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Continental Philosophy and Christian Beliefs

Edited by
Glenn Morrison

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About the Editor

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Glenn Morrison is an associate professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Notre Dame Australia in Fremantle. He completed his Ph.D. in Systematic Theology and Continental Thought at Australian Catholic University, where he has also held a lecturing position. Through the years, Glenn has published in various journals, such as *The Heythrop Journal*, *Irish Theological Quarterly*, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, *Australian eJournal of Theology*, *Australasian Catholic Record*, *International Studies in Catholic Education*, *Religions*, *Pastoral Liturgy*, and *The Furrow*. He is the author of *A Theology of Alterity: Levinas, von Balthasar and Trinitarian Praxis* (Duquesne University Press, 2013). Glenn's research interests include Continental thought, the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, Catholic spirituality, pastoral theology, interfaith dialogue, the mysteries of the faith, ecclesiology, synodality and Catholic universities.

Preface

Continental philosophy can be as highly provocative as inspiring by awakening and orienting the theological imagination and language of Christian faith towards new horizons. As a provocative means of thought, it challenges, guides and aids every generation of philosophers and theologians to renew their commitment to developing an affectivity of aggiornamento, keeping up to date with the contemporary world from issues of identity, relevance and clarity, to being, existence and consciousness. Continental philosophy aims to deepen the Christian message and vocation to wrestle with divine revelation, be wounded by the struggle and find new ways of expression (as well as acknowledge ones that have walked decades and centuries in tradition yet were lost along the way).

The goal of this Special Issue is to offer space to continue the pursuit of truth in being and identify ways of practical expression to give life to the identity and mission of the Church: "to bring good news to the poor" (Lk 4: 18). In the wisdom and service of love, there remains an invincible little goodness, the nearly invisible heaven of the Kingdom of God (Matt 13:33). Scholarship and dialogue can provide a voice for the Christian Church to pursue holiness with joy and gladness, and come to a place where Christian beliefs provide an outpouring of faith, hope and love that the world has a future in and through the person of Jesus the Christ. This Special Issue, now presented in book format, will seek to contribute to the development of Continental philosophy on the mysteries of faith in the hope of developing what Pope Francis proclaims in *Gaudete et Exsultate* (no. 135): "God is eternal newness. He impels us constantly to set out anew, to pass beyond what is familiar, to the fringes and beyond".

The contributions invite scholarship from twelve international scholars to share their philosophical and theological imagination of faith to create a vision for truth in the mystery of being, articulated as love. Theology is called to recognise philosophical turns through the centuries. This produces a hopeful resonance to recognise that the time of doing philosophy and theology today demands understanding the place of human suffering, temptation and will, and searching for meaning and wisdom. Continental philosophy recognises that the form of theology produces opportunities and possibilities to reflect upon truth in being, and truth witnessed in the service of wisdom and love. I invite you to take time to reflect upon these contributions beginning with the Editorial as a guide to inspire philosophical and theological vision, to discover a narrative at play awakening a sense of newness and hope for transformation in Christ.

Glenn Morrison
Editor

Editorial

"Continental Philosophy and Christian Beliefs": Truth in Being

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The mystery of being touches upon the depths of God's truth articulated as love. The phenomenological, ontological, and theological approaches to being often invoke the themes of time, truth, existence, death, alterity/otherness, and God. This is because being resides more in mystery and concealment. Where the themes of truth and being come together into a theological domain, they evidence a cohesive structure in the language of faith by producing intelligibility to Christian beliefs. The mystery of truth in being offers an opportunity to understand the nature of reality and existence in terms of divine love.

Responding to the light of religious faith, continental philosophers like Emmanuel Levinas, Franz Rosenzweig, Semyon Frank, Gabriel Marcel, Jacques Maritain, Karol Wojtyla (Pope St. John Paul II), René Girard and Jean-Luc Maron have been open for their philosophical inquiry to be at the service of theology. In contrast, Martin Heidegger found resonance in the creative, poetic, and mystical light of the fourfold to give voice to his search for the meaning of being, a search creating a private religion as it were. Whilst Jean-Paul Sartre lamented the absence of God's presence, Derrida pursued the messianic spectre of deconstruction to retrieve and awake the archival memory of belief in God lost in atheistic pursuit. This has stirred much interest and passion for Christian or even Jewish Talmudic theology to take an interest in Continental philosophy. We can assert that Continental philosophy can be pressed into service of theology to give light to Christian beliefs, light that finds its beginning in Creation, the immemorial and anarchic (without origin) presence of the divine Word in God through the diachrony of the Spirit (truth in love) animating humanity towards moments of compassion, justice, and mercy (love in truth).

Certainly, continental philosophers can address human concerns and problems outside of religious beliefs and questions about God's transcendence, such as through a focus on quantum theory, psychoanalysis, political economy and the digital age. Here, Christian beliefs could be perceived as a mere preference to be distrusted in favour of more secular, post-modern or scientific constructs. Perhaps then, the question we can ask is what is first philosophy? And from here, we may very well ponder, what is first theology? From a Levinasian perspective, both philosophy and theology are first ethics and prayer, and hence truth in being rests in acts of justice and mercy ordered and ordained through God's word in the neighbour's face.

We can begin to note that continental philosophy is highly original in imagination, making it amenable to theological inquiry. This means that the human imagination can be developed to explore how the essence, existence and reality of truth in being can produce a knowledge of human freedom: to see "the glory of the Lord" (2 Cor 3:18). Here, amid such creative imagination, the truth of Christian beliefs is enunciated to reveal God's being in an evocative and personal way. The epiphany is evocative because of the Good News "to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Lk 4:18–19). As personal, the encounter with Christ's word demands that the good truth of charity becomes the act of conscience: "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matt 25:40).

This Special Issue of *Religions*, "Continental Philosophy and Christian Beliefs", includes twelve searching and evocative responses to the elements of being's truth and

goodness as means to respond though the imagination of faith and the intelligibility of reason to create a vision of a new world, not just a better world, in the face of the horror of evil. To herald the age of the healing and patient presence of love is to "strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt 6:33). Studies in philosophy and theology, oriented by a bold and searching hope, aim not just to merely surmise on the mystery of being but to create a vision of God's kingdom of blessing and forgiveness that helps to give direction to approach the mystery of God's truth in love, patience and humility. Such an affectivity of faith evokes the Christian belief that Jesus is the Christ who "did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross" (Phil 2:6–8).

The twelve papers form together a road map, as it were, to discover various routes to approach the good truth of being as love for God and neighbour. They do this by unveiling a myriad of dangers along the way, such as nominalism; religious rhetoric, polemics and proselytism; idolatrous and arbitrary philosophical criticism; the separation of philosophy from theology; excluding the process of rational intuition and the imagination of faith from the intelligence of reason; reducing philosophical and theological perspectives of being to the essence of self-interest such as ideology, politics, impractical diversions, the compartmentalisation of data and the finitude of relative, unrealistic and illusional projections; precluding religious experience of the sacred and piety from the philosophical and theological imagination; giving primacy to the egoistic totalizing forces of ontology over the language of alterity, ethical metaphysics and transcendence; instrumentalizing tradition with conformance or indolence rather than the reform of the Holy Spirit's hopeful imagination and inspiration; imposing fundamentalism or naïve realism on Christian beliefs and philosophical inquiry; and divorcing the objectivity of truth from the knowing human subject as a means to purge philosophical and theological discourse from Christian beliefs. Accordingly, the twelve contributions offer an invitation to explore current themes and challenges facing Christian beliefs today by employing the richness of continental philosophy. Especially revealing is the diversity of approaches to facilitate conversation, dialogue and hope for the communication of truth in being. Let us look more closely at these efforts.

Nominalism has various faces moving through the guises of modernism, post-modernism, post-post-modernism and, more recently, hyper-realism, as it were, of wokeism. This can be paralleled by the movement from knowledge (modernism) to information (post-modernism) to control (post-post-modernism) to wokeism (domination of hyper-realities). The threat that nominalism poses to Christian beliefs speaks of the strangulation of reason to remove from Christianity its ability not only to defend itself but to exist through the wellspring of compassion, truth and love. Jean Grondin, drawing from Gadamer's writings, warns of a Nominalistic age, and in response alerts the reader to the importance of hermeneutics, theories of interpretation, regarding the mystery of being. This signifies safeguarding the meaning of truth and the sensibility of faith from the totality and fundamentalism of empirical science.

Religious beliefs, as the content of faith, offer a context to reflect upon the mystery of God. The nature of religious beliefs is not only cognitive but also liturgical, possessing a sacred architecture to imagine the Divine Word at work in the human soul orienting the emotions towards an affectivity of valuing the difference between space and time. Alejandro Navarro finds resonance in Nietzsche's philosophy to enter a metaxic or in-between world of piety and the bruising turbulence of a self-emptying God battering hearts. Beyond the turbulence of contaminating forces of ideas, social pressures and constructed wisdom, there lies the conversion and purification of ancient memory maturing since the days of Creation, namely the original, anarchic Good News unbroken, undisturbed by history. The piety of discovering the sacred remains an experiential quest for truth in love as much as love in truth.

The nature of doing theology is often oriented by taking a step back into philosophy. The pre-eminent Levinas scholar, Roger Burggraeve, develops a method of using philosophy to bring out the Bible in a way that awakens the conscience to the maternity and compassion of the little goodness, stirring, shivering and invincible in nature. These are inviting forms of sacramental light, sparkles of grace as it were, guiding Burggraeve's phenomenological breaking open of biblical mystery and truth. Exploring the nature of blessing in terms of religious language, he invites the theological imagination to journey into the encounter of God. The transcendent sense of the beautiful unfolds in goodness and truth by referencing moments of living poetry and prayer, the affectivity and passivity of God in every blessing as a response to the evil in all its horror, profanity and excess. For blessing, of and from God, is the gift of peace "to the far and the near" (Isa 57:19) as beautiful in form and epiphany as the leaven of the "kingdom of heaven" (Matt 13:33).

In contrast to the joy of blessing, there is raw and impulsive excitement. By intensifying passions, such excitement touches the roots of moral evil. This is because self-interested subjectivity represses the image of God, revealing a moral indolence to ignore the neighbour, the poor one and stranger. The resulting fatigue produces a horror of existence, inviting the presence of evil to reduce the other's face to a form of anonymous existence. Ironically, the ego-laden subjectivity coincides with the horror of depersonalizing others as an inanimate object of consciousness. Martin Cajthaml, utilizing Dietrich von Hildebrand's perception of moral evil, presents an insightful understanding of the fabric of discernment as opposed to the illusion of subjective realities that erode the humane condition of duty and responsibility. Accordingly, discernment, uncovering the idolatries of false transcendence, seeks the newness of the kingdom of God "to grow in holiness", a spiritual theme I take up in this book in the light of integral human development and Emmanuel Levinas's ethical metaphysics.

Integral to human development is appreciating how opportunistic mechanical patterns of thinking can separate reason from faith, nature from grace, or the secular from the sacred. Today, the growing reliance on digital, algorithmic forms of thinking can turn into a terrible forgetting of how the transcendentals revive lived experience in terms of the intellect, piety and intuition. The forgetting is "terrible" because of the wounding done to the metaphysical imagination, causing, for example, faith to be amputated, so to speak, from the humanities and social sciences. Universities are suffering marked consequences of Arts and Humanities being judged and exiled into irrelevance. Tracey Rowland, the distinguished Pope Benedict XVI scholar, invites reflection on German Catholic Scholarship in the inter-war years of the 1920s and 1930s. She evokes the contribution of four prophetical Guardians witnessing to the bond between philosophy and theology: Roman Gaurdini, Josef Pieper, Theodor Haecker and Peter Wust. Their humanism, in the face of German idealism and Kantian reductionism, parallels also German-Jewish responses such as those of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig. This is evidence that both Jewish and Christian scholarship can come together to face a common threat of narrowing the place of reason to be devoid of the lived experience of faith and redemption.

The question of whether spiritual lived experience can give light to metaphysical conceptions of selfhood is not just a modern and contemporary question. Jonathon Lo, situating Martin Heidegger's hermeneutics and historicity of the being of Dasein, the existent in search of self-interested possibilities, discovers sapiential resonance in St. Bonaventure's medieval spirituality. The resonance is further revealing because it acknowledges first the limitations inherent in Heidegger's ontological phenomenology. Moving to medieval time, a spiritual architecture and design of knowledge offers to the human intellect a piety animated by affective intuition of God's transforming love in Christ. Heidegger's preoccupation with Dasein's ownmost possibilities forges a totality to approach the mystery of being and time. However, the medieval spiritual mindset is a reminder of the rich tradition and wisdom of how Christian beliefs testify to God's infinity and incarnational truth, God in the finite, rather than totalizing forces falling into self-interest and evil.

Religious experience bears a phenomenological character. It challenges the self to journey towards a flourishing personhood to develop a sense and sensibility of truth. Personhood flourishes in truth where the senses evoked by the encounter of God open towards a spiritual sensibility and maturity. Przemysław Zgórecki draws out the nature of religious experience in terms of the creative energy and imagination of French phenomenology. We have here Jewish and Christian thinkers coming together. The interplay between Judaism and Christianity by way of phenomenology has produced a remarkable turn towards understanding religious experience to bring meaning to tradition so that the self may become a living book of experience. Further, religious experience invites the study of philosophy and theology to be pronounced as freedom for the act of thinking, freedom as a form of blessing for future generations to imagine the truth and word of God's being distilling a kingdom of righteousness, love and new life.

The nature of religious experience has a bearing to truth as unconcealment (*aletheia*). In the light of creating unity in the Church, the Holy Spirit unveils God's will according to the plan of salvation (1 Cor 2:9; 2 Cor 6:2). This means the People of God, seeking communion and covenantal renewal today through a synodality of listening and dialogue, are called to discover the grave mission of love in the unveiling of truth. To give time and space to think and ponder, to reflect and act with charity, truth finds a way to explode the prevalent narrative of lies and excesses of evil contaminating the world with avarice, power and the semi-pelagian forms of idolatry. Ryan McAleer, using Levinas' philosophy, discovers how one can love the Torah more than God, so to speak, to rebel and dissent in the Church. Dialogue needs stirring dissent to give freedom for thought to play out, freedom for the Spirit to make a stance against forms of totality destroying the gift of synodal listening in the Church.

One form of totality that avails itself to power and privilege is possessing a docetic attitude. Giving voice to gnostic fear and self-interest, salvation becomes an entirely secret, personal affair to possess knowledge as a response to evil and suffering. Consequently, there is little care for the well-being of others and the Church resulting in the illusion of a perfect Church and spiritual reality to inhabit, a vessel impenetrable to sin and the concerns of a lesser humanity. Docetism invites fear and a Pelagian desire to form the self into an object of idolatry. Peter Richards, developing a theology of governance in the Anglican Church with the aid of Giorgio Agamben's thought, has highlighted the danger of a lack of consultation in episcopal leadership oriented by secular managerial styles. Noting the transforming character of theology and philosophy, Richards utters the word "reform" in response to the tyranny of authoritarianism in ecclesial governance to return to the egalitarian roots of the early Christian communities.

The world today can seem "ruthless . . . like a winter rainstorm" (Isa 25:4). A secular, post-modern, post-Christian world collapsing into the intense gravity of nominalism and scientific theory produces an apocalyptic future of no escape. Here, lies are constructed in new metanarratives reflecting a "ruthless" humanity bent on war and death. Nevertheless, truth, "the day of the Lord", will emerge "like a thief in the night" (1 Thess 5:2) to announce a "day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:2). Peter Christofides, responding to secular philosophy and the experience of Australian culture, testifies to the Good News by upholding the sacredness of the divine presence. Like Moses, humanity is called to an affectivity of reverence to understand that our world is "holy ground" (Ex 3:5). Like Isaiah, humanity too is called to seek a future world, an ancient Edenic "feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines" (Isa 25:6).

The relation between subject and object demands much care. This is because of the "holy ground" and Edenic hope uniting the subject and object, the intuition of the immemorial time of the divine Word creating spaces for thought, understanding and knowledge to witness to truth and goodness so that being in love may overflow into a world tempted by self-care, indecision, chaos, polarization and phrenetic impulses. The Lonergan scholar, Matthew Ogilvie, has invited discussion on the relation between subject and object in the light of Christian Fundamentalism's rejection of the searching

and knowing subject and position of favouring the objectivity and thematization of facts. Levinas, in contrast, speaks of a noesis (act of consciousness) without a noema (giving visibility to being), producing a non-phenomenology of the other's face. Only where being has been uttered in righteousness, justice and the little goodness of mercy, the diachrony of responsibility comes to mind as love without eros, a love free from the totality of evil forming into the horror of anonymous and haunting objectivity.

These contributions offer unique and creative ways and possibilities to give intelligibility to Christian beliefs through the lens of continental thought. As a sum, the writings announce hope to pronounce truth in being, the word of God, with the newness of the spontaneity of faith and the vigilance of love in truth. In every age, there remains the challenge to listen to the Spirit and respond to the mystery proclaimed by St. Paul and Isaiah: "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor 2:9; cf. Isa 64:4).

Article

Faith in the Nominalistic Age? The Possible Theological Contribution of Hermeneutics

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Abstract: This paper inquires about the defensibility of spiritual faith in this Nominalistic age, i.e., an age when all reality is reduced to scientifically ascertainable matter and all spiritual realities are deemed to be irreal. This Nominalistic worldview was developed in the late Middle Ages and became one of the major presuppositions of Modernity. It has made it ever more difficult to defend the legitimacy of faith and its objects. It also played an important, albeit seldom recognized, role in the emergence of Hermeneutical thought in the 20th Century. In his strong, if also seldom carefully studied, interpretation of Heidegger's philosophy, Gadamer saw in the Nominalism of Modernity one of the main challenges to which Heidegger's thinking wished to respond: the hegemony of the Nominalistic understanding of being would have led to the Nihilism of our technological Age and made the experience of the Divine unthinkable. After recalling the outlines of this interpretation and of the meaning of Nominalism itself, this paper argues that this Nominalism was also one of the main challenges Gadamer wanted to overcome with his Hermeneutics. It discusses how Hermeneutics strives to overcome this Nominalism by calling into question the monopoly of scientific truth (an effort summed up in the title "Truth and Method") and through its renewed understanding of language as the presentation of Being itself, which goes hand in hand with the rediscovery of the Platonic metaphysics of the Beautiful. Hermeneutics thus shows how something like faith is defensible and thus makes an important theological and metaphysical contribution.

Keywords: faith; nominalism; hermeneutics; metaphysics; Gadamer; Heidegger; modernity

The title of this contribution speaks of "Faith in the Nominalistic Age?", with a question mark that one can expect at the end of all philosophical titles. Since I hail from a discipline, hermeneutics, that is fond of double entendres, this title also has a double meaning. In its first meaning, "Faith in the Nominalistic Age?" inquires about the possibility, indeed the defensibility, of faith, religious faith mostly, in the Nominalistic age: what does faith consist in? How can it be justified? Must it be justified? This is a most classical question of theology, philosophy and what is called the philosophy of religion. There is, however, another meaning of the title "Faith in the Nominalistic Age?": it inquires not about the status of religious faith in this day and age; rather, it questions our own faith in the Nominalistic age as one of the hidden creeds of our time. As I will argue or recall, Nominalism forms the default metaphysics of our time, our basic worldview, out of which it is quite difficult to justify anything like a religious faith. Can this Nominalistic framework be overcome?

I will try to wrestle with these issues in three steps. I will first try to give a general idea of my starting point, which is to be found in Gadamer's dialogue with Heidegger and centers on the topic of my lecture[1] (faith in the Nominalistic age). I will secondly try to explain (or recall) in broad terms what this Nominalistic age is all about. Thirdly and lastly, I will try to sketch how faith can be thought of in the Nominalistic age with the help of hermeneutical philosophy and thus try to outline the, or a, possible theological contribution of hermeneutics to theology.

1. Gadamer's Unique Theological Interpretation of Heidegger

There are many things to marvel at in Gadamer's hermeneutics, but one of the things that never ceases to amaze me is the intensity of his life-long dialogue with his teacher Heidegger. When Gadamer met him, in 1923, he came from a very different background and already had a solid philosophical upbringing. For the background: Heidegger came from a peasant setting, the backwater city of Messkirch, and from a modest family in which no one had ever received a university education. Gadamer, on the other hand, came from a major city, Breslau, and was the son of an acclaimed professor of pharmaceutical chemistry who became the rector of the University of Marburg in 1921. In religious matters, Heidegger was in his youth a devout Catholic, destined for the priesthood, whereas Gadamer was, at best, a nominal Protestant, for whom faith issues were less existential, if relevant at all. On the philosophical front, Gadamer benefited from a solid upbringing before he ran into Heidegger: he had studied with some of the most famous Neo-Kantians of his time: luminaries such as Paul Natorp, Nicolai Hartmann and Richard Hönigswald, all strong believers in the sacred authority of science, as was the case with Gadamer's father. Worlds thus separated Gadamer and Heidegger, but in 1922, Gadamer happened to be interested in Aristoteles, and his teacher Natorp handed him a handwritten manuscript of the young Heidegger on Aristotle. Gadamer was entranced by it and decided to study with Heidegger in the summer of 1923. The rest is history.

The first thing that amazes me is that Gadamer, despite his different background, immediately became a follower of Heidegger and wished nothing more than to do his habilitation under his supervision (Heidegger first refused, in 1925, but finally accepted him in 1928, after Gadamer had made strides in his studies of Greek Philology with Paul Friedländer from 1925 to 1927). The other thing that amazes me is that, from the time of this early encounter, Gadamer developed an intense and original reading of Heidegger's main motivations, which forms the bulk of the strong Heidegger interpretation he developed during Heidegger's lifetime and which he presented (among other places) in tributes for Heidegger's 75th, 80th and 85th birthday (which Heidegger appreciated, by the way, as his soon-to-be published correspondence with Gadamer will show). Gadamer continued developing this interpretation in his book *Heideggers Wege*, published in 1983 and translated as *Heidegger's Ways* in English, as well as in his later work published in the 1980s and 1990s. To my knowledge, this strong interpretation of Heidegger by Gadamer has hitherto received little scholarly attention, even though it has much to teach us about Heidegger's underlying motivations, or at least Gadamer's perception of them.

According to Gadamer, the driving force behind Heidegger's endeavor, or "what Heidegger was all about", was his life-long effort to find an adequate expression for the experience of Christian faith. Heidegger, in Gadamer's eyes, was a *Gottsucher*, a God-seeker. Early on, probably as early as 1919, as Heidegger's now-famous letter to his mentor Engelbert Krebs testifies (published in Kisiel and Sheehan (2010)), Heidegger became disillusioned with the traditional philosophical terminology with which this experience of faith was expressed[2]. Gadamer's interpretation is all the more noteworthy because Heidegger himself never presented his path of thinking in this way; from Heidegger's perspective, his only question was that of Being, and in order to raise it properly, one had to unfold an existential Analytics of *Dasein* or delve into the history of Being. One must, however, ask: *why* is it important to raise anew this long-forgotten question of Being? For Gadamer, Heidegger's main motivation was always theological, and this is what the publication of Heidegger's early lecture courses of the 1920s confirmed in his eyes[3]. In 1989, when Heidegger's *Natorp-Bericht* was finally published (Heidegger's *Beiträge* were also published in that year, but Gadamer had far less interest in them), Gadamer wrote a preface provokingly titled "Heidegger's theological *Jugendschrift*", an allusion, of course, to the belatedly published manuscripts of the young Hegel (by a Dilthey pupil, no less, Hermann Nohl). Just as the publication of these early Hegelian "theological" manuscripts opened the way for a renewed and unitary understanding of Hegel, so, too, would the

early manuscripts and lecture courses of Heidegger open the way for an appreciation of the underlying religious motivations of his entire philosophical outlook.

It would be a complex story to explain Heidegger's misgivings about the vocabulary with which Christian faith was expressed, but there is no doubt that he was wrestling with his own theological upbringing, which was framed by the Catholic Church and the doctrine of Thomism, which, like him, extolled the question of Being. Heidegger believed—like many other theologians of his time, it must be noted (von Harnack springs to mind, but also dialectical theologians such as Barth and Bultmann, to name only the most famous)—that the scholastic doctrine alienated or distorted (*überfremdet* is Gadamer's word) the original Christian message and experience, which was rooted in the temporal anguish of the believer. Where did this "alienating" doctrine come from? This would also be a long story to narrate but, in a word, it came from "metaphysics" (GW 3, 298) and its reassuring attempt to understand the whole of reality out of a first principle and, according to Heidegger, to distract human existence from its own temporality. This metaphysical urge to explain the world became, according to Heidegger, the foundation of our technological age which would also seek to control everything and thus make us forgetful of our historical condition.

Where did Gadamer encounter this motivation in 1923? In this fateful summer semester of 1923, Gadamer followed Heidegger's seminar on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and his programmatic one-hour lecture course on the "Hermeneutics of facticity". Yet, it was in a small seminar Heidegger held with Julius Ebbinghaus on Kant's *Religion in the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793) that Gadamer appears to have recognized the secretly religious motivation of Heidegger's questioning. Gadamer recalls, for instance, that it was Heidegger's aim, in this seminar, to distance Kant from Luther (GW 10, 7), whom Heidegger celebrated, and to situate him in the continuity of Thomas and metaphysical thinking. What ensued was *Being and Time* and its attempt to understand human existence, indeed Being itself, out of its forgotten or repressed temporality. When Heidegger soon realized that *Being and Time* was itself not entirely free of the metaphysical vocabulary (as if any philosophical work could ever be), he abandoned its entire project and plunged into the history of Being in order to understand our present predicament as the consequence of the long history of "metaphysics", and to explore ways of thinking beyond it, since the outcome of this history had been a debilitating nihilism.

In this process, Gadamer never fails to point out a major motivation of Heidegger's undertaking, which would also prove decisive for Gadamer himself: it is Heidegger's attempt to escape the narrowness of the scientific culture of the West, the *Versuch, aus der Enge der Wissenschaftskultur des Abendlandes auszubrechen* (GW 10, 27). This is indeed a fundamental tenet of Heidegger's thinking about technology, namely the notion that the all-pervasive attempt to dominate the world would stem from the tradition of metaphysics. It is this technological mindset that can be identified with the project of Nominalism, at least in Gadamer's eyes. This is perhaps less the case for Heidegger, who had little to say about Nominalism *per se* and who even had positive things to say about it—in his *Habilitationsschrift* of 1916 for instance—because of its focus on *haecceitas* or "thisness" as opposed to essential generalities. Nonetheless, Heidegger would have readily recognized what Gadamer understood by Nominalism. Which leads me to my second question:

2. What Is Nominalism and to What Extent Is It the Default Metaphysics of Our Time?

Of course, Nominalism is not a doctrine of Gadamer. It is the name of a worldview, actually a metaphysics, which came about in the Middle Ages and traced its own roots back to the privilege Aristotle bestowed upon the *tode ti*, the this or that, as opposed to the abstract essence. The history of the rise of Nominalism is a complex issue and it is not my aim, nor part of my competence, to dissect here its meaning for medieval authors. When I speak of Nominalism, I mostly refer to the Nominalism of our age[4], our scientific and materialistic age, whose roots go back to a metaphysical revolution that occurred in the late Middle ages when the (Platonic) view that there was an order of Being we could know through reason was challenged by the view that there are only individual and contingent

entities which we would know through experience. What gives Nominalism its name is the notion that abstract entities and universals are just "names", *nomina*, since the only realities that "actually exist" would be individual ones which can be observed in space and time. There are different types of apples, but the concept of the apple as such does not exist; it is a creation of the mind–hence a mere name–to characterize various types of beings that share a characteristic. As is well known, at least by historians of Nominalism, the original motivation of this metaphysics, which rejects essences, was theological: Medieval authors such as Ockham argued that it would limit the omnipotence of God, the only eternal reality, to admit a realm of eternal essences that would coexist, as it were, with God. Being omnipotent, God could modify, at will, any order of Being. This view of the world had a wide-ranging and well-studied impact on Modernity, and many relate its rise to that of Nominalism[5]. The consequences are ontological and epistemological. On the ontological side, Nominalism goes hand-in-hand with a new understanding of Being, which is now viewed as individual existence (*Vorhandenheit*) in time and space; it is not the unfolding of an essence. Since essences have become problematical, or viewed as mere, albeit useful, fictions of the mind, there is no "order of Being" out there, no *telos* of Being either, only individual realities devoid of any essential purpose[6]. The epistemological consequences are no less revolutionary: to know is not to grasp an essence anymore, since essences do not really exist; it means to recognize through experience, which Nominalism promotes as the main source of knowledge besides logic, patterns or laws that govern individual realities. For modern authors such as Kant, it is ultimately the human understanding that would be a priori responsible for the order we recognize in the world of phenomena. I do not need to make the argument here, since it has been done countless times over, but it is generally right to view in this Nominalism one, if not the, deciding feature of Modernity.

It certainly promoted the scientific and empirical study of nature based on repeated observation, but it also promoted, as Hans Blumenberg argued in his book *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (1966), the autonomy of the human subject, which is also widely heralded as a hallmark of Modernity. Since the human subject is not constrained anymore by an overbearing realm of essences to which it must subject, it appears free to fashion the world, its own world, to its liking. Nominalism is thus the age of the individual and of the ego. Of course, the question of what is binding for this ego has to be raised: what should govern our lives, and what is the point of our lives if there is no order of Being to which we can look up to? The history of Modernity can be read as a series of answers to this question and, thus, to Nominalism.[7]

Needless to say, Nominalism has potentially disastrous consequences for the issues that theology deals with. The irony here, but which is now mostly viewed as a mere historical curiosity, is that the original motivation of Nominalism was theological to begin with: it would limit the omnipotence of God to admit an independent realm of essences besides God. It was thus a Nominalism *ad majorem Dei gloriam* (or *ad majorem Dei omnipotentiae gloriam*). However, if there are only individual entities and all abstract, non-observable realities become questionable, any idea of an otherworldly God can ultimately fall under the razor of Nominalism. This was, of course, not an issue for the Middle Ages, but it would become one for Modernity, which can be viewed in this regard as a radicalization of Nominalism. For Descartes, for instance, there are only two types of realities: *res extensae*, the meaningless, purposeless individual and material entities "extended" out there, and the *res cogitans* of my thinking ego. The existence of God can only be deduced (at least, in the Third Meditation) from the fact that the finite being that I am cannot be the cause of the idea of infinity which I find within my mind (See Arbid 2017). This argument was only binding, it appears, for Descartes himself. Out of a Nominalistic understanding of existence and reality, the existence of God became problematic for modern philosophers and would become ever more so for the wider public (at least, its "educated" class in the West) in our late Modernity, or our "Secular Age" as Charles Taylor calls it.

These issues are well known and generally well studied. What is perhaps less appreciated is the impact they had on thinkers such as Heidegger (who spoke little of Nominalism

and even had, as I recalled, some appreciation, in his formative years, for its sense for *haecceitas*) and Gadamer. Gadamer, in his powerful reading of Heidegger, saw the principled Nominalism of Modernity as *the main issue* of Heidegger's *Being and Time* and the overriding challenge behind his life-long struggle or *Auseinandersetzung* with metaphysics[8].

Even if Heidegger speaks little of Nominalism *per se* (thinkers often speak very little of their deepest motivations), it is arguable that his entire philosophical effort wishes to problematize its understanding of Being by tracing it back to the forgetfulness of Being which would be the signature of metaphysics. There are at least two prominent instances of Nominalism's understanding of Being that come to mind in Heidegger's work. The first, to be found in *Being and Time*, is the privilege bestowed upon the understanding of Being as sheer *Vorhandenheit*; mere subsistence or Being as "occurrentness" (See Cerbone 2021b)[9]—what is is what can be objectified and observed as an object that stands in front of me (very much like Descartes' *res extensa* or Sartre's *en-soi*). This is an understanding of Being that most of us presuppose without question: Being means to actually exist somewhere as opposed to not being there or not "being a thing", as one says nowadays (a sense of Being as existence Aristotle *never* evokes [!] when he famously distinguishes four senses of Being in *Metaphysics*, V, 7 and VI, 2; *existentia* was a late Medieval discovery, as Jean-Christophe Bardout has shown (Bardout 2014)). It was Heidegger's genius (or mischievousness) to show that this understanding of Being was not only one of many, but that it was even *derivative*: it would emerge out of the *disruption* of the mode of Being of *Zuhandenheit* ("availableness" (See Cerbone 2021a), "readiness to hand", 'handiness') which would be more original and more related to *Dasein*, for whom *Vorhandenheit* would also be a woefully inadequate way of describing its way of being. To my knowledge, Heidegger never explicitly relates *Vorhandenheit* to the Nominalistic understanding of Being, but it is obvious that there is no *Vorhandenheit* without Nominalism (granted, Heidegger is probably thinking more about Descartes' *res extensa* or the *Gegenstand* of the Neokantians). It is this Nominalistic understanding Heidegger wishes to rattle by raising anew the question of Being. As we saw, according to Gadamer, the motivation of Heidegger was ultimately theological: the Nominalistic understanding of Being would make it impossible to think of the possible being of God.

The second decisive instance of the Nominalistic understanding of Being can be found in Heidegger's later account of the essence of technology which, according to his provocative reading, would emerge seamlessly out of the tradition of metaphysics and its focus on objectified beings (*eidos, ousia, res*) instead of on the "event" of Being (Being as *phusis, Aufgehen* or *Ereignis*). How does technology consider beings? It views them mainly as something to be controlled and exploited. Descartes's emblematic phrase about us becoming "*maîtres et possesseurs de la nature*" might have led Heidegger to this view, but it certainly confirms his insight. For modern technology, beings would not even amount to a *Vorhandenheit* anymore, ironizes Heidegger but, at best, to something like a reservoir (*Vorrat*) for possible manipulation and domination[10]. Beings are essentially disposable, replaceable, since the only reality is (or would be) that of the *Gestell*, the urge to technologically master everything. Again, Heidegger does not relate this urge to Nominalism *per se*, but to the roots of the metaphysical tradition, especially to Plato and his understanding of the world through the prism of the *eidos*, i.e., what the eye can grasp and thus master. Plato, and not Nominalism (which would only derive from Platonism), would be responsible for the forgetfulness of Being, i.e., the forgotten notion that Being cannot be reduced to what the *Gestell* can get a hold of. It is thus metaphysics that Heidegger takes to task, not Nominalism *per se*.

The question one can raise here (and there would be many) is whether metaphysics and our entire Western tradition can indeed be reduced to the Nominalism that came to the fore in the late Middle Ages and paved the way for Modernity. For Heidegger, there is a straight line that goes from the foundations of metaphysics in Plato to Nominalism, Modernity and our technological predicament, which is most evident today, as I believe

Heidegger correctly diagnosed, in the ecological challenge we are facing and in the nihilistic plight of our culture.

It was Gadamer's immense merit, I contend, even if this is not widely acknowledged, to challenge Heidegger's one-sided reading of metaphysics as the cradle of the technological age. He did so in at least two ways: firstly, in his different reading of Plato, and the Greeks more generally, in which he tried to show that it would be an anachronism to project into Plato the modern and Nominalistic understanding of Being. In effect, Gadamer reproached Heidegger for confusing the Greeks with the Nominalist, modern worldview[11]. Gadamer mostly did so, however, by suggesting, if I understand him correctly, that Plato's understanding of Being was, in fact, much more closer to Heidegger's in that it was, or would have been, more attuned to the essential mobility and, hence, temporality of Being which would escape mastery. Gadamer recognized this sense for mobility in the fact that "movement" (*kinesis*) was indeed one of the five main genres of Being in his *Sophistes* besides "rest" (GW 3, 405–6), in Plato's understanding of the soul as self-movement (ibid.) and in the fact that Plato would have recognized that an ultimate intellectual grasp of the world was impossible, since no one knows how many ideas there are. And if the idea of the Good is the overriding principle of the ideas, it is never presented as an idea that we could perceive or grasp (it is not a *Gegenstand* in the Nominalistic sense), but as an idea in which all the others would partake or participate (GW 3, 244). Similarly, Plato would never speak of the divine as an objectified *Seiendes* we could grasp (GW 3, 409). The pointed notion of participation means, for Gadamer, that we only have an inkling of the link of the sensible to some ideal order, but that none of us has any mastery of this relation. Thus, Plato would not only have been the forerunner of metaphysics, and our scientific culture focused on the mastery and logical explanation of beings, but he would also have preserved something of the unity of philosophical knowledge with religious and poetic wisdom (GW 3, 416: he would have been a true witness of "*der unleugbaren Einheit von Wissen und religiöser und dichterischer und Weisheitsüberlieferung*", "the undeniable unity of knowledge and the tradition of religious and poetic wisdom"), with its sense for the immemorial, the uncontrollable and the unpredictable (GW 3, 415: *das Unvordenkliche, das Unbeherrschbare, das Unberechenbare*). Thus, Gadamer did challenge Heidegger's reading of Plato; however, a massive part of his argument was to show that Plato was actually somewhat of a Heideggerian or, at least, an author with whom Heidegger could have identified himself more than he did[12]. I, for one, believe this is not the only, nor the best, way to challenge Heidegger's reading of Plato. I would more readily follow Gerhard Krüger, who defended a metaphysical reading of Plato against Heidegger's effort to overcome metaphysics and also showed how much Heidegger was a son of Modernity in this undertaking[13].

The second important way in which Gadamer rejected Heidegger's reading of metaphysics lies in the distance he took from Heidegger's notion that there would be such a thing as a constraining *language* of metaphysics, a *Sprache der Metaphysik*, that would have held philosophy captive from Plato to the logical positivists. By challenging Heidegger on this, Gadamer suggested that there are actually many different voices in the metaphysical tradition and not only the Nominalistic blowhard. He also made the point that language is, in principle, always able to express or convey what needs to be said (which is a standard version of the universality he claims for hermeneutics (See Jean Grondin (2022a))). This is also true of the alleged language of metaphysics: if Heidegger thinks here about the objectivizing language of substance metaphysics, he should know that there are non- objectivizing ways of thinking of Being, as can be found in Plotinus, Meister Eckhart, Schelling, Hölderlin, Bergson and, according to Gadamer, even in Plato. There are indeed many different languages of metaphysics, i.e., of the effort to understanding something about Being. Plato's language is not necessarily that of Descartes or Carnap. In his unitary understanding of metaphysics as a forgetfulness of Being, Heidegger would himself have fallen prey to the technological urge to become *maître et possesseur* of our entire philosophical tradition.

Gadamer thus resisted Heidegger's unified view of metaphysics; in his own understated way, of course, since he always revered his teacher and mentor Heidegger. Yet, he did not do so, for the most part, to rekindle metaphysical thought, which was not his main task, but only to rectify, as it needed to be, Heidegger's too-modern reading of Plato, which was perhaps influenced by the NeoKantians (again, Heidegger was more modern than he believed). I think, and this is a guiding thread of my modest work, that one can build on Gadamer's resistance to Heidegger to renew the metaphysical impetus of philosophy (I fully understand that this is not the most popular way of doing philosophy but I, for one, see, in the rabid rejection of metaphysics and in philosophy, the hidden impact of Nominalism and its metaphysics). I will now try to suggest how this is true of faith and the faith in the being of God, since this was our starting point.

3. Faith in the Nominalist Age: The Possible Theological Contribution of Hermeneutics

We have seen that it was Gadamer's contention that the main impetus for the God-seeking Heidegger was to find an adequate expression for the experience of Christian faith, which he could not find in the vocabulary of Greek metaphysics. Other readings of Heidegger's motivations are certainly possible, but Gadamer's reading has the benefit of pointing towards one of the possible theological and metaphysical contributions of hermeneutics[14]. As we saw, Gadamer argues that the Nominalism of Modernity was *the* main challenge Heidegger wanted to take on in *Being in Time* and in his life-long struggle with metaphysics.

There is no denying that faith represents a challenge for Modernity in light of its fundamental Nominalism. How is faith seen from a Nominalist and modern point of view? One of the many differences between the contemporary Nominalist reading of faith with that of earlier epochs resides in the fact that faith is now mostly seen as an *option* that the subject can espouse or not. You either have faith or you do not (as if the issue were black or white; it is not!) and whichever option you choose, this is your sovereign, plebiscitary decision. As Charles Taylor argued at the beginning of his *Secular Age*, one of the hallmarks of Modernity resides in the fact that it was almost impossible for any Western person around the year 1500 to not believe in God, whereas in our epoch this has become possible, if not inescapable[15]. In our Secularized age, and most of us will recognize ourselves in this, faith is "understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace"[16]. Yet, faith has not always been seen as an option we could choose, like we can choose to vote for this or that candidate on election day. In the Letters of Paul, for instance, which were also the first to stress the importance of faith (*pistis*) in our relation to God, this *pistis* is readily understood as a *gift* from God, a *theou doron* (*Ephesians* 2, 8) or *donum dei*. It is not a plebiscitary decision on the part of the subject, but a gift that opens up an outlook on life and a path (*hodos, via*) we can follow. This conception explains, by the way, Paul's all-important notion that we would be saved by the grace of faith. If faith were merely and only a matter of human initiative, this doctrine of salvation would make no sense at all. In our time, the notion that faith can be seen as a gift and a grace has been masked by what can be called the metaphysics of subjectivity, which posits the human subject as an autonomous monarch that constructs its own relation to everything, to the world, to others, to itself and even to God (this widespread constructivism is a consequence of Nominalism).

This plebiscitary conception of faith has only been enhanced by the ascendancy of modern science and its Nominalistic outlook on our mindset. In the modern era, science has accumulated so many triumphs—especially in its technological and economic applications (which do not exhaust science and were not part of its original project)—that any relation to the world that does not follow the track of science has been widely discredited. Everything that is not science (*epistèmè*) is only a matter of opinion (*doxa*). Faith (*pistis*) would also fall in the category of opinions, i.e., of views that cannot be rationally defended. The only reliable and rational access to reality would be provided by science, which studies,

as Nominalism commands, individual realities in the empirical world and the laws that govern their interactions.

Given this scientific and Nominalistic outlook, faith has become, for all intents and purposes, excluded from the realm of truth. Any justification of faith appears desperate and vain because a faith that would be rationally justified would not be faith anymore, but knowledge, scientific knowledge. This possibility appears precluded by the Nominalistic presupposition that confines science to observable empirical entities. Faith is thus doubly excluded from the realm of truth and victim of a "Catch-22" of sorts:

a/ It concerns, or so it seems, *objects* that "do not exist", or are at least viewed with suspicion, by the modern Nominalistic outlook which holds that there are only observable material realities: God, gods, spirits, blessings and the like all fall under the Nominalistic razor;

b/ Faith seems devoid of any type of *certainty*, which also excludes it from any serious, i.e., scientific, consideration. Faith appears to be such an inferior type of knowledge that it hardly merits being called knowledge at all. It is thus excluded from any claim to truth.

This Nominalistic predicament sums up what one could call the tragedy of faith in the modern world: it does not form a reliable, truth-capable form of knowledge, and it deals with realities that our modern Nominalistic metaphysics deems as irreal and views, with obvious and contemptuous condescendence, as fairy tales. The Christian, Jewish or Muslim God would not be different in this respect from any Greek or Roman god or any other fictional character from a Disney movie.

We are thus faced with a question which Heidegger already confronted, according to Gadamer: how is a philosophically responsible account of faith possible in this Nominalistic age? I would say, somewhat ironically using the Nominalistic vocabulary of our time, that this is the "Million-dollar question". How can one answer it or rise to its challenge?

I believe hermeneutics opens a few paths to address this question, and I would like to close by indicating some of these, knowing that a short paper can do no more:

1/ The first contribution of hermeneutics resides, I believe, in its challenge to the monopoly of scientific truth, which was indicated by the title of Gadamer's main opus, *Truth and Method*. Even if faith was by no means a major subject in this book, it is clear, from a hermeneutical point of view, that the tragic situation of faith in the modern age proceeds from an absolutization of scientific truth, i.e., the conviction that there would be no truth outside of the conditions defined by modern Nominalism, which posits that every truth must be empirically verifiable and independent from the person that makes this experience. This is a notion of truth that Gadamer's hermeneutics sought to unsettle by arguing, in an important way for an adequate understanding of faith, that there are indeed genuine experiences of truth that do not conform to the scientific, Nominalistic mold, but that can, nonetheless, be recognized and retrieved as legitimate experiences of truth. Gadamer sought to *rediscover* such experiences of truth in the world of education (See Jean Grondin (2022c)), for instance, where the truths we encounter are not objectifiable, verifiable truths but *formative truths* that shape and orient the individual. He also uncovered *bona fide* (I like this "English" expression that evokes faith) experiences of truth in the world of *art*, in moral judgment and common sense, in history and the humanities, in jurisprudence; indeed, in our entire linguistic relation to the world, experiences which, for the most part, resist objectivation. The truth that these experiences offer are not truths that help us to dominate the world, in the Nominalistic sense, but that enable us to participate in a realm of meaning that procures orientation and guidance. Gadamer did not reflect much on this topic, if at all, but my contention is that it is certainly possible to extend his analysis to the realm of religious faith if one wishes to escape its aporetic and tragic predicament in the Nominalistic age: faith can surely not be understood as an objectifiable truth that could be established independently from the person that experiences it. It is quite clear that it does not (or does not only) pertain to realities that would be ascertainable in the modern Nominalistic sense of verification, even if the *fruits* of the engagement of the believer can, in many ways, be verified. They nonetheless offer an experience of knowledge, direction

and wisdom which goes beyond the enclosure of what modern science defines as truth. So, in sum, my first answer would be to apply the insights, indeed the distinction, of "Truth and Method" to the experience of faith.

2/ The second major contribution of hermeneutics would be to challenge, to a certain degree, our faith as such in the Nominalistic age. I spoke earlier of the "conviction" that there would be no truth outside of the conditions defined by modern science. This conviction is that of Nominalism. What Nominalism forgets is that it, too, rests on a conviction, on assumptions and, thus, a form of faith. It is a conviction most of us share, but of which we have forgotten, that it is a faith and a view of the world that is perhaps not the only one that is possible. There are other possible understandings of Being. It is to Heidegger's immense credit that he sought to explore other ways of understanding Being than those of Nominalism and modern science, focused on *Vorhandenheit*, which led to the hegemony of technological thinking and nihilism. What if this nihilism were the consequence not of metaphysics as such, but of a specific Nominalistic metaphysics, which does not exhaust our experience of Being and its possible understandings?

In this regard, I was always impressed by Gadamer's contention that there was an intellectual arrogance or *hubris* in the claim that our epoch would be one of sheer nihilism because it would be one in which there would be no binding truths anymore. Is that really true, asks Gadamer? When one claims that there are no binding truths anymore, one presupposes the type of foundation that is privileged by Nominalism and modern science, which only accepts truths that are ascertained deductively or that can be verified independently from the observer. Are those the truths we live by, asks Gadamer? This is an argument Gadamer made, for instance, in a letter of 1 June 1982 to Richard Bernstein, which was published in 1983 (See Bernstein 1983). Faith was not Gadamer's main topic when he made this argument, but I believe his intuition can be applied to the type of foundation faith offers[17]. When we have faith in someone, a friend, a parent or a grandparent, for instance, does this faith have to be established deductively to be recognized as nothing but a mere opinion or a whim? It is, on the contrary, the very solid basis and common ground of all that we do and are. There are thus other types of *foundations* than those promoted by natural science and technology (the so-called STEM).

3/ Finally, hermeneutics can help us rediscover an understanding of Being to which Nominalism was a reaction and the counterproposal. The Nominalistic notion that there are no essences, only individual, contingent beings, with no inherent purpose, understood itself in opposition to what could be called a Platonic understanding of Being which is easily derided as the view that there would be ideal entities "floating" somewhere in an invisible spiritual realm. Essences have had a bad reputation ever since Nominalism became the leading creed of our worldview. What if something of the Platonic understanding of Being could be rescued from its Nominalistic caricature? For a Platonic understanding, the being that truly merits the name of being is not only the individual material thing since this individual partakes in an order that shines through in the world and which can be contemplated. This essential being also appears to have the rare quality of permanence since it goes beyond the individual itself and evokes something like an order of Being, a certain coherence to the world. Incidentally, this order of the world is one that many types of science help us uncover and, in many cases, presuppose, since it is always a certain order of the world itself that science wishes to reveal. It was also understood and recognized that this order had some beauty, finality and even intelligence to it which could not but spark our amazement. Where do this beauty, this finality, this order and intelligence come from? It is obvious that a Nominalistic understanding of Being has no credible answer to this question (except that it came about "randomly"; if this is not magical thinking, I do not know what is). It can only be answered forcefully from a Platonic and metaphysical perspective on Being.

It has always been my contention that hermeneutics can help us rediscover something of this Platonic, "essentialist" if one wants, understanding of Being. It is indeed striking that Gadamer ends the last section of *Truth and Method* by renewing the metaphysics of the

transcendentals and of the Beautiful that is a hallmark of the Platonic tradition. Gadamer—unlike Heidegger, it must be noted—clearly saw in it an alternative to Nominalism and its instrumental understanding of language (See Jean Grondin (2022a, 2022b)). What attracted Gadamer in this pre-Nominalistic doctrine was the notion that the Platonic tradition and the Middle Ages saw in the transcendentals, like the Beautiful, universal attributes of Being and not mere constructions of the human mind. These qualities would shine through Being, just as the Beautiful would shine through everything there is and even be that which shines the most (*to ekphanestaton*) in this world. Gadamer obviously thought that this was especially true of language (his main topic in the last part of *Truth and Method*), i.e., that language would somehow pertain to Being and give us a glimpse of its order. However, by renewing this Platonic tradition, Gadamer also revived the possibility of a metaphysics that pretends to sense something about the world order, thus helping us make sense of our lives, which is philosophy's traditional task. Hermeneutics can thus help us understand how something like faith is defensible in this Nominalistic age.

Notes

[1] This text was presented as the first Blanchette-Kennedy Lecture in Philosophy and Religion at Boston College on 27 October 2022.

[2] In Gadamer's words, he felt "*die Unangemessenheit der traditionellen philosophischen Begriffe für das Verständnis des christlichen Glaubens*" (GW 3, 294–95 (GW refers henceforth to the standard edition of Gadamer's *Gesammelte Werke*, 10 volumes, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 1985–1995)), "the inappropriateness of traditional philosophical concepts for the understanding of Christian faith".

[3] See H.-G. Gadamer, GW 3, 298; *Heidegger's Ways*, SUNY Press, 1994, 155: "Now that we know more about Heidegger's first lectures and initial thought experiments (Denkversuche) of the early 1920s, it is clear that his critique of the official Roman Catholic theology of his time pushed him closer and closer to the question of how an appropriate interpretation of the Christian faith could be possible or, to put it in another way, how could one ward off the infiltration (Überfremdung) of the foreign Greek philosophy–which forms the foundation of both the Neo-Scholasticism of the twentieth century and the classical Scholasticism of the Middle Ages–into the Christian message? There was the inspiration he took from the young Luther; there was his admiring emulation of Augustininan thought and especially his engrossment in the eschatological mood fundamental (Grundstimmung) to St. Paul's Epistles. All of this led him to view metaphysics as a type of misunderstanding of the original temporality and historicality experienced in the Christian claim of faith". Gadamer saw in this Heidegger's "most profound driving force", "*der tiefste Antrieb in ihm*" (GW 3, 398): "so sah er sich vor die Lebensfrage gestellt, den Weg der Neuzeit zur Wissenschaft und zur Aufklärung mit christlicher Existenz verbinden zu lernen" (H.-G. Gadamer, *Hermeneutics Between History and Philosophy*, Bloomsbury Academic, 2019, 252, translates: "He, thus, found himself confronting the vital question of learning how to connect the modern way toward science and enlightenment with Christian existence. This was obviously the deepest concern for him.")

[4] Just as Nominalism took on many forms in the Middle Ages, there are also many forms of Nominalism in Contemporary Philosophy. For an almost dizzying overview on the question of Nominalism in Contemporary Philosophy, one can consult the entry "Nominalism in Metaphysics" by Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra (n.d.) in the online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/nominalism-metaphysics/#Uni, accessed on 25 October 2022). On the classical forms of Nominalism, see Paqué (1970) (with a preface by Heidegger). See also the essay collection of modern and medieval authors by Panaccio (2012) and the studies of Panaccio (2020, 1987). See also de Gandillac (1998). One also has to think of Hans BLUMENBERG, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*, Frankfurt a. M., Suhrkamp, 1966 (*The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, MIT Press, 1983). On the challenge of Nominalism for Heidegger, see the Chapter "Comprendre le défi du nominalisme" in Grondin, Jean, 2019, 45–59.

[5] It was also Gadamer's view, who liked to mention the ground-breaking work of Anneliese Meier (1905–1971) who published the seminal five-volume work *Studien zur Naturphilosophie der Spätscholastik* (Rome, 1949–1958), of which Hans Blumenberg wrote an extensive review, "Die Vorbereitung der Neuzeit", in *Philosophische Rundschau* 9 (1961), 81–132, a journal published by Gadamer (see in English: Sargent 1982). Gadamer also referred to the work of the Medieval scholar André de Muralt (GW 8, 402; GW 10, 254). In his more recent work, Jürgen Habermas also sees in Nominalism one of the main presuppositions of Modernity. See the

6. Chapter "Wilhelm von Ockham: Das doppelte Gesicht der nominalistischen Revolution" in his *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie*, Band 1, Berlin, Suhrkamp, 2019, 805–851.

7. On this notion of an order of Being in the Middle Ages, see Blanchette (1992, 2011). See in the same volume the study by Goddu (n.d., pp. 213–33).

8. It was also the conviction of Hans Krämer, *Integrative Ethik*, Frankfurt a. M., Suhrkamp, 1992: "*Die Neuzeit ist definierbar als die Geschichte des Nominalismus und seiner Vermeidungsversuche*" ("Modernity can be defined as the history of Nominalism and the attempts to overcome it").

9. See H.-G. Gadamer, GW 3, 238; *Heidegger's Ways*, 81, modified translation: "If Heidegger understood his own endeavor as a preparation for posing the question of Being anew, then this assumed that the traditional metaphysics, since its beginning with Aristotle, had lost all explicit awareness of the questionableness of the sense of Being. This was a challenge to the self-understanding of a metaphysics which would not recognize itself in its own consequences: in the radical nominalism of the modern age, and in the transformation of the modern concept of science into an all-embracing technology. It was the main concern (*das Hauptanliegen*) of *Sein und Zeit* to urge just such a recognition by metaphysics and its later formations".

10. For this translation, see Cerbone (2021b). In *Being and Time* (§ 61, original German pagination, p. 304), Heidegger tellingly speaks of the *Vorherrschaft des verfallenden Seinsverständnisses (Sein als Vorhandenheit)*, of the *"domination of the 'falling" understanding of Being (Being as Vorhandenheit)*)" which can prevent his readers from understanding the ontological meaning of *Dasein* and of temporality itself (to which § 61 aims to gain access). Heidegger clearly sees here in the prevailing (*Vorherrschaft*) and derivative (*verfallenden*) understanding of Being as mere subsistence (*Vorhandenheit*) one of the major impediments his reawakening of the question of Being aims to overcome. One can argue that this prevailing and derivative understanding of Being is that of Nominalism.

10. Heidegger (1954, p. 30): "Sobald das Unverborgene nicht einmal mehr als Gegenstand, sondern ausschließlich als Bestand den Menschen angeht und der Mensch innerhalb des Gegenstandslosen nur noch Besteller des Bestandes ist,—geht der Mensch am äußersten Rand des Absturzes, dorthin nämlich, wo er selber nur noch als Bestand genommen werden soll". Translated in Heidegger (1977, 308): "As soon as what is unconcealed no longer concern man even as object, but exclusively as standing-reserve (*Bestand*), and man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve, then he comes to the brink of a precipitous fall, that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve".

11. See also Blanchette (1999, pp. 3–19), see especially p. 4: "We could say that Heidegger's deconstruction of metaphysics was a deconstruction of modern metaphysics or ontology and not of the more ancient science of being as being". Oliva Blanchette rightly saw that in understanding "the metaphysical tradition as a homogeneous whole running from Plato to Hegel", Heidegger was "in keeping with Nietzsche's view of Western Philosophy" (p. 13).

12. GW 3, 411 sums up Gadamer's basic conviction: "Nun scheint mir, er [Heidegger] hätte bei Platon mehr finden können". See also the *last* sentence of his *Heraklit-Studien* (GW 7, 82): "Aber hat nicht auch Heidegger recht, wenn er hinter die Metaphysik zurückfragend Heraklit entdeckt, in dem alles noch ineinanderspielt? Hätte er nicht auch Platos Dialektik entdecken können, in der das Spiel dieses Gedankens weitergespielt wird". In other words, Heidegger could have recognized his doctrine of *Aletheia* with its interplay of revealing and concealedness not only in Heraclitus, but also in Plato's dialectics.

13. On this, Grondin, Jean, "Gerhard Krüger et Heidegger. Pour une autre histoire de la métaphysique" in Grondin (2019, pp. 185–210).

14. On the other possible contributions of Gadamer in this regard, see Lawrence (2021, pp. 242–81).

15. See Taylor (2007, p. 25): "One way to put the question that I want to answer here is this: why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in, say, 1500 in our Western society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy, but even inescapable".

16. *A Secular Age*, p. 3.

17. This argument regarding faith was made in Jean Grondin (2010).

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Abstract: This article approaches the religious phenomenon from a perspective that combines the anthropology of the sacred and the science of religions and from which religion can be interpreted as an "architecture of value", that is, as a technique for constructing values and, at the same time, as a "technology of salvation", that is, as a mechanism for individual and group healing. On this theoretical basis, certain aspects of Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra are analysed not as mere rhetorical or polemical devices but as the backbone of a work of a religious nature. The result is a religious interpretation of Nietzsche's great work and, at the same time, a reflection on religious life itself and the scope of post-metaphysical religiosity.

Keywords: religion; Nietzsche; Zarathustra; value; wisdom; technology; salvation

1. Introduction

This article deals with the meaning of Nietzsche's greatest work, emphasising the prophetic and visionary facet of this author rather than his post-theistic and post-humanist dimension, that is, looking for the intimate and pious Nietzsche as opposed to the current image, no less true, on the other hand, of the enfant terrible who philosophises with a hammer. At the same time, this text is the result of an approach that brings together heterogeneous fields, such as the science of religions or anthropology, which, when they converge, seem to situate the problem addressed in that place that the Koran calls barzaj: an intermediate land between what is no longer *the one*, but not yet *the other*—a border zone between the sacred, power, emotions, value, and, in short, everything that makes up what has always been at the centre of Nietzsche's thought: life.

[1]While there is a significant amount of secondary literature on the religious dimension of Nietzsche's philosophy, much of it is based on an incomplete understanding of what constitutes the religious, as I will explain shortly. Even Karl Löwith, who is knowledgeable about contemporary trends in Abrahamic eschatology, fails to interpret the philosophy of Nietzsche's Zarathustra as a genuinely religious practice. Although there are some subtle differences, I will not delve into the ideas of Peter Sloterdijk in this regard, who has devoted several essays to the question, among which I would highlight *On the Improvement of the Good News: Nietzsche's Fifth Gospel* (Sloterdijk [2000] 2005). Indeed, there are some monographs (I am thinking of older studies such as Fouillée's or recent ones such as Medrano Ezquerro's (2014, 2016)) that do not limit themselves to posing the relationship between Nietzsche and religion in exclusively critical terms but also dare to address its problematic aspects, aspects that have to do with the fact that, on the Nietzschean battlefield against traditional religion and morality, the flowers of an unforeseen spirituality sprout from time to time: a spirituality that rises precisely against the sacrilegious temptation of the transmundane, and which, on closer inspection, illuminates surprising aspects of the very tradition it claims to combat.

Another aspect that needs to be clarified at the outset is the need to distinguish carefully between two types of religious readings of Nietzsche's work based on two absolutely

opposite conceptions of religion itself. The first of these is based on a concept of religion as a *cognitive fact*, whose origins can be traced back to early evolutionary anthropologists, such as Tylor, and who understand religion first and foremost as a form of knowledge or as a set of speech acts. In other words, religion would fundamentally consist of a certain stance towards reality and the very corpus of affirmations that would derive from this stance. Thus, for example, when Vattimo makes his *aggiornamento* of Christianity as a religion of the emptying of God in order to make it coincide with his vindication of the Nietzschean-Heideggerian legacy (Vattimo 1996), he is resolutely situated in this reading. The first concept understands religion as a set of theses about the divine. This is also the context for the important analyses of Andreas Urs Sommer, who sees in the slogan "Dionysus against the crucified" an attempt to establish "Nietzsche's religious alternatives to Christianity" (Sommer 2006, p. 47).

The second approach, however, is based on a concept of religion as a *liturgical event*, i.e., as a set of practices aimed at dealing with the sacred. In this case, religion is understood as a praxis of valuing, preserving and realising the divine. This is the framework for the studies of Valero Sánchez, who distinguishes "religiosity" as humankind's admiration for that which amazes it as opposed to religion as a dogmatic and doctrinal body, a distinction he finally dispenses with in order to speak of "Nietzschean religion" (Valero Sánchez 2019, p. 209). Similarly, Martin Chicolino has ventured to look for the "numinous" aspect of the experience of power in Zarathustra (Chicolino 2012). Particularly important are the contributions of Valadier (2006), who recognises the presence of the divine in Nietzsche's thought: the unnamable sacred, evocable through images, of erotic madness, of celebration (Ávila 2001), of the beauty and sublimity of the world, purely contemplated. Hence the importance of: "not clinging to Dionysus as such, nor researching in erudite encyclopaedias. One could say, therefore, 'dear chance', personal providence that plays with us, beautiful chaos of the world, infinite fire, abysmal and unfathomable depth, Will to power identified with life and the real, to cite the various names found throughout the texts and thrown as if carelessly, like someone throwing stones on a path, but here rather to confuse than to lead to a sure term" (Valadier 2010, p. 229). This is also the starting point of the present study.

First of all, it is worth remembering, once again, that Nietzsche himself has declared his magnum opus to be a "fifth Gospel" and a "sacred book" (Letters to Ernst Schmeitzner and Malvida von Meysenburg, in Sloterdijk [2000] 2005, pp. 29–30)[2]. From this statement, it is possible to focus the discourse in the following pages on three questions: firstly, the possibility of reading Nietzsche as a religious thinker, that is, as a thinker in whom the old therapeutic concern of traditional wisdom, in which knowledge is linked to personal salvation and to the construction of an emotional and axiological edifice, takes centre stage; secondly, the reflection on what a religion is, what is *specifically religious* in that tangle of activities that we call "religion"; and thirdly, what Nietzsche, from the pages of his *Zarathustra*, intends to say to the humanity of the future, that is, to elucidate the message itself, the untimely "good news" that Nietzsche's Zarathustra brings, this last part being merely sketched, pending further development.

2. Value Architecture

Understanding any cultural fact is a titanic undertaking, an endeavour reminiscent of the character played by Ron Perlman in Annaud's film *Quest for Fire*: a man whose harvested fruits are falling off as he strives to gather new ones. The intricacy of this subject arises from the fact that cultural phenomena often operate on multiple significant levels that can vary greatly. That is to say: a cultural fact is a phenomenon of individual consciousness as well as a social reality and a historical moment of human rationality. Of all cultural facts, religion is perhaps the one that moves in the most confusing way between spheres that go beyond its boundaries, that overflow it and call it into question again and again. All this becomes even more problematic if we stop to think about the difficulty of comparing religious forms that are distant from each other in space and time. We call "religion", then, political structures such as the churches, magical practices such as shamanism, moral and

civic prescriptions such as those contained in the Talmud, literary manifestations such as mysticism, practices of bodily sacrifice such as those of the *sadhus* or Hindu ascetics, ecstatic dances such as the Sufi *hadra*, and so on. This is the well-known reproach made to classical anthropologists such as Tylor and Frazer: how could one call "religion", without more, a variety of events that could be considered—with equal justice—law, cultural exchange, art, or simple symbolic expressions of sociability?

Additionally peculiar to the complexity of the religious phenomenon is that many of the best reflections on it have come either from the realm of theological proselytism or from the realm of philosophical criticism. Peculiar and, to some extent, arbitrary because if it is true that *truth* is an essential issue in religious rhetoric, it is no less true that religion itself cannot be reduced to a simple set of statements about reality. It is not the affirmation or denial of certain facts that constitutes the essence of religious life. In this sense, much of Nietzsche's thought is an example of a polemical approach to religion. It is on these margins that the long tradition moves, on the critical side, from Lucretius to Dawkins, and on the apologetic side, from St. Justin to Francis S. Collins. Perhaps this observation— that of being a phenomenon always imprisoned by polemical passion—gives us a clue about the peculiarity of the religious fact: that it is always and at all times linked to the question of value, that in religion everything that has value for humanity, including itself, is compromised.

Moreover, in this matter, as in so many others, the old polemic of nominalism is repeated. In fact, the rhetoric of much contemporary religious polemicism is permeated by a repeated *nominalist dispute*. We find, on the one hand, the old universalists: they ask what a religion is, answer with a general characterisation and from there disregard, applying Procrusteanism, all possible religious manifestations that do not meet their definition. On the other hand, and opposite to these, the old nominalists insist on pointing out that each thing is each thing, that the individual is essentially different from any other, and, from such useless obviousness, they make all science impossible. The reality, however, is that there are trees because the roots, trunks and leaves are repeated; there is green because there is something between blue and yellow; there are religions because men do and say things which are distinct from philosophy and wisdom; all this is as real as that certain bushes look like trees, that there is blue-green and yellow-green and that certain religions look like philosophies or wisdom. Understanding is only possible in a lucid movement within this confusion. This is a truism, and perhaps, for this reason, it is often overlooked. There is religion where there is a community that believes in certain supernatural entities and practices certain rites. However, there is also religion in the hermit who turns away from all Church, in the Buddhist who seeks a path of purification, and in the mystic who places himself above or beyond particular beliefs and dogmas. There is a philological religion of the Book or of books, just as there is a religion of those who write only in the sand.

Therefore, rational, dogmatic and even liturgical contents differ to the extent that— speaking ontologically, not historically—they are *derived* contents. Religion is not primarily a discourse on divinity but an evaluation of the divine. In English, as in other languages, the word "believer" is used to designate one who practices a religion, which confuses the problem tremendously because the religious life itself, which is given in this "believer" as an emotional and evaluative state, is not reduced to "holding certain judgments to be true". This would be a very restrictive interpretation of religious life, which would put it on the same level as any other belief, mistaken or not, and which, by the way, comes from that 19th-century anthropology of religion that wanted to interpret religion as a (failed) mode of knowledge. Max Scheler said that values are not but are worth. The same could be said of divinity since it is the very source of value and is configured in the very act of valuing. It is the *imaginary place* where the highest (the sacred) is arranged as a support for the lowest (the profane). What emerges between religious differences is, then, a certain emotional disposition, a vertebration of human emotions with respect to the value of things. Valuation is emotional: it is in itself the determination of what provokes admiration, fear, veneration, and power. Religion is, in short, an emotional architecture within which human beings

construct the meaning of the world and the value of things. How that architecture takes shape will depend on many factors, but what is clear is that it will inevitably determine people's self-consciousness: the specific way in which human beings have understood themselves as members of a totemic clan, as followers of a moral decalogue, as "children of God" or as seekers of a sacred intimacy.

Of course, the attempt to define religion in terms of belief in God or gods has long since been abandoned, although the reason for this abandonment has usually been that such a definition was theologically biased, rationalising or too restrictive (Pals 2006). However, there is, as we noted earlier, a further reason for abandoning a theological-theoretical definition of religion: belief, that is, the affirmation of certain judgements about human or divine nature, does not in itself constitute the fundamental practice of religious life, not even in those religions with a highly developed dogmatic body. Nietzsche himself states this about Christ: "The whole life of the Redeemer was nothing else but this *practice*" (Nietzsche [1888] 2016, p. 733), not the belief in an *afterlife* but the practice of a life free of guilt and resentment. To be religious is not to assert a set of theses, not to issue propositions about a supernatural reality. To be religious is an emotional state from which a specific mode of evaluation is articulated. It is not the reality of the world that is at stake, but something much more important: the structure of value, the configuration of what is to be valuable for humankind. Because there is an architecture of value, an awareness of "us" and "them", an image of belonging, as well as a world view in which up and down, high and low, heaven and hell, angels and demons, and good and evil are drawn.

This interpretation of religion as an architecture of value is not alien to certain contemporary approaches to the problem. Thus, for example, Jim Stone sees religion as "a system of practices rationalised by beliefs according to which the practices situate the practitioner in a relation of value to the supramundane reality" (Stone 2001, p. 183). Nevertheless, even if we go back to the classical theorists of religion, we find the same idea, perhaps not always explicitly developed. Durkheim's explanation of the totem as a symbolisation of the "we" is well known, for example. However, the "we" is totemised in a context in which the collectivity must be strongly protected as a guarantee of life. It is its value that totemises collectivity. Such a characteristic cannot simply be extrapolated to contexts of social dissolution such as late Hellenism, the late Middle Ages in Central Europe or the present day, where it is common to find expressions of religious life that are rather inward-looking, if not openly anti-social. For his part—to continue with the classics—Mircea Eliade made famous the idea that religion was, above all, the erection of a sacred time and space (Eliade [1957] 1998), and Rudolf Otto interpreted it dispensing with moral and rational categories, focusing on what he called "the numinous" (Otto [1925] 1985).

Indeed, it was Eliade himself who began his famous work on *The Myth of the Eternal Return* by taking this very fact into consideration, namely that religion stands in the context of the symbolic activity of men who try to give value to a reality devoid of value (Eliade 2001, p. 7). If we combine both definitions, religion would constitute a valuational division of space and time by means of an experience of that which "overwhelms". In the first act of veneration is thus the recognition of the hierarchical nature of things. Therefore, the opposite of religion is not unbelief but indifference. What both Eliade and Otto are saying is that religion establishes a boundary between value and disvalue: space and time are rationalised only insofar as they erect boundaries beyond which there is neither space nor time but nature, darkness, chaos or divinity. The origin of value places us at its frontier, at its margins: on the other side is the jungle, that is, what is not yet language, not yet reason, not yet humanity. Human beings know what they are; they reach their place in the cosmos by means of this symbolic construction of value. Berger and Luckmann say something interesting in this respect: "Identity is definitively legitimised by placing it in the context of a symbolic universe. Mythologically speaking, the "real" name of the individual is the one given to him by his God. In this way, he can know that he "is himself", subjecting his own identity to a cosmic reality, protected both from the contingencies of socialisation and from the maleficent self-transformations of marginal experience. Even if his neighbour does not

know who he is, and even if he himself ignores himself in his anxieties, the individual can be sure that his 'real self' is a real entity in a definitely real universe" (Berger and Luckman [1968] 2003, p. 128).

The religious architecture of value is the backbone of the gigantic scheme of human emotions. Religion is where values are moulded, and consequently, it shapes the particular way in which individuals and societies come to embrace or reject love and hate. Thus, at the core of religious life are three mutually dependent realities: love, identity, and value. To be religious is to respect the sacred: this is what piety is all about. The sacred is, at the same time, that which deserves to be loved and that which makes us what we are. As Max Scheler says, "He who possesses the *ordo amoris* of a man possesses the man" (Scheler [1933] 1996, p. 27).

If religion is an architecture of value, in what sense can Zarathustra's philosophy be said to be "religious"? Is it an arbitrary technique or rather a discovery? Indeed, Nietzsche's thought seems to oscillate between an uncompromising vindication of *true-life* values and a relativisation of them that would derive from the very correlation between knowledge and the will to power. Thus, Scarlett Marton argues that values are a construction and, as such, have a history: "Understanding the transvaluation of all values as a work analogous to that of lawgivers, [Nietzsche] thinks that, in order to do so, it will be necessary to conceive of man in another way" (Marton 2016, p. 132). However, in this reading, it gives the impression that transvaluation operates in a vacuum, that it is an artistic creation made in thin air. In other words, in the interpretations of Nietzsche where the relativism of this author is accentuated, it gives the impression that the transvaluation had no other foundation than the mere will to overcome values perceived as outdated and that the new values had no greater *raison d'être* than the old ones (Sánchez Meca 2013). This reading is evidently possible if we stick to a large number of Nietzsche's texts, and it is, in fact, the usual one among the great scholars of Nietzsche. However, if we go deeper into this ambiguity, we could nevertheless return to the perplexity already shown by Max Scheler and note that if "the error" of Western morality has been to oppose nature and culture, then "the right thing" would be a morality where they do not oppose each other. In other words, there is a healthy relationship between human beings and reality, a relationship that must be reflected in culture. Therefore, there are true values—or, if the adjective is too metaphysical—"more adequate" than others, closer to the Earth and to health.

According to this reading, there is a very specific motive for transvaluation: "religious" respect for a life that is perceived as violated. Without such respect, transvaluation would effectively be an exercise in pure arbitrariness. In fact, Marton further explains that: "It is necessary to combat these values in order to bring forth others. As a creature and creator for himself, the superman will cherish values that will be in consonance with the Earth, with life, with the body" (Marton 2016, p. 133). However, precisely from this reasoning, it should be deduced that these values are the "authentic" values, which had been devalued by a resentful *distortion* of reality. Therefore, the transvaluation could not be conceived, without further ado, "as a work analogous to that of legislators", but rather to that of the founders of religious systems on the basis of a valuational experience of *the real*.

3. Salvation Technology

Religion, in effect, constructs values, and there is nothing strange about the fact that, in this exercise, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish it from other forms of spiritual life. The human being needs to know what is worthy of esteem: within himself and outside himself. The question of religious demarcation thus involves problematising the differences between religion and other expressions of spirituality, and there is nothing special about this: every universal reality has fuzzy margins. Religion is contaminated by sociability, art, wisdom and science, and it is not difficult to think that the great dogmatic systems we know today are but the complex development of an originally simple feature: the human creation of value. Valuing allows us to organise the itinerary of our own existence, pointing to what is important and what is not, what is worth pursuing and what is to be

avoided at all costs, what distinguishes us from beasts and demons and ensures our health. The question of value is the religious question par excellence. It is also the philosophical question par excellence, the one that stirred the spirit of the old pre-Socratics, the one that made Anaximander conceive of existence as the repayment of an original debt. For if there is a question of value, it is because there is also an experience of disvalue, of discontent, of degradation, and it is here that religion is configured as a way of restoring lost value. Asceticism is the technology of the restoration of value, just as ritual is the technology of its preservation. The architecture of value is, in any case, linked to a technology of salvation.

To elaborate on this point, I would like to explore some concepts put forward by Foucault when he set out to investigate the conditions in which the genesis and development of *epimeleia heautou* ("self-care") takes place in the archaic Greek world because they illuminate this relationship between religion, wisdom and value. Religious life—at least in historical religions—is hardly comprehensible without the emergence of the subject as a problem for himself: the human being perceives himself in a state of fallenness in relation to which religion becomes a salvific technique. The human being is, in his present condition, degraded, sick, lost, fallen, and far from value; therefore, the memory of a sacred value also demands its restoration, its return. This is why religious myths are often the narration of an exodus and a journey.

Foucault recalls how this concept of *epimeleia heautou* is linked to that of *gnothi seauton* (know thyself) in the character of Socrates. Socrates is basically telling the Athenian citizens that they are concerned with many things but not with themselves (Foucault [1982] 2005, pp. 18–21), and this is so because the majority of humanity is numb, blind, and alienated from itself. Man finds himself in that state to describe which Plato had to create the fabulous allegory of the cave. Indeed, man's starting point is in the darkness and chains of an underworld. In Epicurus, we also find the term *therapeuein*, a verb that refers to medical care, but also to the service provided by a servant to his master, and even to the divine service proper to religious worship (Foucault [1982] 2005, pp. 22–23). It is also the verb used by Luke (Lk. 9:1–6) to refer to Christ's healing power, together with authority over demons. Healing power and subduing demonic evil are two aspects of the same divine power (*dynamis*) and authority (*exousia*). There is indeed something of this, in that self-care must be a technique of repairing something sick or damaged, but also a service to oneself that has a religious character, as a worship of the true divine being that dwells within man. I will come back to this. The point is that Foucault argues that this religious or spiritual dimension of self-care was eclipsed by what he calls—very much in quotation marks—the "Cartesian moment", that is, the progressive replacement of a living, emotional, religious subject by a pure subject of rational knowledge, or what we could already call in a Nietzschean way—also with all the inverted commas—the "triumph of the Apollonian dimension of existence".

This practice of self-care, which we find in religions, also forms the axis of philosophical practice as a mode of access to truth. "Spirituality", in the sense that Foucault gives to this word, postulates that access to truth is impossible for the subject unless he goes through a series of practices whose aim is, so to speak, his self-dissolution, or at least his reconversion. Man must change his being in order to become a possible receptacle of truth. Another term from the Gospel illuminates this idea: *metanoia*. It is the word usually translated as "repentance" or "conversion", but what its root teaches us is unequivocal: it is necessary to change one's thinking, to go beyond what we have believed up to now, in order to attain salvation.

It is only after some time that academic "philosophy" transforms this practice, making the conditions of access to truth have more to do with logical rules, procedures, methods, and extrinsic conditions, than with the internal conditions of the subject. We could say that philosophy truly separates itself from religion when it abandons self-care to become a method of aseptic knowledge, which has nothing to do with the transformation of the person and his or her salvation. In fact, Foucault sees in 19th-century philosophy an attempt to recover spirituality in the face of theology, that is, a type of thought that assumes

the question of self-care as a condition of the possibility of truth. Thus, for example, in psychoanalysis, where the belief reappears that access to truth demands a transformation of the subject and that, conversely, this access to truth gives rise, in a just correspondence, to a modification of the subject's being (Foucault [1982] 2005, pp. 40–41). This is certainly true of Nietzsche's work, and it is in line with this that we can make the aim of the present essay somewhat more concrete: to approach Nietzsche's philosophy, especially that contained in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, as an attempt to reconstruct wisdom as self-care, that is, as religion.

Evidently, this religious wisdom, this self-care that we find in Nietzsche's philosophy, is not the same as what we find in traditional ascetic expressions. Its fundamental inspiration lies in the Greek world, in archaic spiritual forms, from which Pauline ascetic morality would be a degeneration. Specifically, the process of transformation experienced and preached by Nietzsche's Zarathustra would be inspired by the *katharmoi* of Empedocles (Babich 2020). In detailing the characteristics of Greek philosophical asceticism, Foucault expressly points out the differences with respect to Christian asceticism: "First, in this philosophical asceticism (. . .) the ultimate goal is obviously not the renunciation of self. On the contrary, the aim is to postulate oneself, and in the most explicit, strongest, most continuous, and most obstinate way possible, as the end of one's own existence. Second (. . .) it is a matter of constituting for oneself an equipment, a defence equipment for the possible events of life. And this is what the Greeks called *paraskeue*. The function of asceticism is to constitute a *paraskeue* [so that] the subject constitutes itself. Thirdly, it seems to me that this philosophical asceticism, this asceticism of the practice of the self, does not have as its principle the subjection of the individual to the law. Its principle is to bind the individual to the truth" (Foucault [1982] 2005, p. 310).

However, these differences, while real, are not as marked as Foucault and Nietzsche themselves believe, for Nietzsche's struggle against religious tradition often turns into an unsuspected re-encounter with it. Nietzsche's (otherwise obvious) anti-religious character is often emphasised in the context of the genealogical nature of his thought. Thus, for example, in order to underline the difference between his philosophy and that of Levinas, William Large (2004) insists on the more genealogical texts and underlines Nietzsche's critique of religion as an expression of a sociohistorical way of valuing, which places him in contrast to Levinas's ethical reduction to immanence. However, this exposition omits precisely those texts of *Zarathustra* in which valuation takes on a religious slant, such as the episode of the Feast of the ass, where the superior men rediscover a post-metaphysical liturgy and make Zarathustra himself see the meaning of the rite that has as its object the "kingdom of the earth" and in which the boundaries between the individual and the community are blurred (Buñuel Fanconi 2019, p. 112)[3].

The human being is a problem for himself because he does not know his value and his position in the world. He requires an emotional reference system that can also serve as a framework for his beliefs because that which has value is also that which provokes love, in the same way, that disvalue has hate as its emotional expression. Learning to value is learning to love and to hate. That which is of value will be the object of veneration and adoration. The most holy and numinous is thus erected as the symbolic reference of that which man, in an arbitrary way, delimits as liturgical: the sacred animal versus the rest of nature, ceremony versus everyday life, the space of the temple versus the space of the city, festive time versus natural time, the priestly caste versus the people. Religion is the construction of value and, with it, of hierarchy. Paul Claudel used to say that "He who admires is always right". He is right who contemplates the order of things in an affirmative way. Life, meaning, and reality come from contact with what is "above" in the privileged position: the imaginary place where the gods dwell or the vital force (*wakan*) that orders the cosmos. For this reason, philosophy was originally understood as a liturgical, sacred and sacrificial effort, as an ascetic system of approaching the privileged order, the Platonic sunlight. In Foucault's words: "This is what constitutes the very practice of philosophy and its reality: that the philosopher has to cohabit with it. *Synousía*: cohabitation. *Syzén: to* live with. And, Plato goes on to say, by dint of *synousia*, by dint of *syzen*, what will happen?

The soul will be illuminated, a little in the way a light is lit (*phos*; the translation says "a flash of lightning"), that is to say, as a lamp is lit in contact with fire, until the lamp of the soul is lit or until the lamp is lit as a soul: in that aspect, and in that way, philosophy will effectively find its reality. (. . .) Philosophy will live in this way, in the form of cohabitation, of the light that is transmitted and kindled, of the light that is nourished by the soul itself" (Foucault [1983] 2008, p. 218).

For ancient thinkers, access to truth was inextricably intertwined with certain internal conditions of the subject, so science and asceticism were two aspects of the same process. Sensible reality points to an intelligible world on the condition that the mind has been freed from the blindness of cavernous darkness. The *katharmoi*, the purifications, are the beginning of wisdom and piety at the same time. The eyes have to hurt in order to see the light for the first time. Plato does not simply speak of the theoretical difficulty of science but of the suffering it generates in terms of self-esteem, social esteem, and shock. Nietzsche receives—or, rather, rescues—this vision of knowledge as a state that is *conquered by* dint of suffering. In his philosophy, suffering has to do with the assumption of emptiness, a desert of value that our philosopher, as the privileged depositary of a historical destiny (that of nihilism), will feel compelled to inhabit. "We are of the opinion," said Nietzsche in 1886, "that harshness, violence, slavery, dangers in the street and in the heart, concealment, stoicism, the art of temptation and devilry of every kind, that everything that is evil, terrible, tyrannical, everything that is animalistic and serpentine in the human being serves the species "man" as well as its opposite" (Nietzsche [1886] 2016, p. 327). By taking on suffering, loneliness, and incomprehension, Nietzsche feels himself to be the bearer of a message that he receives from history and that he must pass on to a future that *is yet to come*. As Dorian Astor says, "Man has no chance to overcome the anxiety of the present in the horizontality of de-spiritualised asceticism" (Astor 2018, p. 485). Delving into this surprising verticality, Hadot expressly states that Nietzsche has practised philosophy according to the ancient model of philosophical life as a quest for a "cosmic consciousness" that goes beyond the "self-care" highlighted by Foucault (Hadot 2006).

So far, I have tried to elaborate a tentative definition of religion that includes ritual as a technique of "value preservation" and asceticism as a technique of "value recovery". This definition brings together concepts from a long tradition in the anthropology of religion, starting with Durkheim and leading to the work of some contemporary authors, such as Jim Stone, via the classics Eliade and Otto. According to this tradition, the specificity of religious life has less to do with linguistically and conceptually formulable beliefs than with the experience of a sacred reality that is precisely defined by its relation of value to the profane. Accordingly, if the ascetic attempts to purify his inner self of a "fallen" state, he does so because he perceives his present state as "disvaluable". For its part, ritual, in its repetitive symbolic action, would serve to keep the religious man in a "state of grace", i.e., in connection with the sacred or with the valuable dimension of his own being. In the following section, I would like to suggest, through these ideas and against the background of his own cultural tradition, a specifically religious reading of Nietzsche's great work. Nietzsche's philosophy can be described as a technology of salvation that involves the restoration of lost values, the recovery of an original message lost to history, a prophetic mission, the reevaluation of all values, the proclamation of good news, the reconstruction of inner health, and a contemplative view of the world.

4. "A Savage Wisdom": From Romantic Mythology to Zarathustra's Religion

Paul Loeb, a noted specialist in Nietzsche's work, alerts us to an obvious chronological anomaly in Nietzsche's thought: while late works are usually presented by their authors as additions, nuances or culmination of earlier works, the fact is that our philosopher insists time and again that his fundamental work is *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (written between 1883 and 1885) while books such as *Beyond Good and Evil* (Nietzsche [1886] 2016) or *Genealogy of Morals* (Nietzsche [1887] 2016) should be understood as preparatory texts for his great work (Loeb 2010). It is, therefore, necessary to take very seriously the evidence that *Zarathustra*

goes beyond anything Nietzsche has been able to say before (and since!). It is more profound in its depths, more far-reaching, because it seeks to place itself in the history of the spirit, on the same level as the Gospels or the Vedas. The wisdom that *Zarathustra* teaches in its pages is, in his own words, *a savage wisdom*. As self-care, as a religion that seeks salvation (i.e., inner health as an agreement of the self with the value of reality), *Zarathustra*'s good news is announced as "wild". What does this expression mean? Not, of course, what Eugenio Trías limits to the archaic age of religions as the personification of the telluric powers of nature (Trías 1996, pp. 880–81). The term here refers to a polemic that took place in the last years of the eighteenth century, which was to permeate all the thought of the following century, and which occupies an important place in the origins of the crisis of modernity. In *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (Schiller [1795] 2004), Schiller famously distinguished between two types of human beings: the *barbarian*, permanently subjected to the criterion of reason, incapable of being guided by impulses which he strives to repress, logical, inflexible, absorbed by the cultural dimension of existence; and in contrast, the *savage*, unaware of rationality, rules, standards of conduct, moral norms, in short: culture. It is not difficult to see here a distant antecedent of the Nietzschean division between an Apollonian and a Dionysian dimension of existence. Modern culture is a culture that enshrines barbarism, that is, the despotic predominance of reason over any other dimension of existence.

Indeed, there are numerous attempts to link Nietzsche to early German Romanticism and, more generally, to the various cultural movements that emerged in late 18th-century Central Europe in reaction to an excessively rationalising and moralistic Enlightenment. As Ansgar Maria Hoff—and, before him, Ernst Behler—have shown, it is clear that early Romanticism is not affected, without further qualification, by Nietzsche's constant polemic against what he calls "Romanticism" (Hoff 2002). However, this linkage is usually made— and Hoff himself does so—only in terms of its aesthetic *pathos*: the use of the fragment and the aphorism, the role of art as a healer of culture, and so on, sometimes, as Valero Sánchez (2019) does, to refer us to the idealised relationship of both with Greek morality. In reality, the link is deeper: what is glimpsed in German thought at the end of the 18th century is the evidence that European history has led to a disintegrated, split culture in which the forces of man are pitted against each other and where the necessary link between man and nature is fatally broken, how such a split is expressly thematised in Schiller but also in Novalis and Schlegel, who conceive of their own intellectual activity as an attempt to reconnect man with nature and to think of him as part of it. It is interesting, in this respect, that the Romantic approach to nature takes place in the context of the controversy about pantheism that arose in Germany around Lessing's and Jacobi's reading of Spinoza. Spinoza is indeed the inspirer of an attempt to think the totality of the real in a non-dualistic way, and Nietzsche himself acknowledges his legacy when in a letter of 30 July 1881, he confesses to Franz Overbeck to have discovered in Spinoza an enormous precursor of his own doctrine (quoted by Gawoll 2001, p. 44).

The Romantic—and Nietzschean—approach to nature is animated by the conscious desire not to let human cultural constructions have the last word and to make room for the unfathomable, amoral, unpredictable and violent dimension of existence. It is the yearning for truth in ruins, a clearing in the thicket of human meaning, for a primordial force before which all discourse reveals itself to be superstition and vanity. Surely the two artists who best reflect this spirit are Turner and Caspar D. Friedrich. The German, because of the collection of Romantic themes that run through his paintings: the ruins of old temples in the middle of the forest, the walker standing on a rock in the mist, the stillness of the sea and the monk who contemplates it; The Englishman, because of that Dionysian fury that envelops and destroys all human work, that fury that goes beyond themes (the theme, for example, of the tempest) and becomes a trace, the very form of reality. In Nietzsche's *Zarathustra,* there is something of Turner and Friedrich: something of the silent contemplation of nature alongside the violent stroke of time and fate.

The most visible religious aspect of the Romantic spirit is precisely this determination not to give in to the idolatrous temptation of culture. The liturgical, ritual praxis of religion

is—as we saw earlier—a mode of restitution and conservation of value, and it is true that Nietzsche says that this is not an objective or metaphysical reality but that "it is by valuing that value appears" (Nietzsche [1891] 2016, p. 105). It is also true that, when analysing the way in which different axiological systems have historically been forged, Nietzsche's idea that there is a healthy way of valuing versus an unhealthy way emerges. That is to say; there is what deserves to be valued and what does not. What deserves it is life; what does not deserve it is every form of negation of life, every substitute for it, every illusion created by the force of affirming characteristics contrary to life. It is good and valuable to remain faithful to the earth and to the meaning of the earth (Nietzsche [1891] 2016, p. 73). Good is that which increases human being's natural forces, that which awakens in him a deep desire to live, to be more of what he is, to exist more intensely, to set obstacles to overcome, to grow, to conquer and to dominate. "What is good? -you ask. Good is to be brave" (Nietzsche [1891] 2016, p. 65). Life is the savage unfolding of a struggle for survival, understanding this word in a non-biological way: super-living, living above life, living upwards. Life is the only real thing, and its law is the only law. The heart of the Earth, *Zarathustra* says, is made of gold. That is where the value and the measure of all values lie.

In short, Nietzsche shares with early German Romanticism the observation of a broken spiritual order in history. The link between man and the Earth is an original state in relation to which what follows is a *fall*. The rupture of this bond takes place in the transition from archaic Greece to classical Greece, and Nietzsche describes it, as is well known, in *The Birth of Tragedy* (Nietzsche [1872] 2011). The Apollonian, the ordered and rational dimension of existence, becomes—at the hand of Socrates and Plato—its guiding principle, while the Dionysian, the inebriated, impulsive, contradictory dimension of life, undergoes a process of devaluation. *Zarathustra*'s wild wisdom implies, then, the re-encounter with the divinity of Dionysus, which disappeared—the *flight of the gods*, another Romantic cliché—from the history of Europe by the fatal Socratic-Christian event. This reunion runs through Nietzsche's work from beginning to end, for it appears expressly in *The Birth of Tragedy*: "Tragedy stands in the midst of this superabundance of life, suffering and pleasure, in sublime ecstasy, and listens to a distant melancholy song—it speaks of the mothers of being, whose names are: illusion, will and sorrow. -Yes, my friends, believe with me in the Dionysian life and in the rebirth of tragedy. The time of the Socratic human being has passed" (Nietzsche [1872] 2011, p. 421). Nietzsche thus knocks at the door of the conscience of modernity, where the destructive fire of a culture that insists on not recognising itself in nature, that forces individuals to prioritise within themselves the demands of an antivital morality and that vainly believes in the superiority of the ethical order over instinct, the body and desire, lives on.

True piety, then, consists in restoring the truly sacred to its place. The place of the sacred is the highest, and the highest is the bottom of the Earth: there from where man's natural forces, his creative power, emanate. The sacred must be elevated from the valley of the heavens and the underworld to the highest mountains of the earth, where the footsteps of the prophet Zarathustra are lost. Nietzsche's rejection of religion is thus a moment of his own religiosity, of the veneration of the sanctity of life. This is also a common gesture in religion: Christianity conceives itself as the authentic message of the Abrahamic faith eclipsed by Pharisaism. Protestantism, on the other hand, presents itself as a return to the spirit of Christianity hidden under idolatry and immorality. However, pietism also understands that the religion of the heart must be reborn in the face of the desert of faith which is the Protestant reduction of faith to philology. The same is true of Islam and of any historical religion. In this sense, Nietzsche only advances the religious reunion with a non-idolatrous veneration, a piety of love and truth. This ambivalence of his philosophy—the materialistic critique of religion, linked to the idealised exaltation of a lost spiritual paradise—also appears very early on in a text as uncompromising as *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*. The return of Dionysus, the god of the Earth and earthly drives, configures the eschatological *pathos* of *Zarathustra*'s message: the reunion with life, promised by the glorious coming of a dancing god.

5. Conclusions

If piety can be understood as respect for the rightful place of the sacred and, at the same time, as a challenge to the idolatrous character of all that seeks to usurp that place, then it is easy to perceive in *Zarathustra* how that piety is clothed in the motifs of the Judeo-Christian tradition: resentment would come to constitute the original sin against which the prophet's preaching rises; Greek morality would constitute the lost paradise from which humanity has been cast out; the doctrine of the *Übermensch* would not be a transhumanist prefiguration (García-Granero 2020, p. 42), but the response to the eschatological need for a future object for hope; and the "sense of the earth" would come to occupy the role of the sacred itself, that which has been neglected by the erratic march of a humanity that must be brought back to its centre. It is beyond the scope of this study to develop each of these aspects. Suffice it to point out that the architecture of value that Nietzsche conceives beyond the act of transvaluation—that is, the erection of a profane/sacred division with respect to the value of reality—is, here too, accompanied by a technology of salvation that brings Nietzsche's philosophical thought back into that tradition, masterfully described by Foucault, which makes thinking itself a form of restoration of value, that is, of religion.

Notes

[1] Another great connoisseur of Nietzsche's work, Andreas Urs Sommer, speaks of the characters in the work as "literary artifices" that allow the philosopher a certain distance that "dispenses him as the author from taking ultimate positions" (Sommer 2006, p. 50), which would prevent a simple identification between Nietzsche and the protagonist of his great work. In contrast to this position, it seems that *Zarathustra* becomes the spokesman for a series of ideas (criticism of resentment, antivital morality, the "transmundane", the vindication of the overman, the revelation of the eternal return, etc.) that are defended by Nietzsche himself in other works (before and after this one), so that it is not risky to conclude that *Zarathustra* pre-eminently embodies the role of Nietzsche's spokesman, in a prophetic and mythical context that projects him beyond his role as a "mere" thinker. This does not, of course, prevent this role from being fulfilled, eventually and with respect to certain specific aspects, by other characters in the work.

[2] In this respect, Volker Gerhardt's interpretation is complex, for, on the one hand, he mentions Nietzsche's claim to make *Zarathustra* a New Gospel or a Bible of the future. Furthermore, he refers to the fact that Nietzsche himself describes the inspiration of his work within the genre of Revelation. After this acknowledgement, however, the analysis immediately shifts its focus from an interpretation of *Zarathustra*'s religion as a liturgical fact to an interpretation of it as a cognitive fact (Gerhardt 2002, p. 34 ff.).

[3] Sánchez Meca notes that the basis of a transvaluation is to be found in a construction that necessarily passes as sacred for the community. "Only by virtue of the reference to the sacred (narratively created by the myth), the value or custom is socially justified" (Sánchez Meca 2005, p. 132). It is precisely this necessity that explains the rediscovery of liturgy in the Feast of the ass and, indeed, the entire mythological character of *Zarathustra*.

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Article

BLESSING: Exploring the Religious, Anthropological and Ethical Meaning

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Abstract: The point of departure for this essay, which reflects on the religious, anthropological and ethical meaning of the act of blessing, is the multifaceted tradition of all kinds of blessings in the Catholic faith community, both in a sacramental and non-sacramental context. To properly understand the act of blessing, it is necessary to outline the existential and religious background of the blessing as an experience and condition. Starting from the general biblical background of blessing as an earthly reality, attention is paid to the transition from the implicit to the explicit religious meaning of blessing as a gift. Subsequently, the act of blessing in its bi-dimensional modality, namely as word and gesture, receives the necessary attention. This is accomplished by a shift from a theological to a philosophical understanding; this is anthropological and existential understanding of blessing. First, the specificity of the blessing as a language event is examined. Then, the bodily and possibly material form of the act of blessing is explored phenomenologically. Thus, it will appear that what is specifically Christian also has universal significance, is literally "catholic", that is, "kat' holon", meaningful "for everyone". Last but not least, consideration is given to the "power" of the act of blessing, both its "founding" power and the risk of magical derailment.

Keywords: being blessed; act of blessing; speech act; performative language; expressivity; bodiliness; power of blessing; magical derailment; phenomenology; ethics

1. Multifaceted Tradition of Blessings

At a first glance, it becomes clear that the Catholic faith community knows the practice of all kinds of blessings. This is fully reflected in "De benedictionibus" (1984) (*Blessings*) of the post-conciliar revised "The Roman Ritual" (1984) (Weller 2017): from the sending of missionaries to the blessing of a table, a house, a tabernacle, a cemetery; the blessing of a mother before childbirth, the blessing of the sick and aged; the blessing of animals (horses, pets, etc.) or of tools. There are blessings for places, things (objects such as 'founding stone' or vehicles; buildings such as seminaries, new homes, factories, facilities for care and relief, etc.); individuals, and groups or communities; and for 'special circumstances.' There are also blessings for objects or things that are erected or used in places of worship (churches), such as a baptismal font, as well as for objects of popular devotion, such as scapulars and neck crosses. We can distinguish between blessings in the context of parish life, blessings in family life or religious communities, blessings in the context of public life (for example, of a fire brigade), and blessings for general use. It is clear that blessings exist not only within but also outside the sacramental and official liturgical context (Davison 2014).

Many ecclesiastically recognized blessings fall under the heading of "sacramental". "These [sacramentals] are sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments. They signify effects, particularly of a spiritual nature, which are obtained through the Church's intercession. By them men are disposed to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, and various occasions in life are rendered holy" (Vatican II, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* 1963, n° 60) (Flannery 2014). They are instituted to sanctify ecclesiastical offices, states of life, and all kinds of circumstances of Christian life. It is important to point to these sacramentals as an opportunity. In addition to the blessings that belong to the recognized

sacramentals, all kinds of blessings that accompany daily life have developed and continue to develop in popular religion. There are also circuits of alternative blessings, for example, in the Christian women's movement, which believes that traditional blessings affirm the subordination of women too much (Walton 1985). It is not the purpose of this essay to go into this diversity and its tensions. Rather, our approach tends to be global and focuses on the act of the blessing, whatever its form, the minister or "performer", and the recipient.

2. Blessing as Being Blessed: Earthly and Religious Experience

To properly understand the Christian act of blessing, we need to look at how blessing is taught or evoked in the Bible. We mainly focus on the general biblical interpretation, without offering a detailed exegetical study of the different modalities and contexts of the blessing (see: Mitchell 1987). It is striking how, in the Scripture, there is never talk of blessing as an act (performance or ritual) unless the idea of blessing as a state and gift experienced by a human being is supposed.

2.1. An Earthly Reality That Is Experienced as a Blessing

Starting from the Old Testament, blessing can be described as a positive tangible reality: health, water, life, wealth, fertility, wholeness, and well-being, in short, everything that is good and beneficial. Synthetically, the Bible makes a direct connection between blessing and life, in the sense that blessing stands for the fullness of life as an earthly created reality.

Even today, people still use the word "blessing" to denote the good that comes to them in some way. Positive things such as (sufficiently) good health, prosperity, children, a successful operation, a caring partner, and loyal grandchildren are experienced as a blessing and happiness, as "gifts" that happen to us. In our striving for self-determination, these experiences bring us into contact with the heteronomous, the coming from elsewhere, that which is beyond our control. There is something of a "fortunate fate" in this, which happens to us despite our power and is therefore undeserved—in contrast to the "unfortunate fate", which is all about tragedy and curse. Not only the special but also the ordinary "things" that make us happy are both of the order of the gift and of the order of abundance. That is precisely why people continue to call those things a blessing in a profane context.

2.2. From Implicit to Explicit Religious Significance of Blessing

The question is, how are blessings and God connected? At first glance, the mentioned forms of being blessed seem to have little religious significance. They concern earthly realities that people experience or interpret as blessings. It could be questioned whether a completely non-religious use of the word blessing is possible. After all, there is, at least implicitly—and in our secular world—a reference to a "power" that brings good things to us. People recognize that one is not the almighty, nor the initiator, nor the alpha and omega that determine meaning and purpose. Blessing is being blessed. This passivity means that people almost naturally interpret the word "blessing" religiously, or at least presuppose the religious dimension. In everyday language, a "coincidence", as "good luck", is regularly connected with the expression "from-god-knows-where . . . ".

The same implicit religiosity also applies to the "pronounced blessing", the act of blessing. In blessing, both for those who promise it and for those who receive it, there is always a reference to a heteronomous element: something that comes from elsewhere through something or someone else. Therefore, the word "blessing", and certainly the act of blessing, is almost naturally interpreted as religious—or at least the religious dimension is assumed. After all, the one who blesses appeals to the unconditional and absolute, without being able to find it in oneself. By blessing one refers—in the blessing itself—as it were, to an absolute reliability, which far exceeds the one who blesses. In the blessing, one also connects the person on whom the blessing is pronounced with "the absolute". One cannot pronounce a blessing unless one does not also, at least implicitly, resort to a "higher" authority that guarantees the outcome of the blessing. In other words, by blessing,

the person who blesses appeals to his explicit or implicit conception of God. In this respect, we discover how, in the blessing, a theological meaning is implied, that is, a reference to the divine, although the one performing the blessing and the one receiving the blessing are not necessarily aware of this theological significance.

The biblical blessing implies an explicitly religious meaning: blessing is always "from God". As creatures created by a Creator, we experience creation as a gift given to us "from elsewhere". Our creation is not a diabolical curse but a divine blessing. This implies that the explicit reference to God-Creator is a qualified reference, namely an experience of God as benevolent beneficence. God is not a neutral explanatory principle, but an ethically qualified reality. The earthly fullness of being and life is simultaneously seen as a sign of divine grace: God's ethical goodness is a blessing to us! In other words, this implies that not just any idea of God can be associated with blessing. This is only possible if God is seen and experienced as a graceful God: a God who is a blessing himself, and of which an expression and 'radiation' can then be found in creation.

With Matthew Fox, we can also call creation the "original blessing", in contrast to the "original sin" (Fox 1983). Based on today's sensitivity to the environment and earth, he argues for a paradigm shift. While, in the past, too one-sided an emphasis has been placed on the Fall or Original Sin and the curse associated with it, the gift of creation deserves at least as much attention as the paradigm of sin and redemption. While the fall and redemption strongly emphasize the negativity of failure and human smallness, a swing to the creation paradigm allows us to place a stronger emphasis on power and creativity. Humans were created as connected to the world, and the world was given to them as an environment in which it is good to live. Creation is the blessing of God Himself for humans, and moreover, it itself is also blessed by God. Insofar as creation is God's blessing, we can also experience the world religiously as a gift: "God is the giver of all good". In our creation, we relate to the world in gratitude, grateful as we are for the gift received. In addition, through the gift of creation, the human being also shares in the divine energy deposited in creation. Creation is a divine blessing to humans because it also bestows divine energy and creativity on them, as God also blesses living beings with dynamism and fruitfulness (Gen 1:22.28). God blesses humans through creation, making the world and the stream of life a blessing and gift to humans. The redeeming and liberating grace of God, which Christians especially receive and experience in Christ, must not be separated from the way in which God gives himself to humans in creation. Based on our belief in God's creation, blessing is the active, creative presence of God in his creation and his creatures: in nature, in all living beings (plants and animals), in fellow human beings, in our own lives and in its joys (without this leading to a deification of creation). Without becoming blind to the dark side and the ambiguity that is also attached to creation—as a finite reality—which means that it is sometimes experienced as chaos and curse, creation is, for those who profess that God is the Creator of heaven and earth, an essential act of faith to receive and experience the gifts of creation as blessings from God. We may enjoy creation and life, because they have been given to us as a blessing from God! That creation blessing is not over with the Fall. Even after the flood, in which the very existence of the earth was threatened, the divine blessing of fertility is confirmed. Moreover, throughout the Noah story, the creation blessing evolves into a covenant blessing, because God makes a covenant with Noah and his descendants, and with all living beings (Gen 9:11).

In the Gospel, the New Testament, the idea of God's grace as blessing, is consistently included and extended in its own way. Jesus also reveals God to be a "blessing full of grace". According to the synoptic Gospels, this is evident from his proclamation of God's kingship ("Basileia tou Theou") (Mc 1:15) (Merklein 1981, pp. 17–45). This implies that Jesus never speaks of God per se as some sort of neutral ontological given or indifferent "fact of being", although this is the grandest and most powerful fact of Being. He always speaks of God in a specific way, namely by always connecting God with the idea of kingdom, or rather with "reign", for he does not mean a place but an active event. He then assigns a paradoxical meaning to this active "reigning" by, as it were, turning it inside out and connecting it with

a serving and liberating approach to people. Through this "reversal" of the worldly power category of "dominion", Jesus proclaims a near God who empties oneself of one's majesty that causes "fear and trembling" to associate with the "poor, weeping, hungry, crushed, persecuted" (cf. Beatitudes') (Mt 5:1–11). They are bestowed with gifts by God Himself, comforted, satisfied, raised up, restored: "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 5:10b). This echoes the way in which God revealed Himself as the Merciful since Abraham in the First Testament. This mercy is to be understood as "uterinity" or "wombness", in the sense that "rahamim" (mercy) goes back to the root word "rehem" (uterus, womb). In the words of Emmanuel Levinas: "What is the meaning of the word Merciful (*Rahamim*)? It means that the Eternal One is defined by Mercy. *Rahamim* goes back to the word 'rehem', which means uterus. *Rahamim* is the relation of the womb to the other, whose gestation takes place in it [to be born] ["trembling of the womb where the other is in gestation in the same"] (Levinas 1994, p. 142). *Rahamim* is maternity itself. God is merciful; God is defined by maternity. Perhaps maternity is sensibility itself [i.e., touchability and vulnerability by and for the other], of which so much ill is said among the Nietzscheans" (Levinas 1990, p. 183). By his proclamation of the Kingdom of God, Jesus not only proclaimed God's mercy, but also put it into practice and incarnated it in his whole being. Jesus 'is' what he does and says: "agere sequitur esse" becomes "esse sequitur agree", being follows from doing and saying. Not only is Jesus the face of God's *Rahamim*, but through his humanity he makes divine mercy tangible and sensible in his flesh and blood in this world, among people. He literally "does" God, namely through all kinds of acts of recognition and appreciation, communion at the table, exorcism of all kinds of "evil demons" who occupy and obsess humans, forgiveness of sins, healings and raising people from the dead . . . Through his "ethics"—being merciful to vulnerable people—Jesus reveals and embodies God's *rahamim*. Jesus' ethics is our grace. Therefore, it becomes clear how God's ethical quality—the One's "extravagant merciful love"—is our blessing: Jesus Christ is God's incarnated blessing for us!

3. The Act of Blessing as Language Event

It is this proclaimed divine blessing of creation and life, and of the "Reign of Love", that brings believers to the act of blessing. Henceforth, we turn our attention to this religious act of blessing as a human act. It is important to note that we do not primarily aim to use a Christian–theological approach (Davison 2014), even if that approach is not absent (Greiner), but rather pursue a philosophical, i.e., phenomenological, anthropological and existential understanding (Austin, Dolto, Ginters, Ladrière, Marcel, Searle). First, we focus on the blessing as a language event and then, in a subsequent part, we pay the necessary attention to the "incarnation" of the blessing through gesture and its material modality, namely the material elements that possibly accompany the word and gesture of blessing.

3.1. Blessing as an Elementary Language Act

With Dorothea Greiner, we can say that blessing as a language event is an "elementary language act" according to distinct aspects (Greiner 1998, pp. 36–38).

First, blessing is elementary because it is a simple act. According to the Latin term, the blessing does nothing but say something good: "bene-dicere". Three words suffice for the religious blessing: "God bless you". This formula is recognizable in many religious traditions and contexts. In addition, the blessing formula is usually accompanied by a simple gesture, sign (cross) or concise ritual, without frills and mannerisms, and is short and powerful.

Next, the blessing is an elementary act because it relates to a basic human desire, namely the pursuit of acceptance and healing. People are looking for places, persons and figures of ultimate trust, of ultimate surrender to lasting meaning and future, to life stronger than death, to a love stronger than all disaster and evil. As a language event, the blessing creates space for this ultimate trust, the belief that one is ultimately safe and saved, that life is worth living in the end. The blessing uniquely meets our great desire—our

hunger and craving—for fullness of life. In this regard, there is a deep connection between blessing and promise. The promise transcends the ruptures that certain experiences create in our existence: negative ruptures of evil that seem irrevocable. The promise leaves open the possibility that the irrevocable can be revoked, that one can trust in the future in spite of everything. Hence, the Christian faith professes God as a promise of healing, redemption and reconciliation through Christ, through which the unexpected can be born and everything can become new. This is the ultimate, far-reaching meaning of the religious Christian blessing.

Thirdly, blessing is an elementary act because, as a language act, it has a creative and "founding" meaning. Blessing does not only imply proclamation, but is also the commitment and realization of its own promise. What the blessing pronounces is also accomplished through the blessing itself. Through the blessing that is spoken to persons, they experience that they are or become blessed. In this respect, the blessing is a "performative" speech act (Searle 1979). It is a "language act", with the emphasis on "act", because the blessing accomplishes something. Moreover, it concerns a "performative" act, to be distinguished from a descriptive or informative act. An informative statement simply reflects a certain state of affairs, communicates a certain content of knowledge, and affirms that a certain "given" (object to person) behaves in a certain way, that something occurred in some way, and so on (Austin 1962). A performative statement affects, or at least intends to affect, something in the person to whom it is spoken, and also in the person who utters it. The language act itself creates a new situation that was not there before. Through what is said, both the addressed and the speaking person are involved in the new situation. As a result of this, they change, literally become "different" and are also called on to react and to "do" something with what is said (Ladrière 1973). From this distinction between informative and performative language, it is clear that the blessing is a performative speech act. The word of blessing is an act that effects what it communicates, namely that the person to whom or about whom the blessing is pronounced is the beneficiary of God's love. That the One first loved us (1 Jn 4:19) is not only the core of the Christian message, but also the ground and transformative effectiveness of every Christian blessing. As a speech act, the religious (Christian) blessing introduces the receiving person to the "experience" that one's existence has ground under its feet, that one's existence is anchored and surrounded by a Reality to which one not only can give oneself, but from whom one can also gratefully receive and cherish oneself.

3.2. Specificity of Blessing as a Modality of Religious Language

After this exploration of blessing as a speech act, we now want to examine the religious specificity of blessing by distinguishing it from wish and intercession (Greiner 1998, pp. 43–54). At first glance, the blessing seems closely related to the wish, in the sense that whoever blesses someone wishes the other well. Sometimes, a wish is even called a blessing. Both the wish and the blessing are marked by desire; they are a form of eager anticipation and, therefore, of hope. Typical of the wish is that it relates to the relationship between two people: I wish you all the best. The wish is a dual reciprocal relationship: "I—you". In the wish, the emphasis is on the other (as object) and on the I (subject) that expresses the wish. Even if the I is omitted, as in "Good luck with your marriage!", the expression means: "I wish you good luck with your marriage!" The wish does not require a third party to act as guarantor. The wish leaves open who or which body is responsible for the addressed "happiness": fate, God, the addressee her- or himself, etc. Just think of the Happy New Year's wish: "I wish you a very good new year". Remarkably, those who wish for a happy year do not guarantee it themselves. The guarantor is left undetermined. The religious blessing, however, manifests itself unequivocally as a "triad" or triangular relationship: it involves a relationship between three persons. In that blessing, there is always a clear reference to a third person, besides you and me, namely God (or his "representative"). The emphasis is not on the I, the subject who blesses another, but on the One who guarantees the blessing: "God grant you a good year"; "God grant you that your marriage succeeds".

In this respect, the ego withdraws to make room for God: a form of human anachoresis or kenosis. Moreover, God cannot be equated with fate ("fatum"). It is not just "something or someone in general", or "fate" as "fortuna", that is invoked. After all, by fate, the object of the blessing is anything but assured. Fate can give all or nothing, be lenient or brutal; fate is, by definition, indifferent, neutral, un-preferential, wild and unreasonable, and therefore full of tragedy ("doom"). In the religious blessing, it is always a loving God who intends true good for human beings. We know this from the Biblical proclamation of the good news. However, the blessing is more than proclamation, for it also declares—and by pronouncing, also accomplishes (as stated above)—that God as "embracing grace" wills the very best for the blessed person (community, group, etc.).

This shows how the blessing is, par excellence, a religious act. The speech act of blessing introduces God, as a third person as essential, in this speech. It is not the one who pronounces the blessing that bestows the blessing. God is the founding referent of the blessing. The one who pronounces the blessing does not refer to her- or himself, but to God, who is the real subject—the real Agent—of the blessing. The blessing is primarily concerned with the relationship between God and the blessed. God and the human being are brought into a personal relationship with each other, which is true religion. This connection is not established by the blessed person (or group) but by the blessing pronounced by a person other than the blessed person(s). At the same time, the person who blesses withdraws as much as possible, because that person is only a "mediator": only God is the source of the blessing. This is also shown in the famous Aaron's blessing: "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace" (Num 6:24–26). With this, we encounter a double "extra nos:" the blessing brings people "outside themselves", both the blessing one and the blessed person. The one who blesses does not bless oneself, just as the blessed does not bless oneself. Whoever blesses points away from oneself in a twofold way: to the blessed other and the Blessing One. The blessed person is not the source of the spoken blessing; he or she is blessed by another. This is precisely the event of grace that breaks open humans from their self-confinement and directs them toward an other than themselves: the divine Other. The person who is blessed is connected with the divine Other One, and so, too, with the human person who speaks the blessing. In this respect, the blessing is completely at odds with the autonomistic self-redemption tendency, which one believes one can possibly achieve through all kinds of techniques and methods (of "mindfulness" and others).

The distinction between wish and blessing has not yet revealed the whole uniqueness of blessing as a language event. However, related to the wish, the blessing is more than wish, it is also, and above all, prayer. Hence, another comparison arises, with intercession or supplication. This relationship is so striking that one does not always perceive the difference between the two. The gesture that often accompanies both shows the difference. When people pray with their arms open and upraised, we know that they are addressing God "in heaven", the true addressee of prayer. In intercessory prayer, people turn to God asking for help and assistance from someone, an individual or group. When someone blesses another person, for example a parent blesses their child, we see a different body movement. People who bless address the receiving person. They extend their hands directly to, or rather over, the addressee, or they lay hands on the other. Even the prayer for blessing a person differs from a direct blessing. In such a prayer for blessing, one does not extend the open arms and hands to the one who is the object of the blessing, but to God, to heaven, for the Holy and no one else is the addressee (second person): "Lord, we implore You: bless N.N. with your gifts". The mere blessing, however, refers to God in the third person and directly addresses the person (to be blessed): "The Lord (3rd person) bless you and keep you (2nd person)" (cf. supra). As said, this finds expression in the bodily gesture that accompanies the word of blessing: the language of the arms and hands gives shape to the language of the words!

3.3. Bodily and Material Dimension of Blessing

Through the comparison with the wish and supplication, we involuntarily arrived at the bodily form of blessing. Sometimes, the blessing is just a word, like Jacob's blessing of all his sons (Gn 49:28). Usually, however, the blessing, even if it comprises a strong word, is accompanied by a gesture or an action in the form of a well-defined sign, such as the laying on of hands, the sign of the cross, or the sprinkling of holy water. Sometimes, but rather exceptionally, the blessing is performed only as a gesture, a bodily touch or an action, without any word. For the most part, word and gesture go together in an indissoluble unity. Moreover, material elements, such as water and oil, are often used in the performance of the blessing. There is no Christian rite where people come so close to each other as blessing. For example, in individual blessings, the hand of the person blessing touches the other person's hair and scalp. If one blesses by drawing someone with the cross, one draws this cross on the forehead (or on the hands and feet). Pouring the water over the head of the person being baptized is not as intimate as blessing that person with a bodily touch. In baptism, the material element of water stands as a mediating element between the person who is baptizing and the person being baptized. On the other hand, there is also blessing during baptism: the person being baptized is signed with the cross and there is the laying on of hands, anointing with the chrism. In the Effeta prayer ("Open up"), the various senses of the baptized are touched and anointed. In the sacrament of the sick, the sick are also anointed and touched. This means that the blessing is often not only gesture but also touch. Even if we have become accustomed to it, it remains a curious phenomenon. Usually, people try to avoid contact with strangers or those with whom they do not have a connection. In ordinary life, people will not touch someone's head or hair unless there is a more intimate relationship with that person. In the blessing, people do touch people even though they have never met them before. If we were to touch someone in that way in everyday life, we would apologize for it, and run the risk of being suspected or even accused of (sexually) transgressive behavior. In other words, the blessing is a ritual "sanctuary". The blessing creates a situation that allows people to come close to and touch each other without embarrassment or apology. In addition, the rite of blessing allows the bodily proximity to become religiously transparent. The purpose of blessing as a rite is that God comes close. After all, people do not say, while touching: "I bless you", but "God bless you" or "The Lord be with you". The one who blesses does not primarily express his own closeness through the gesture and the touch, but through divine closeness and touch.

This puts us on the trail of the expressive nature of the blessing. Gestures, signs and material ingredients embody the word of the blessing, making the content of the blessing tangible. In order to properly understand this expressive character, a reflection on 'expression' is first necessary. Before the so-called "linguistic turn" (Rorty 1967), the expression was often understood too spiritualistically, starting from the consciousness that already possesses an idea, essence or content in itself, and then expresses it in a certain form at a later stage. Such an approach implies that, on closer inspection, the form is incidental and certainly does not co-determine the preceding essence or thought. Under the influence of Descartes, the body was reduced to a "res extensa": the object of consciousness ("cogito"), source of the autonomous subject. As a result, the body could also be regarded as an instrument that one can control and which one can use to realize one's "projects of meaning". Then, the thinking consciousness becomes the active "signifier" and the body the object and instrument of signifying. Since the linguistic turn in philosophy, we have gradually started to think differently about this, although the turnaround has still not fully taken effect. A careful study of speech makes us understand that the language in which an idea expresses itself also helps to create the idea. The form is not only a decoration, but also a "founding" for the content. Our body is not incidental but essential and constitutive of our humanity. It is not only an object of "signification", it is itself a "signifier". Even if we cannot reduce our humanity to our bodiliness, which would create a flat materialism, we do not only "have" a body, but we also "are" our body (Gabriel Marcel) (Troisfontaines 1968, pp. 173–75). The body provides us with a number of meanings that

invite us to look at things differently. This is, perhaps, the truly expressive character of the human bodily experience. Our body as a "lived body" also characterizes our intentional giving of meaning. In itself, the spirit is an abstraction; it only exists thanks to the living and lived body. The human body has a spiritual dimension in the sense that it facilitates and orients the spiritual—and thus is also a source of meaning.

When applied to the act of blessing, this means that the bodily form not only gives shape to the content, but also co-establishes and creates that content itself. This means that blessing is a special kind of act, namely an "expressive act" ("Ausdruckshandlung") (Ginters 1976, pp. 11–18, 36–44). This action must be distinguished from instrumental action, which is based on a functional relationship between the goal, namely the effect one wants to achieve, and the means to achieve this goal, namely the action. The primary goal here is an outcome that lies outside the action itself. In addition, the cost–benefit analysis plays a central role. The value criterion lies in the balance between advantages and disadvantages, or rather the positive outcomes must prevail over the negative outcomes. However, our actions cannot be reduced to instrumental functionality and pragmatic effectiveness. They are much richer and multidimensional. After all, in addition to instrumental acting, there is also "intrinsically meaningful acting". Such actions are performed for the sake of the value or meaning of the act itself and not for some beneficial objective or external effect. The desired effect lies in the action itself: means and goal coincide. In this respect, the value of the action lies in the quality of the action itself. We can think, for example, of play and of artistic expression in any form. Moreover, we perform many instrumental actions not only because of their usefulness, but also because of the intrinsic, qualitative sense of the action itself. Then, those actions become "sur-determined" in the sense that they acquire an "additional meaning" that elevates them above everyday neediness and usefulness. It is remarkable that they then also acquire their expressive character from the reversal of the utilitarian benefit–cost ratio, in the sense that they often cost more than they produce in benefits. That is why outsiders often call them a form of waste: "costly expressive acts" ("kostspielige Ausdruckhandlungen"), which are not only "expensive", but often also imply a form of exuberance and exaggeration, which can go as far as to be wasteful (Ginters 1982, pp. 94–97). Even if they are not wasteful, they are usually economically unnecessary and even useless. Last but not least, the expressive nature of the expressive actions also has a relational dimension, in the sense that they direct what is expressed to another, and thus not only enable but also realize relationships (cf. infra).

The act of blessing is pre-eminently an intrinsically meaningful act that is expressive in word and gesture. By audibly and tangibly shaping the divine blessing, the act of blessing itself realizes that blessing "here and now". In this respect, the blessing is not an "extrinsic" but an "intrinsic sign". Both types of signs refer to something other than themselves. With the extrinsic sign, the "other reality" lies outside the sign itself, as becomes clear in all sorts of functional, conventional signs in society. In the intrinsic sign, the signified reality coincides with the sign itself, so that the signified—the reality of blessing—is fulfilled by the act of blessing. The gesture of the blessing, together with the audibly pronounced word and any material elements, can therefore be labeled—by analogy with the sacraments—as an "efficacious sign" ("signum efficax"): it realizes what it signifies. To bless someone by the laying on of hands means that the blessing is realized here and now by the sign on the person in question, so that the person "is" also a blessed person from the moment of the blessing. Moreover, the act of blessing as an audible and tangible expression of God's blessing connects the blessed with the Holy One as well as with the one who performs the act of blessing, and with the community in which the blessing may be performed.

4. Power and Powerlessness of the Blessing

The expressive character of the act of blessing leads us directly to the "power" of the benediction, which deserves separate and explicit attention (although it already appears in the above reflections). On the one hand, we reflect on the special power of the blessing; on the other hand, we examine the risk involved.

4.1. The "Founding" Power of Blessing

First, there is the creative power of the blessing. In contrast to the curse, the French psychoanalyst Françoise Dolto (Pohier 1985) puts us on the trail of the "founding" power of blessing. Through her fellow psychoanalyst Chertok, who specialized in suggestion under hypnosis, she came to understand that the curse is something against which hypnosis is powerless. The curse forms such a harsh reality that even hypnosis cannot get through or overcome it. Someone who was cursed at conception cannot be helped by hypnotherapy. A curse, which the child knows about through its parents and applies to the father of the child and his offspring or to the child himself, exerts an indelible influence on the whole of his life, on the fruits of his labor and his sexuality.

Conversely, this also applies to the act of blessing and the being blessed that forms the basis of this. In order to become human, one depends on the blessing that others give us. One is dependent on the blessing of others in order to experience one's own life as a blessing. As the curse kills, so the blessing creates life. Even if a blessing does not immediately help, it is, for the blessed one, the assurance of protection and hold in trouble, a promise for the future. The blessing is not an incidental thing, such as clothing, it is so strongly intertwined with existence that it determines the positive or negative sense of what a person is and produces. You can meet people who have a radiant feeling that everything will work out. Even though they may not have much reason to believe this at present, they firmly believe that the future will be positive, "because someone told me so, and I trust it!" Sometimes, you hear people say: "I will succeed because my father (or my mother) said that I will succeed. I may not experience it anymore, but my children will certainly experience it". However, this feeling of confidence is not the result of one's own performance. It is not one's own creation but a gift from someone else: a blessing given to me. This is the ground for the deep emotion of knowing oneself to be blessed, despite all that is happening!

The Bible also assumes the efficacy and power of the blessing. Four aspects stand out regarding the impact of the blessing on the blessed (Greiner 1998, pp. 143–48).

First, there is the strengthening effect, which consists of strengthening the blessed. Thanks to the blessing, people, individually or collectively—for example, the people of Israel—find resilience and become strong and fruitful. Sometimes a new name, and thus a new identity, is the sign and confirmation of this. For example, after wrestling with the stranger (an angel of God), Jacob asks the angel for his blessing (Gen 32:23–33). However, before the angel blesses Jacob, he also gives him a different name, and thus a new identity and meaning, namely "Israel": he who wrestles with God and was victorious. The blessing that follows confirms the new identity and gives strength to face the new existence and the new mission.

Second, there is the protective effect, in the sense that the blessing offers shelter against all kinds of evil, threat and suffering. The blessing protects against misfortune and disaster, with the risk that the blessing will be perverted by the recipient into a magical power that one tries to exorcise or bend to one's own will (more on that later). The blessing stems from the acute awareness that reality and history, both great and small, are not always rosy, but are often marked by obstinacy, boundaries and setbacks. In a perfect world, humans would be omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, without question and uncertainty, so that they would not have to step outside themselves and knock on someone else's door. Whoever asks or receives a blessing confesses that he is not the "master and possessor of this world". The blessing presupposes humble and small people, not masochistic people who indulge in their smallness and wallow in it narcissistically, but realistic people who realize not only that they are finite and fragile but also that they cannot survive on their own. Asking for a blessing is a sign of realism and humble self-knowledge without self-abasement!

Thirdly, there is the healing effect: the blessing offers redemption. After all, people are also personally afflicted by all kinds of calamity and evil, especially by their sinfulness and weakness as ethical beings. Today, emphasis is often placed on finiteness and thus on error and failure. However, humans, as ethical and therefore free and responsible beings,

are also beings of evil and immoral actions. Humans are not innocent creatures; they are "sinners": "fallible beings" with a wounded freedom (Ricoeur 1986). This implies that they need redemption and healing from their sins and freedom. That, too, belongs to the intent and power of the blessing: to heal people from sin and evil, to deliver people from the guilt that traumatizes them.

Last but not least, there is the community-building effect of the act of blessing. Thus, in the Bible, the blessing is the beginning of the history of the covenant between God and Abram (and Israel) (Gen 12:2–3). A blessing always shows a binding force, as indicated above. It establishes involvement and communication between the "partners". Thanks to the one who addresses the blessing from God about (to) the addressee, involvement also arises, both between God and the addressee and between God and the blessing person. However, involvement grows also between the blessing person and the recipient, implying that, as a religious act, the blessing also establishes interpersonal interaction and relationality. In other words, the blessing not only contains a statement and declaration of a promising and merciful perspective, it is also a relationship event that makes clear: "You are not alone. We won't let you down, we love you!" Not only is there the divine Other, and compassion for people, blessings also connect the one who utters the words of blessing with those people. Blessing someone is impossible, or at least lying, if one does not have a positive attitude towards the other person and does not want the best for him or her. Hence, the curse is radically opposed to the blessing. After all, a curse not only pronounces a curse on someone else, that curse also expresses the aversion and rejection of the one who pronounces the curse. In the blessing, I not only wish the other person the best, but I also express that I am close to the other and that I support the blessed person.

4.2. Risk of Magical Derailment

There is also a downside to the effectiveness of the blessing. After all, it can derail into magical claim and even obsession. Because of their finitude, people tend to use the blessing as a magic spell, the mere utterance or muttering of which they believe can bring about its intended good. Blessing formulas are used to influence and control certain supernatural or extra-natural forces. Some even claim that blessings always function as spells, and therefore they should be rejected. This extreme view, however, confuses blessings with "incantations", which turn wishes into demands by expressing them in imperative form. The incantation presupposes a divine or demonic power to which one has no direct access and which one, therefore, cannot easily understand nor immediately control. By means of a kind of "magic formula or ritual" people try to get a grip on that power. One hopes to be able to force that power to please the person who uses the magic formula, or at least not to harm that person (which is certainly true when this concerns an "evil power").

However, this must be distinguished from authentic dealing with blessings. After all, authentic religiosity is not based on fear and therefore does not resort to attempts to "coerce" divine powers. Magic seduces or even bribes the "gods" into action, while authentic faith rests on trust and hope without certainty. The blessing remains a prayer and never becomes a "demand", in the sense that one entrusts oneself in surrender to God's love. Therefore, authentic blessing requires a culture of impotence, strange as this may sound. Only if, in pronouncing or receiving the blessing, one accepts that one cannot exercise power over the result of the blessing, can one avoid getting bogged down in the despair of the convulsive grip on the divine. Then, people accept that the blessing does not work immediately, but sometimes only much later. Then, people also accept that it may work completely differently than expected, or that it might not even work. As Job confidently puts it: "The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1:21b).

A special aspect that can protect us from the magical derailment of the blessing is the ethical appeal contained in the blessing. The blessing of the divine fullness of grace, to which the blessing refers both in its origin and in its purpose, immediately implies an invitation to the person pronouncing the blessing to act blissfully. In fact, this is about

more than the desire that spontaneously bubbles up from being blessed. This is not about a possibility but about an incentive, even a "commandment": whoever receives a blessing from God should not keep it to oneself, but must pass it on to others, not only by pronouncing blessings on others but also, and especially, by treating others benevolently, namely by treating them with incarnated "deeds" of blessing.

5. To Conclude: Blessed to Bless

"No one knows the power of the body" (Atlan 1996, p. 209). Paraphrasing this statement by Spinoza, we dare to put the following into words at the end of our quest: "No one knows the power of blessing!" This can be expressed, both humanly, religiously and Christianly, in word and gesture! That the religious act of blessing, right down to its anthropological basis as an event of language and body, has a unique meaning and special effect, became phenomenologically clear in a multifaceted way. This phenomenological analysis also makes the religious blessing accessible and valuable "for everyone"; it is literally "catholic"—"kat' holon", with a universal meaning. From the general biblical perspective, it also became clear that the experience of religion in general and the practice of the Christian faith in particular needs the "blessing of God" in all its facets: the gift of life and creation, love and redemption. Moreover, this "grace" needs moments of condensation through which God's blessing becomes concrete and tangible for earthly beings. Blessings are such condensing moments. Through word and sign (and matter), they embody God's proximity. Moreover, that 'blessing from God' not only invites surrender but also makes that surrender possible. Precisely because of this, the blessing also provides the strength needed to get up and carry on, and even more so to take on the ethical commitment of blessing others. A synthesis of grace and ethics occurs: "You are blessed to bless; not only in word and gesture, but also and above all in deeds!"

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Article
Von Hildebrand on the Roots of Moral Evil

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Abstract: In this article, I sketch, both in broad outlines and in selected details, the new, richer picture of von Hildebrand's account of moral evil as it emerges from my discovery of extensive materials in von Hildebrand´s *Nachlass* at the Bavarian State Library in Munich dealing with the "roots of moral evil". These manuscripts and typescripts, the critical edition of which will be published at the same time as this article or shortly thereafter, show that von Hildebrand´s account of moral evil is much richer, more nuanced, and complex than the one we can glean from the final section of *Ethics*, his magnum opus in moral philosophy. In this article, I also aim to situate von Hildebrand´s analysis of the roots of moral evil in the context of both Christian religious thought and the Western philosophical tradition. Von Hildebrand was, to be sure, an heir to both of these traditions, despite the thrust of his phenomenological method to "bracket" all extant theories and turn "back to the things themselves". The mind-boggling feature of the tension between von Hildebrand´s existential rootedness in the Catholic tradition and his methodological distance to it, including the Aristotelian–Thomist philosophy, is the following: On one hand, he claims that the two ultimate roots of moral evil are pride and concupiscence, which sounds perfectly traditionally Christian. On the other hand, however, he strips these concepts of most of their traditional connotations and endows them with the meaning they acquire in the context of his phenomenological analyses. The intriguing result of this approach is the transformation of religious or moral theological concepts of pride and concupiscence into descriptive phenomenological categories which encompass an almost inexhaustible wealth of various subspecies and subordinate forms of moral evil.

Keywords: moral evil; akrasia; value; pride; concupiscence; hatred; realist phenomenology; Christian ethics

1. Introduction

Dietrich von Hildebrand was a former student of Edmund Husserl´s and an important figure in early phenomenology. Besides his seminal religious writings, he made notable contributions to several branches of philosophy, including epistemology, aesthetics, philosophical anthropology, philosophy of love, and social philosophy (von Hildebrand 1975, 1991, 2007, 2009, 2016). However, he is most renowned and appreciated as a moral philosopher (von Hildebrand 1969a, 1969b, 1980, 2017, 2019a, 2019b, 2020). His magnum opus in this field, *Ethics*, which was first published almost seventy years ago, recently reappeared in a third and definitive edition (von Hildebrand 2020). Among the many themes treated in this voluminous, rich, and exacting work, there is also an intriguing treatment of the origins of moral evil. It appears right at the end of the book and, until quite recently, it seemed to be the most extensive treatment of this topic in von Hildebrand's oeuvre. However, this misleading impression was recently rectified by my discovery of extensive materials in von Hildebrand's *Nachlass* at the Bavarian State Library in Munich dealing with the "roots of moral evil".[1] These manuscripts and typescripts, just about to be published by the Hildebrand Press, show that von Hildebrand's account of moral evil is much richer and more nuanced and complex than the one we can glean from the final section of his *Ethics* (von Hildebrand 2023).[2]

In this article, I present von Hildebrand's account of moral evil as it emerges from both of these principal sources, that is, *Ethics* and the edited materials. Writing a paper on this topic is justified not just because the edited materials bring a new, richer perspective on the theme, but also because even the account of moral evil found in *Ethics* has not yet been discussed in the scholarly literature. Hence, the contribution of the present article is twofold. First, it inaugurates the scholarly treatment of von Hildebrand's analysis of the roots of moral evil. Second, it does so by drawing on primary sources which were discovered and edited only quite recently and will come out shortly before or after the publication of this article.

2. The Points of Contact of von Hildebrand's Account of Evil with the Tradition

The aim of this section is to mark some points of contact between von Hildebrand's account of moral evil and the traditional accounts of the same subject in Western philosophical and religious thought. This is important because von Hildebrand himself, in the spirit of Husserl's phenomenological maxim, "Back to the things themselves", largely abstains from a discussion with his predecessors. His declared aim is to describe and scrutinize the "given", that is, the moral experience as such (von Hildebrand 2020, p. 2). But it is obvious that despite this effort to "bracket" all extant theories in order to focus on the "moral data", von Hildebrand's phenomenological analysis is not performed in a conceptual vacuum. Moreover, a brief reminder of some traditional views about the origins of moral evil will prove to be helpful in assessing the originality of von Hildebrand's analysis.

One notable point of contact between von Hildebrand's account of evil and the traditional views is the problem of akrasia or acting against one's better knowledge.[3] In ch. 3 of *Ethics*, one of the most important texts in his whole ethical oeuvre, von Hildebrand takes issue with the Socratic claim that "No one errs knowingly", meaning that the knowledge of the best is a sufficient precondition for acting morally well. Von Hildebrand argues that if I am in a situation where I have to choose between, say, participating in an amusing social event and assisting my distressed friend, I may choose the former option, knowing well that the latter option is, morally speaking, better (von Hildebrand 2020, p. 44). In situations such as this, he contends, I am usually not confronted with a choice between a higher and a lesser good, with the implication that there is a single scale of values on which both of these goods are to be found. Rather, I am confronted with one course of action which appeals to me from the point of view of pure subjective satisfaction and another course of action which appeals to me from the point of view of its intrinsic value; to amuse oneself is merely subjectively satisfying, and to help one's friend in distress is valuable in itself.

Von Hildebrand elaborates on the contrast between what is merely subjectively satisfying and what is important in itself in the immediately preceding section of ch. 3 of *Ethics* (von Hildebrand 2020, pp. 36–41). He points out that while what is important in itself is the intrinsic value of some being, the merely subjectively satisfying is an entirely subjective type of importance that persons, things, or events acquire in the human experience as a result of causing subjective satisfaction or dissatisfaction in us. This total divorce in principle of the merely subjectively satisfying as a category of motivation from the objective structure of a given being makes it incommensurable with the motivation rooted in the intrinsic worth of things and persons around us. This brings von Hildebrand to say that there is no "common denominator" between these two "categories of importance" (von Hildebrand 2020, pp. 42–44). That means, for example, that by intensifying the mere subjective satisfaction, we are not coming closer to the viewpoint of the intrinsically important. It also means that it is impossible to consider the merely subjectively satisfying as a lower type of intrinsic importance.

It is on the basis of this insight that von Hildebrand explains how acting against one's better knowledge is possible. If I choose to amuse myself rather than to assist my friend in distress, it is because I chose the merely subjectively satisfying over the intrinsically important, knowing that, from the moral point of view, doing what is intrinsically important is unequivocally better than doing just what is pleasing. This type of explanation of

acratic action is essentially different from the one given by the tradition. Both Plato and Aristotle explain acratic action not by a morally reprehensible choice/volition, but by strong emotions or desires interfering with one's capacity for practical reasoning.[4] Ever since Augustine, the decisive factor in explaining the possibility of acting against one's better knowledge has been the will. But the explanation of how such willing is possible was given in terms of the distinction between the true and apparent good. I choose what is worse by preferring what appears to me to be the higher good, while, in fact, it is lower. Max Scheler's approach is also similar. In his view, I prefer a value, which, objectively speaking, is lower.[5] This is possible as a result of my disordered ordo amoris, which makes me love more what is of lesser value and love less what is of higher value.[6]

These accounts are fundamentally flawed as explanations of the dilemma of the amusing event vs. assisting one's friend in distress and other such situations as they explain away the actual choice of what one knows to be, morally speaking, worse. They interpret the situation as one in which someone acts on his or her (culpable or inculpable) ignorance of what, in the given situation, is the higher good. Thus, instead of explaining how it is possible to go with one's will against one's knowledge of the best, they collapse, ultimately, into a restatement of the old Socratic dictum that "No one errs knowingly", with the qualification that strong emotions or desires may, at times, overturn the dominion of the cognitive element in our psyche over the appetitive one with the result of swaying us in the direction immanent in the desire or in the emotion.

Compare this type of explanation of acratic action to von Hildebrand's. In his view, my choice to go to the amusing event instead of assisting my friend in distress is not based on my (culpable) ignorance of what is the higher good in the given situation or, in Scheler's terminology, which value is preferred. When making my decision, I know well that, from the viewpoint of what is intrinsically important, it is clearly better to assist my friend in distress than to go to the amusing event. I also know that, from the perspective of mere subjective satisfaction, going to the amusing event is definitely preferable to the other alternative. So, the moral decision here is ultimately a choice between the following two incommensurable viewpoints: the appeal of the intrinsically important vs. the attraction of the merely subjectively satisfying. This explanation makes it fully understandable why our decisions (and actions based on them) are sometimes at odds with our knowledge of the best. It also explains how hesitation is possible in such situations. For, seen exclusively from one of the two viewpoints, no hesitation is possible. It is only possible when the two viewpoints clash. And they clash because each of the alternatives appeals to me from one of the two perspectives.

It may seem that, given von Hildebrand's account of akrasia, the main root of moral evil must be the striving for the merely subjectively satisfying. However, von Hildebrand contends that striving for the merely subjectively satisfying is, as such, not morally bad (von Hildebrand 2023). Therefore, it cannot be considered the ultimate root of moral evil. The ultimate root of moral evil in the human person, he submits, is her interest in the merely subjectively satisfying, *which is detached from the value-response attitude* (von Hildebrand 2023).[7] In order to understand this important qualification, it must be explained what the value-response attitude is for von Hildebrand. In the discussion of akrasia, we encountered the value-response attitude in the form of a value response to a specific value in a particular situation (helping a friend in need).[8] However, according to von Hildebrand, value responses given in particular situations of our lives flow organically from value responses which "are not restricted to a mere actual experience but must subsist in a superactual way if they are at all real and not mere sham acts". (von Hildebrand 2020, p. 253). Von Hildebrand calls these value responses *superactual* (*überaktuell*). Their most characteristic example is love. Love does not cease to exist the moment it ceases to be currently experienced, when, for example, we stop thinking about or talking to a loved one and devote ourselves to something else, while, for example, a pain in the back that recurs repeatedly may have the same physiological causes, yet it will not be one and the same pain that persists in us even in moments when we are not currently experiencing

it; we can say that love for a certain person persists in us even in moments when our current consciousness is focused elsewhere and is present in the background of our current consciousness and gives it a certain coloring.

Unlike love, which is always directed at a specific person with its unique and unrepeatable value, some superactual value responses are directed at whole value spheres. For example, if we say that someone is not interested in art, we are not expressing his or her attitude toward this or that work of art, but toward artistic values in general. Von Hildebrand calls these superactual responses *general* (*allgemein*). This term does not indicate that the attitudes or responses themselves are general or universal. They are the concrete and real attitudes or responses of a concrete and real person. It is their *object* that is general. For it is, as noted above, not a particular value or good, but a type of value or a sphere of goods. These attitudes are also general in the sense that they give rise to attitudes toward the particular values and goods to which the general response relates, that is, for example, the general attitude toward artistic values is the basis of the responses to particular works of art and their value given by the person who has this general attitude. This general superactual response always has its basis in a certain sensibility of the particular person for the sphere of goods or type of values to which the answer refers. The generality of this response can vary. For example, one may be sensitive to music, but not to the whole field of art. Someone else may be sensitive to the whole field of art, etc. The broader the range of goods and types of values to which one is sensitive, the more general one´s attitude or response will be. Usually, more general attitudes fund less general attitudes. According to von Hildebrand, by analyzing these increasingly general attitudes, we arrive at what he calls fundamental or basic attitudes.

Turning now to the moral sphere, the "backbone" of moral virtue is, for von Hildebrand, always a certain *general superactual value response*. Von Hildebrand thus develops a singular account of the nature of moral virtue that is distinct from the Aristotelian notion of moral virtue as a habit, and the mean between two extremes (Cajthaml 2012). In *The Art of Living*, he depicts the following five basic closely related moral virtues: reverence, faithfulness, responsibility, veracity, and goodness (von Hildebrand 2017). These fundamental moral attitudes are particular expressions of the value-response attitude of which von Hildebrand speaks when he says that the ultimate root of moral evil is the interest in what is merely subjectively satisfying that is detached from the value-responding attitude. To put it in the traditional moral language, von Hildebrand says that the ultimate source of moral evil is the pursuit of pleasure unbridled by moral virtue. When put in this way, von Hildebrand´s complex phenomenological terminology dissolves into a very familiar statement. Yet, how is such a detachment of the pursuit of pleasure from moral virtue possible? And which forms can it assume? The answer to these questions brings us to the very heart of von Hildebrand's understanding of the ultimate roots of moral evil.

Von Hildebrand's answer to the first question is that there are opposing tendencies in human nature. This answer in itself is nothing new. We already find it in Plato's theory of the tripartite soul in *Republic* IV and in innumerable later accounts of the human psyche or, say, in later philosophers' reflections on the ambivalence of the human will. What is original, however, is the way in which von Hildebrand describes these opposing tendencies. He first does so in the last chapters of *Ethics* and then in the edited materials. In ch. 31 of *Ethics*, he describes three "centers" in the human person: the free, loving, value-responding center, and the two opposing "centers" of pride and concupiscence. On this basis, he develops, in ch. 32, an intriguing account of five basic types of morally deficient characters. It is based on the observation that although the value-responding center in the human person is antithetical to the centers of pride and concupiscence, it nevertheless coexists with them in most human beings in several basic ways. Sometimes this coexistence has the character of an open fight between the antithetical centers, as in an upright but still morally struggling person. Sometimes the value-responding center is merely juxtaposed with the centers of pride and concupiscence, as in the morally unconscious person. Sometimes, again, a compromise is struck between the antithetical centers, as in the third type, etc.[9]

A notable corollary to this account of opposite "centers" in the human person is von Hildebrand's contention that moral good and evil are *polar opposites*. By this claim, von Hildebrand seems to contradict the millennia-old tradition according to which evil is only a privation of the good.[10] However, one must note that von Hildebrand does not dispute the metaphysical doctrine of good and evil and explicitly limits his claim to the relationship between *moral* good and evil. According to his account, moral evil is the polar opposite of good, because evil human attitudes, such as hatred, are not merely a lack of morally good attitudes, such as love. The lack of love is indifference, not hatred, von Hildebrand says. Moreover, from an epistemological point of view, hatred has its own intelligible structure that can be investigated in its own right and cannot be conceived as a sort of "imperfect benevolence".[11] The nature, forms, and relations of this attitude to other phenomena, say, pride, are open to philosophical inquiry and can be investigated in their own right, without bringing in the presupposition of the metaphysical meaning of evil as privation.

In this context, it is easy to imagine the following objection to von Hildebrand. Suppose he tries to stay on the plane of moral good and evil. Can he avoid the ontological plane altogether? Does a certain Manicheanism not manifest itself in the insistence that human nature has, in addition to a positive tendency toward moral good (a value-response center), a negative tendency toward moral evil (pride, concupiscence)? What is the ontological status of these opposing "centers"? Are they all ontologically on the same level?

Von Hildebrand is aware of this possible objection and tries to answer it at the very end of his discussion of the roots of moral evil in the edited materials. The following passage deserves to be quoted in full:

> "This analysis of the roots of moral evil has disclosed to us that pride and concupiscence are always at the basis of all moral evil. The metaphysical question arises: where do these two morally negative centers enter into the human person? It is obvious that they do not come from God, that they are not something issuing from God's hand in creating man. Every creature of God is positive, possessing value, reflecting in some way His infinite goodness. 'Nothing is evil, but the perversion of our will,' says St. Augustine.
>
> Are they a result of the fall of man? Many symptoms of concupiscence and pride are certainly the sad heritage of original sin, as the tendency of our nature to leave the attitude of *religio* when we are confronted with the subjectively satisfying, the rebellion of our instincts against our spirit, the immanent logic of our nature: the continuous tendency of our nature to infect our good intentions by pride and many other symptoms of the mysterious rupture and disharmony in our fallen nature that, notwithstanding its negative character, has such a tremendous reality.
>
> But is not the original sin due to pride and concupiscence? One may answer: Pride and concupiscence are but a privation and nothing positively existing. This may be true, but it does not explain the mystery. The question arises: Where does this privation come from?
>
> We do not pretend to be able to answer this question and to explain the mysterious temptation of pride—potentially connected to the priceless privilege of free will. We restrict ourselves to stating the two following fundamental facts. Firstly, God can never be the cause of pride and concupiscence. Secondly, pride and concupiscence exist in the fallen man and are the roots of all moral evil." (von Hildebrand 2023)

It is clear from this important passage that von Hildebrand leaves open the question of the metaphysical status of negative "centers". He admits that they could be a mere privation of the due good. But he points to the fact that *even if* we consider them only as a lack of goodness, we have in no way answered the crucial question, that is, what the actual cause of this "lack" is. Von Hildebrand thus suggests that the decisive question, namely, what the final cause of all evil is, is unanswerable on the philosophical level. Hence, even the so-called privation theory of evil cannot ultimately explain the mystery of evil.

Now that I have indicated the relation of von Hildebrand's conception of the roots of moral evil to tradition (akrasia and the privation theory of evil), I will now turn to this conception itself. In his account, von Hildebrand, as already mentioned, focuses on the analysis and description of concupiscence and pride as the two main roots of moral evil and on the analysis of hatred as one of its main manifestations or consequences.[12]

3. Concupiscence

In von Hildebrand's view, the basic difference between pride and concupiscence is that while concupiscence delves into and throws itself at subjectively satisfying goods, the proud person is characterized by a reflexive gaze at herself (von Hildebrand 2020, p. 465). The relationship between subjective gratification and ego (self) thus differs significantly in each case. To use von Hildebrand's Old Testament metaphor, in concupiscence, "one renounces one's birthright for a mess of pottage" (von Hildebrand 2020, p. 465). In pride, the person arrogates to herself a right that surpasses her; she exalts herself in an illegitimate way. Despite this general distinction between pride and concupiscence, von Hildebrand is very careful not to speak of pride and concupiscence in general. He distinguishes three basic types of concupiscence, more precisely, three basic types of persons afflicted with concupiscence, and a total of four basic types of pride.

The first type of concupiscent person is one in whom "the craving for the agreeable assumes a violent form" and whose "temperament has an impetuous character" (von Hildebrand 2020, p. 462). This is the best-known type of concupiscent person, personified, say, by Don Giovanni from the famous Mozart opera or by the father of the Karamazov brothers in Dostoyevsky's novel. The second is "the vegetative, phlegmatic type in whom concupiscence has the character of a lazy and heavy enslavement to the agreeable" (von Hildebrand 2020, p. 463). "Men in this category", writes von Hildebrand, "do not manifest any passionate impetus, any unquenchable thirst which holds them in a state of perpetual tension. Comfort plays a greater role in their life than the intensely agreeable. Theirs is a bovine heaviness characterized by the predominance of the desire not to be disturbed in the satisfaction of their animal urges. They are too lazy for any passionate craving for the agreeable. But they are nevertheless exclusively absorbed by the subjectively satisfying, mostly concerned with bodily agreeable things, but they also enjoy in a 'Fafnerlike' manner the possession of wealth. Their charnel, blunt approach toward the world makes them completely indifferent to the reign of morally relevant values and incapable of being charitable. They share hardness with the first type, but their hardness has more the character of a blunt and pachyderm-like insensitivity" (von Hildebrand 2020, p. 463).

The third and "soft" type is characterized neither by the passionate craving for the agreeable of the first nor the bovine enslavement by the agreeable of the second. The soft type "reacts in an exaggerated, self-pitying manner to any bodily displeasure or pain" and "likes to be petted, to be surrounded by a soft atmosphere, to be caressed and cherished" (von Hildebrand 2020, p. 463). "He is the man", von Hildebrand writes, "who pities himself, who feels himself to be harshly treated on every occasion, who is incapable of abandonment to the important-in-itself and of any interest in it for its own sake. He always thinks of himself and of his own feelings, and relishes every emotion, instead of focusing on the object which motivates this emotion. His tears are rooted only in his pampered softness and brought on exclusively by the slightest harsh or rough touch; sometimes he even enjoys them for their own sake" (von Hildebrand 2020, p. 463).

The first two types, which von Hildebrand calls "hard", are, despite the quite obvious differences between them, actually shown on several occasions to be much closer to each other than to the "soft" type. What the three types do share in common, however, is total egocentrism, with the only interest in life being the gratification of the desire for the agreeable. As von Hildebrand notes, this fundamental trait makes all of them equally incapable of charity (von Hildebrand 2020, p. 464).

In addition to these three basic ways in which a person can be affected by concupiscence, von Hildebrand makes a number of other distinctions in the sphere of concupiscence. The most basic of these, from a systematic point of view, is the distinction between the pursuit of mere subjective satisfaction, which may or may not have the morally negative character of concupiscence, and the pursuit of mere subjective satisfaction, which is inherently illegitimate and, thus, always a manifestation of concupiscence. He calls the latter "pure" concupiscence. What is remarkable is his observation that "pure" concupiscence has two forms, sadism and curiosity (in the sense of the sensational indiscretion with which some people inquire into the intimate affairs of other people). Now, these two are so different that, at first sight, it would seem that they have nothing in common at all. But this is not the case according to von Hildebrand's analysis. It reveals that the common feature of both of these otherwise quite different phenomena is a desire for mere subjective satisfaction, which is inherently reprehensible and, therefore, cannot take any legitimate form. Unlike, say, sexual gratification, which can take morally legitimate and morally illegitimate forms, the desire of the sadist and the sensationalist is always wrong. The pleasure caused by the sight of another's pain and suffering, or the pleasure the sadist derives from being able to inflict suffering on another person, is always morally reprehensible, regardless of circumstances, historical and cultural conditions and contexts, etc. The same is true, according to von Hildebrand, of indiscriminate sensationalism.

Nonetheless, despite this basic similarity between sadism and sensationalism, there is, von Hildebrand contends, something which sets the former apart from the latter and, in fact, from all types of concupiscence. It is the fact that the source of evil in sadism is not just the disrespect for morally relevant values, discarding the basic value-responding attitude. The sadist's desire for pleasure is different to all other types of desire in that it is necessarily connected with the evil character of the object itself—not with its formal character of being evil as such, but with its material nature, which is intrinsically morally evil. What gratifies this immoral desire is the fact that one knowingly and willingly inflicts suffering upon another person. To take pleasure in such an activity is morally evil, even if the perpetrator believes it is just punishment for the wrongdoings of the victim; it is even more obviously morally evil if the one who suffers is innocent (von Hildebrand 2023).

The distinction between "pure" concupiscence and the pursuit of pleasure, which may or may not be a form of concupiscence, opens up the very complex question of what causes a legitimate form of the pursuit of pleasure (or avoidance of pain) to become morally illegitimate. Von Hildebrand addresses this question by discussing various forms of pleasure seeking and the avoidance of pain. In the course of these analyses, he makes several intriguing points. One of them is the following asymmetry in the concern with physical pleasure and pain; while the pursuit of physical pleasure is always accompanied by the danger that one will abandon the value-responding attitude and that one's relation to the pleasure in question will thereby be stained by concupiscence, the effort of avoiding physical pain does not carry this intrinsic danger.

Here, von Hildebrand points out an interesting fact that has not been noticed in traditional treatises on pleasure, as far as I know. The pursuit of pleasure, he claims, is in itself morally neutral. It becomes morally legitimate only if certain conditions are fulfilled. By contrast, the avoidance of pain and suffering is in itself morally positive. The effort to avoid pain and suffering becomes morally bad only if there is some special obligation to undergo the pain and suffering in question. For example, if someone wants to force me to bear false witness by means of the threat of torture, I may have an obligation to undergo the pain of torture if it cannot be avoided except at the cost of a morally wrong act. By contrast, the pursuit of pleasure might be immoral even if there is no special obligation to abstain from it. But if this is the case, under what conditions is the pursuit of pleasure morally positive?

In von Hildebrand's view, the morality of our desire for pleasure depends on whether this desire is subordinated to the above-mentioned basic value-response attitude. In this context, he very interestingly points out the inadequacy of the concept of moderation,

which is based on the idea of the autonomy of the will in the face of the allure of pleasure (von Hildebrand 2023). He recognizes that this autonomy is definitely an important formal prerequisite for leading a morally good life, as otherwise, despite having the best intentions, one falls prey to one's passions. However, what is crucial from a moral point of view is not the ability to control one's desires by one's will, but the dominion of the aforementioned basic value-response attitude over the centers of pride and concupiscence. It is this preponderance that enables us to find a morally proper approach to pleasure. By contrast, the ability of our will to renounce certain pleasures can be instrumentalized to achieve other, more refined pleasures. If we look at a person dominated by the desire for primitive pleasure and a person dominated by the desire for a more sophisticated pleasure from the perspective of the concept of moderation just discussed, the latter would appear to be morally superior to the former because a higher degree of moderation can be presupposed. However, such a perspective is misleading from a moral point of view, von Hildebrand suggests. A person who is dominated, for example, by the desire for power, and who sacrifices many of the pleasures of a comfortable life to satisfy that desire is not morally superior in that respect. On the contrary, a person may be morally worse than a primitive hedonist despite the fact that she displays a superior capacity for moderation in comparison with the primitive hedonist.

In the edited materials, von Hildebrand does not limit himself to the description and analysis of concupiscence in relation to bodily pleasures and pains. He also turns to the area of psychological pleasure and pain. This passage is perhaps even more interesting than the discussion of bodily pleasures and displeasures. In it, von Hildebrand accumulates insights and analyses approaching what we are used to finding in the existentialist philosophy and in the literature. He explores such various phenomena as games, superficial forms of socializing, the light literature, movies, pop music, and even the concupiscence, which can be detected in the satisfaction of one's psychic urges and in the unloading of one's mental energies.

Below, I limit myself to just two notable points that appear in this section. Both of them concern concupiscence in the area of superficial socializing. Within this area, von Hildebrand distinguishes several phenomena. One of them is the concupiscence of the "elegant man" who seeks the superficial, elegant surroundings of a salon. The tendency of this type of person to substitute a basic value-response attitude for conventional forms of politeness and elegance is, von Hildebrand aptly notes, mostly unconscious and hidden under a mask of good manners. Yet, even here, the ultimate roots of this substitution are pride and concupiscence. Concupiscence, observes von Hildebrand, manifests itself in the desire for superficial distraction that is characteristic of these forms of socializing, in the yearning for "the illusion of a world without suffering and serious problems; the soft atmosphere of politeness and compliments" (von Hildebrand 2023). Pride shows itself in the desire to satisfy this concupiscence while avoiding the humiliating experience of losing self-control, which would tarnish the illusion of the grand social image this "gentleman" has created of himself. According to this fine analysis, this "gentleman's" pride hides his concupiscence from him. Notes of this type testify to von Hildebrand's remarkable capacity for subtle psychological analysis, which, unlike the authors of psychological novels such as Dostoyevsky, is manifested not in the description of individual human characters, but in the description of certain more general character types. In many cases, however, it is not difficult for the reader to find examples of the character described by a literary character or an actually existing person. Sometimes it is von Hildebrand himself who furnishes such fitting examples.

The other particularly notable point in von Hildebrand's description of concupiscence in the area of superficial socializing is his observation that the preference of illusion to reality is a result of concupiscence. He makes this observation in the context of the discussion of the person who pursues superficial socializing in the hope of forgetting, or of escaping the burdensome awareness of her own troubles. Von Hildebrand argues that the tendency of such a person to flee from oppressive reality contradicts the value-response attitude. What

is interesting about this observation is the finding that concupiscence is not only an attitude in which one strives for subjective satisfaction, but also an attitude for which the object, its meaning, and its positive or negative value are not essential. The only thing that matters to such an attitude is subjective states (von Hildebrand 2023). The following passage is worth quoting in full:

> "To prefer an illusion to reality is already a result of concupiscence. The respect for reality, the desire to face it, to remain in conformity with reality and truth is an important formal element of *religio* and the fundamental value-response attitude. The attitude in which one tries to do away with something depressing by ignoring it, by lulling oneself into the illusion that it is not so, in attempting to forget it in plunging into superficial distractions and pleasures, lacks respect for reality and reveals a formal subjectivism which is a fruit of concupiscence.
>
> Additionally, the trend to fly into the periphery, to escape the cross in stepping down to a lower level, to render ourselves in a lower stratum of our life, to yield to the easier way, to avoid the inner effort and *elan*, is a typical fruit of concupiscence. The deep metaphysical laziness which incites us to choose the easier way, to fear any actualization of our depth, is rooted in concupiscence, as is all laziness. And the readiness to give up the deeper strata, to fly into the periphery, which means as such an ignoring of the general *sursum corda* of the reign of the values, an indifference toward their call, is equally rooted in concupiscence". (von Hildebrand 2023)

As mentioned in this quotation, the tendency to escape the weight of reality is not only manifested in the search for superficial entertainment and company. It is also manifested by laziness. Von Hildebrand develops this theme further in a short typescript on this topic, which is included in the edition. There, he distinguishes between laziness in the sense of an unwillingness to work, whether manually or intellectually, and spiritual laziness. And he observes that even "the most assiduous man, efficient in his work, endowed with a great potential for activity and agility, whom we would contrast with the inert and lazy man, the man who could not live without work, who relishes business, who is reliable, punctual, self-controlled, may be typically lazy in the sense of spiritual laziness". (von Hildebrand 2023). This remark is worthy of careful reflection in today's world, which is dominated by work, efficiency, and pragmatism as an existential attitude.

4. Pride

Following this rich, complex, yet systematically elaborate account of concupiscence, von Hildebrand turns to the other main root of moral evil, which is pride. Like concupiscence, pride has many forms. In ch. 35 of his *Ethics*, von Hildebrand distinguishes four basic types of pride. The first, also the rarest and most radical, is satanic pride. This pride aspires to "metaphysical lordship" or "metaphysical grandeur" (von Hildebrand 2020, p. 466). It is because of this aspiration that it revolts in hatred against every value. "The fundamental gesture of this pride", von Hildebrand submits, "is an impotent attempt to dethrone all values, to deprive them of their mysterious metaphysical power" (von Hildebrand 2020, p. 466).

The second basic form of pride is the "pride of self-glorification". It is directed at the values in oneself; however, it does not aim at "dethroning" them. Rather, a person dominated by this form of pride uses values as the means for self-glorification, as the "source of one's grandeur" (von Hildebrand 2020, p. 468). In the edited material, the pride of self-glorification is further divided into sub-types, each of which relates to the set of values that is exploited (von Hildebrand 2023). The most morally abominable is self-glorification in religious and moral values. Von Hildebrand calls it the pride of the Pharisee. A less serious type is pride taken in one's intellectual values. Even less objectionable is taking pride in one's good looks, bodily strength, and so on. Hence, the moral seriousness

of this type of pride depends on the position of the respective values in the hierarchy of values.

The third basic type of pride is vanity (von Hildebrand 2020, p. 471). It consists of relishing the possession of real or alleged perfections. Vanity does not feature the immoral attitude to the values we find in both satanic pride and the pride of self-glorification. A vain person may have a certain understanding of values and a readiness to conform to their call. In addition, vanity can be restricted to certain spheres of values. For example, one can be proud of one's appearance and yet be indifferent to higher values, such as intelligence or moral integrity (von Hildebrand 2020, p. 471).

The fourth basic type of pride von Hildebrand lists is haughtiness (von Hildebrand 2020, pp. 473–75). Like vanity, haughtiness is partially compatible with a value-response attitude because it does not imply a hatred of values. In this type of pride, values are not used as a means of self-glorification. A haughty person can have respect for certain values and recognize the moral norms that are based on them. In certain cases, she may also recognize legitimate authority. However, such a person is incapable of displaying moral emotions such as contrition, compassion, or gratitude—contrition, because haughtiness does not permit the admission of personal moral failures, even to oneself; compassion, because it is based on the idol of pseudo-virility; and gratitude, because it refuses to recognize one's indebtedness to another person. A haughty person is also averse to admitting the limits of her strength and independence because she sees this as an admission of personal weakness, frailty, or guilt. She recognizes only one evil, which is weakness.

We find this remarkable fourfold categorization of pride both in von Hildebrand's *Ethics* and in the edited materials on the roots of moral evil. The second type of pride, namely, the pride of self-glorification, is elaborated in great detail in the edited materials. There, von Hildebrand makes three particularly noteworthy points.

The first is that the pride of self-glorification is not always based on the values one really possesses, but also on the values one presumes to ascribe to oneself. For example, a conceited person may pride herself on her presumed intelligence, education, or appearance. Second, this pride can even be based on what is a disvalue in reality, for example, when a man prides himself on being macho. Third, von Hildebrand even considers the possibility that human pride is wounded by the realization that one does not have certain values. As in the case of pride of self-glorification based on values that one actually has, the severity of this pride is proportional to the height of the value that the person realizes he or she lacks. If one's pride is hurt by not having, say, a beautiful appearance, it is much more innocuous and superficial than the wounded pride of acknowledging oneself as insufficiently intelligent or artistically skilled.

The passage in which von Hildebrand analyzes the negative attitudes that this type of pride can provoke is very interesting. The first of these is the envy that someone whose pride is hurt by not having a certain value feels toward the one who has it—whether actually or allegedly (von Hildebrand 2023). What is even worse than envy is the second attitude, which is resentment. This attitude is characterized by an effort to overcome the feeling of one's own inferiority by belittling or even denying the superiority of the one to whom one feels inferior. To give an example, Jack hates John because his pride is hurt by the fact that John is much more intelligent than Jack. In order to avoid an unpleasant feeling of inferiority, Jack makes himself believe that intelligence is not actually desirable. The danger of this attitude is that, unlike envy, of which the envious person is often conscious, resentment is usually unconscious and unacknowledged. It is a moral poison that acts slowly and covertly, but its effects are all the worse. Von Hildebrand intriguingly notes that resentment is linked to satanic pride by a hatred of values, and a desire to dethrone them. But unlike satanic pride, the reason for this desire to dethrone a given value is not simply the hatred of the metaphysical power of the given value, but the inability to bear the superiority of the person imbued with that value (von Hildebrand 2023).

As in the case of concupiscence, von Hildebrand does not limit his discussion to a description of the basic types of pride, but makes a number of distinctions within pride

that cut across the types. One of them is the distinction between dynamic and static pride. Static pride is pride that stems from the knowledge that one is a bearer of certain (alleged or actual) values. Dynamic pride is the craving for the acquisition of certain values. While in the pride of self-glorification, we find both of these types of pride, or rather, this type of pride can take both static and dynamic forms, vanity and haughtiness are, by their nature, largely static kinds of pride, von Hildebrand notes.

I would like to conclude this section on a critical note. In his descriptions of the pride of self-glorification, von Hildebrand makes the following three seemingly contradictory assertions: (1) taking pride in merely imagined values is less serious than being proud of the values that one actually possesses;[13] (2) the Pharisee takes pride in merely imagined (non-existent) values;[14] and (3) Pharisaic pride is the morally worse form of the pride of self-glorification.[15] Von Hildebrand does not explain anywhere how these three statements can be simultaneously true. The following is my best guess at how this might be the case: Although (1) is true even in respect of moral and religious values, since the value-response attitude presupposed for the acquisition and possession of these values is incompatible with the attitude of pride, it is impossible for a person to take pride in moral or religious values *if they are real*. For this reason, in the case of moral or religious values, making a comparison between pride taken in real values and pride taken in merely imagined values is pointless. However, if one were to make such a comparison, as a thought experiment, it would reveal, even in this case, that pride taken in real values is worse than pride taken in those that are imagined. This is my best guess at how the three aforementioned statements can all be true at the same time. In any case, it is a shortcoming of von Hildebrand that he does not anticipate this objection and does not attempt to answer it. Since we are discussing unpublished manuscripts, it is possible that we would find this answer in the published version of the text. However, we can only speculate about this possibility. To my knowledge, the unpublished material in von Hildebrand´s *Nachlass*—which is all we have in this case—includes no such text.

5. Hatred

The theme of hatred was already mentioned in connection with von Hildebrand's claim that moral evil and moral good are polar opposites. I would like to return to this theme in this final section of the paper. The main reason for this is the fact that hatred, along with concupiscence and pride, is the central theme of the edited materials on the roots of moral evil.[16] Moreover, by presenting von Hildebrand's analysis of the nature, main forms, and causes of hatred, it becomes more obvious why von Hildebrand considers hatred to be the polar opposite of love.

Right at the beginning of his analysis of hatred in the edited materials, von Hildebrand attempts to specify what type of opposition is found between love and hatred. He does so by comparing it to other types of opposites. The contrast between love and hatred is, he submits, fundamentally different from, say, the contrast between joy and sadness, or esteem and contempt. This is because these opposites have their origin in the antithetical character of the objects to which they refer. By contrast, the opposition of love and hatred has its origin in the antithetical character of the basic intention and center in the human person in which it originates. Let me explain. Contempt is a due response to a disvalue; esteem is a due response to a value. Sorrow is a response to a disvalue; joy is a response to a value. Hatred, by contrast, is not an expression of a value-response attitude differing from love, only in that it refers to an object, the importance of which is antithetical to the importance of the object of love. "Hatred in the strict sense", von Hildebrand contends, "is never a value-response attitude. Its venomous dark character is qualitatively the very antithesis of the victorious intrinsic goodness of charity" (von Hildebrand 2023). Thus, unlike the aforementioned opposites, love and hatred come from opposite centers in man. While love comes from the reverent, value-responding center, hatred has its roots in pride, concupiscence, or both.

Since the connection between concupiscence and hatred is less direct and articulate, von Hildebrand primarily elaborates upon the link between hatred and pride. This connection depends on what type of pride and hatred we are speaking about. The worst form of pride, that is, satanic pride, is the actual source of the worst form of hatred, which is the hatred of God (von Hildebrand 2023). The less severe forms of hatred are not so intrinsically linked to pride. What is crucial to the emergence of hatred from these forms of pride is whether it is a pride based on the (actual or alleged) possession of a particular value or a pride wounded by the knowledge that one does not possess a particular value.[17] In the first case, the person will experience hatred only accidentally, that is, only upon discovering that the possession of the qualities one prides oneself on is rivaled or surpassed in someone else. The second case is much worse. Pride that is wounded by the awareness of one's own inferiority often leads to resentment, a condition that, as already mentioned, poisons the human soul and human relationships.

However, there are also types of hatred that are neither rooted in pride nor in concupiscence, von Hildebrand notes. One of them is hatred that is associated with revenge. In von Hildebrand's view, in order to grasp the link between revenge and hatred, we must first understand that revenge is not a primitive predecessor of the principle that crime deserves punishment. The avenger does not want to punish the crime in order to make justice triumph, but to hit back when he has been injured (von Hildebrand 2023). That means that revenge is impossible without believing oneself to have been harmed by the person deemed responsible, whether this is true or not. Second, revenge gives a particular kind of satisfaction to the avenger. This satisfaction arises by causing suffering to the one who (actually or supposedly) wronged him. Part of this satisfaction is connected to a feeling of exacting, so to speak, "payback" for the original injury. And it is precisely hatred that causes this desire and that makes its satisfaction a pleasure. This is, in sum, the relationship between hatred and revenge.

I will conclude my presentation of von Hildebrand's discussion of hatred by alerting the reader to an intriguing response by von Hildebrand to the following question: "How do hatred and other negative feelings arise in the heart of a person when they are rooted neither in pride nor in concupiscence?" His answer is that hatred and other negative feelings are, in this case, a morally decent person's reaction to repeated offenses. In describing the dynamics leading to this abominable result, von Hildebrand develops an intriguing Christian interpretation of Plato's *thymos*, that is, the spirited or irascible part of the human soul (Plato 2003, Book IV). He argues that when someone is unjustly attacked, his or her affective reaction to this attack is not an expression of either pride or concupiscence. It is morally legitimate. Nonetheless, this originally legitimate reaction can (and often does) become the point of origin of hatred of the perpetrator. In explaining how this happens, he draws on the conceptual resources laid down in his magisterial treatment of what he terms cooperative freedom in chapter 25 of *Ethics* (von Hildebrand 2020, pp. 331–53). In this chapter, he explains that there are two ways in which our freedom cooperates with our affective reactions. The first is when we approve of them. He calls this act "sanctioning". The effect of this act is that what was originally just an instinctive affective reaction becomes an affective response that is fully our own. The second is a negative act. He calls it "disavowing". Through this act, we distance our personal, spiritual self from our affective responses.

Von Hildebrand highlights two crucial points regarding this capacity of inner freedom toward our affective responses. The first is that many of us are unaware of this capacity. He calls these people "morally unconscious". To be morally unconscious is to be unaware of our ability to sanction or disavow our affective responses. The second point is the moral relevance of sanctioning and disavowing. To disavow a morally illicit affective response, such as malicious joy, is morally good. In fact, in von Hildebrand's view, it is even morally obligatory because it is not morally licit to live in naïve solidarity with such a response. Now, while we do not have a moral obligation to dissolve such affective responses immediately and directly by will alone (a plainly impossible task in any event), we are morally compelled

to disavow them whenever we become consciously aware of their occurrence; only then can we avoid living in naïve solidarity with *all* of our affective responses. Not only that, but we are also ethically bound to sanction our morally appropriate affective responses.

Applying these insights to the possibility (and, arguably, moral duty) of the cooperation of our will with the affective reactions of our irascible center to repeated offenses, he describes the dynamics leading to the emergence of hatred in the heart of the morally unconscious person. Such a person will experience her natural hostile reaction to the repeated offenses as completely legitimate. In fact, such a reaction *is* legitimate, provided that the insults are real and not just imagined, says von Hildebrand. The slippery slope starts, however, when this initially quite justified indignation of the injured against the one who injures him develops into a full-fledged hatred. This is possible precisely because the injured person is unaware both of its ability and of its moral duty to disavow morally negative affective responses such as a hatred of the offender. "Whereas the morally conscious man will disavow these impulses with his free spiritual center and counteract them, this morally unconscious type will fall prey to the immanent logic of his hostile impulses. [...] He looks at his hatred as something morally legitimate because he has preserved the original consciousness of the legitimacy of his hostility during this entire process of degeneration". (von Hildebrand 2023)

6. Conclusions

The aim of this article is to introduce the reader to a remarkable conception of the roots of moral evil found in the published and unpublished works of Dietrich von Hildebrand. A specific feature of this approach is the unusual combination of a highly systematic approach to the problem at hand (an attempt to identify the two basic roots of all forms of moral evil) with the immense breadth of the phenomena described and analyzed. It is as if the Aristotelian sense of the systematic nature of philosophical knowledge here meets the phenomenological sensibility to the originality and mutual non-reducibility of various moral phenomena. Moreover, as I have indicated, von Hildebrand's choice and treatment of certain topics evokes the approach of the existentialists.

Although I have tried to place von Hildebrand's conception, at least in some respects, on the conceptual map defined by the most prominent traditional approaches to the problem of moral evil, it is clear that the aim of studying this conception is not to obtain clues for its inclusion in one or another compartment of systematic or historical positions. The most fruitful way to read von Hildebrand's texts is, as with many of the phenomenology-oriented authors, to learn to make the phenomena described present in one's own rational intuition and to see whether the author's way of describing them is true to their intelligible nature. Thus, the study of von Hildebrand's conception of the roots of moral evil is, like the study of much of his philosophical work, an offer of a *symphilosophein*, in the spirit of Husserl's maxim "To the things themselves!"

The obvious Christian, indeed, specifically Catholic, inspiration at many points in von Hildebrand's ethical writings does not mean that we are methodologically moving from this philosophical/phenomenological level to the plane of moral theology. Although it might sometimes seem so, von Hildebrand's ethics is not Christian, or specifically Catholic, in the sense that it methodologically leaves the plane of what can be stated in purely philosophical/phenomenological terms. Its Christian/Catholic inspiration manifests itself primarily in the idea that the moral excellence of the saints far exceeds the moral virtues of even the noblest pagans. The truth of this claim, von Hildebrand argues, is independent of a belief or disbelief in Christian mysteries. It depends solely on whether it can actually be shown in philosophical terms that specifically Christian virtues such as humility or neighborly love are a higher realization of the ideal of moral excellence than, say, the cardinal virtues of natural ethics, that is, wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice, and whether the Christian saints incorporate these higher virtues and ideals to a higher degree than the "noblest pagans". It is in this sense that von Hildebrand's ethics and *Ethics* are Christian (von Hildebrand 2020, pp. 479–89).[18]

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Notes

1   Despite being born in Florence, Italy, and living in the US since 1940, Dietrich von Hildebrand's family roots were in Munich. His father, Adolf von Hildebrand, an important artist and art theorist, built a villa for his family located beautifully on the outskirts of the famous *Englisches Garten*, the huge city park in the center of Munich. Dietrich von Hildebrand inherited this villa and lived there with his family until 1933, when, as one of the most outspoken opponents of Nazism, he had to leave Germany. Although, after the war, he never returned to Munich; he decided that his literary bequest should be deposited in the Bavarian State Library, where the bequests of other Munich phenomenologists are also deposited. On von Hildebrand's fight against Nazism, see von Hildebrand (2000, 2014).

2   Regarding concupiscence, the first main root of moral evil according to von Hildebrand, and the difference between *Ethics* and the edited material, is that while in the former, many different forms of concupiscence are merely listed, in the latter, these same forms are elaborated at length (von Hildebrand 2020, pp. 458–59). Regarding pride, the second main root of moral evil according to von Hildebrand, the new aspect with respect to *Ethics* is, in the edited materials, the discussion of various problems and points arising from the analysis of pride in *Ethics*, but left out from that work. In general, one may say that regarding both concupiscence and pride, the novelty of the edited material with respect to *Ethics* lies mainly in offering explications and further developments of themes mentioned or implied in *Ethics* rather than in presenting something entirely new. The most substantial new idea to be found in the edited material with respect to *Ethics* is the theme of hatred. In *Ethics*, hatred is mentioned as one of the evil responses rooted in pride (von Hildebrand 2020, p. 476). But it is only in the edited materials that it is given proper attention and is analyzed in its various forms and its complex relations not just to pride, but also to concupiscence and revenge.

3   For the purposes of this study, I take the two terms as being equivalent.

4   For Plato's account, see Plato (2003, Book IV); for Aristotle, see Aristotle (1985, Book VII). For a more detailed comparison of von Hildebrand's account of acratic action with Plato's and Aristotle´s, see Cajthaml (2019, pp. 91–122).

5   Note that, for Scheler, the acts of preference (*Vorziehen*) and depreciation (*Nachsetzen*) of values are cognitive acts, not volitional ones.

6   Scheler's account is arguably more sophisticated than this, but is still unable to adequately explain situations similar to the dilemma of going to the amusing event vs. assisting one's friend. Cf. the critical discussion of P. H. Spader's attempt to justify Scheler's position in the face of Hildebrand's criticism (Cajthaml 2019, pp. 64–69).

7   In the edited materials, von Hildebrand occasionally uses the expression "*religio* to the world of values", where *religio* is equivalent to a "value-response attitude". The term "religio" is used in these contexts in an explicitly moral sense but with implicit religious connotations. As just mentioned, von Hildebrand uses it as equivalent to the value-response attitude in the sense of the fundamental, ultimate, most foundational attitude of the human person toward the "world of values", particularly, the "morally relevant values". "Religio" hence means the very foundation of all moral goodness in the human person. Simply put, the moral life consists of, according to von Hildebrand, fulfilling the task of giving the "world of values", that is, the entire sphere of what is intrinsically precious, its due and to respond adequately to its "call". From the moral point of view, the most important is to give its due to morally relevant values, that is, values to which to respond makes us good in the specifically moral sense as opposed to, say, values to which to respond makes us good artists or scientists. Since, however, for von Hildebrand, the ultimate source of all values is God understood in the specifically Christian sense, that is, as the Holy Trinity, the attitude of *religio* is implicitly, ultimately, an attitude toward God, and to that extent, it is a "religious attitude". But this attitude is different for a Christian or other believer in a personal God, who serves God consciously and deliberately through his service to the "world of values", and for an atheist who, if he serves the world of values, serves God without realizing it. The same is true in reverse; the believer in God consciously opposes God by rejecting the basic value-response attitude to the world of values, whereas the atheist does not. This answer could, of course, be further refined, but it is perhaps sufficient for a basic understanding of von Hildebrand in this respect.

8   Clearly, the motivation behind the decision to help a friend in need would require a much more detailed analysis. It is certainly not a response to a single value, but a motivation that may, depending on the actual situation, include a whole host of values in many imaginable mutual constellations. These values would probably include, among others, the value of fidelity to one´s friend, the value of his or her life (if it is threatened), and the value of his or her well-being.

9   On the basis of this chapter, it is safe to assume that the mental conflict and the possibility of acting against one's better knowledge illustrated by the above example of the friend and the amusing event presupposes the first (and perhaps most prevalent) moral character mentioned, i.e., a morally struggling person in whom the antithetical centers openly struggle with each other. This

shows at the same time that, according to von Hildebrand, the problem of the roots of moral evil lies not primarily at the level of the will, which determines the direction and goal of individual actions, but at the deeper level of basic human attitudes, which, as just indicated, admits several basic constellations between antithetical "centers".

10 In the Christian tradition, this view dates back at least to Augustine, who, for his part, probably adopted it from Neoplatonism.

11 This becomes more obvious from von Hildebrand's description of hatred, discussed below.

12 See above, note 2.

13 Cf. the following passage: "The man who abuses the possession of authentic values by considering them as mere means to his grandeur and superiority, is more responsible because he is at least able to grasp a real value and, nevertheless, instead of gratitude to God in the case of exterior perfections or of the consciousness of his insufficiency with respect to the tasks to which his capacities are ordered in the case of intellectual values, he turns back to himself and uses these values as means to his grandeur. The conceited man who glorifies himself in imaginary perfection, by contrast, is already disabled by his naïve self-satisfaction from distinguishing the presence of a real value. This pride, though obviously immoral as such, as any pride, above all affects his intelligence and his capacity to grasp reality, and renders him more ridiculous than wicked. The more we are confronted with real values, the more we have really received a gift from God's bounty, the worse and more serious is the attitude of pride" (von Hildebrand 2023).

14 "The Pharisee, as someone who is completely dominated by pride, can obviously never possess true moral and religious values. He glorifies himself *a fortiori* always in non-existent values, in contradistinction to the man who is proud about intellectual values or exterior perfections" (von Hildebrand 2023).

15 This third claim follows from the following three assertions that von Hildebrand repeatedly makes: (1) the higher the values that one takes pride in, the morally worse the pride itself is; (2) the highest personal values are moral and religious; (3) Pharisaic pride seeks glory in alleged moral and religious values.

16 Cf. above, note 2.

17 This distinction was already mentioned in the discussion of pride.

18 At the time this article was ready to print, the edition of the materials from von Hildebrand´s *Nachlass* I cite in it was not yet paginated. There is not much point in quoting these materials according to the signatures in von Hildebrand´s *Nachlass*. Therefore, I exceptionally quote this source without citing the pages.

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A Spiritual Theology of Integral Human Development: To "Grow in Holiness"

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Abstract: The article identifies the nature of integral human development as a Christian imperative and an incarnational life of responsibility for others. To grow in holiness through the truth of the Gospel signifies overcoming the egoism of the self, being generous in responsibility (love in truth), and discovering a beatitude of hope to become sons and daughters of God (truth in love). Engaging truth in the light of history, evil, and death, the article proceeds to relate the encounter of the soul with "the depths of God" (1 Cor 2:10) to learn from the Spirit a life aimed for the common good. The path to "the depths of God" is one of hope to encounter the vulnerability of the other and oneself, a journey into boldness, newness, and redemption with Christ towards the face of the forsaken and poor. Integral human development, a pathway of peace and healing "to the far and the near" (Isa 57:19), is otherwise than an evasion of love and responsibility. For in the proclamation and witness that "God is love" (1 Jn 4:16) lies the hope to build the earthly city of God and herald an end to war, indifference, and hatred of others.

Keywords: integral human development; eschatology; Levinas; love; Maritain; otherness; Pope Benedict XVI; spirituality; truth; von Balthasar

1. Introduction

Integral human development is borne out of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition animated by the nineteenth-century growing concerns for social justice and the twentieth-century developments of religious-inspired humanism. In Jacques Maritain's words, "the *concrete logic of the events of history*" (Maritain 1936, p. 1) invited a fraternal, social response. After Vatican II, responding to world interest in "development" (Pope 2019, p. 125), key papal writings began to emerge and engage "development" to give a theological and spiritual witness to social and political concerns so that "the rational creature should of his own accord direct his life to God, the first truth and the highest good" (Pope Paul VI 1967, no. 16). Later, Pope St. John Paul II would assert, "If 'development is the new name for peace,' war and military preparations are the major enemy of the integral development of peoples" (Pope John-Paul II 1987, no. 10). Less than ten years later, Pope Benedict XVI enumerated, "Love in truth—*caritas in veritate*—is a great challenge for the Church in a world that is becoming progressively and pervasively globalized" (Pope Benedict XVI 2009, no. 9). And more recently, commenting from the context of a growing alienation through a "consumer society" of "feverish demands . . . superficial information, instant communication, and virtual reality" (Pope Francis 2018, no. 108), Pope Francis stated, "In such a society, politics, mass communications and economic, cultural, and even religious institutions become so entangled as to become an obstacle to authentic human and social development. As a result, the Beatitudes are not easy to live out; any attempt to do so will be viewed negatively, regarded with suspicion, and met with ridicule" (Pope Francis 2018, no. 91).

Together, these papal voices testify to the essential hope for "integral human development" in a globalized world rapidly embracing "superficial" and morally evil ways of living and relating (Pope Francis 2018, no. 108). Such a hope resounds in the language of

fraternity, solidarity, generosity, and spiritual formation and growth. Aspiring towards such a language of transcendence amongst people of faith is a first step to meeting and responding to the great dangers to human flourishing and integral development, such as war and genocide, alienation, loneliness, superficiality, indifference to suffering, hunger, and poverty. A major challenge then is to hear God's word as much as act upon it.

In terms of introducing and developing a spiritual theology of integral human development, the Christian imperative, "Truly, I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Matt 25:40), offers a directive to form humanity in the goodness of truth and love, to hear and respond to God's word in the other's face. Further, for example, having walked centuries to splinter in hope and collide with human reason, the Gospel imperative, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:39), has set out to put into question history and culture as much as economic, social, and political consciousness. The "concrete logic of the events of history" in all its "human wisdom" (1 Cor 1:25) remains a challenge to integral human development. This is because, by inviting a spiritual theological and biblical lens, integral human development attunes to the "stumbling block" and foolishness of "Christ crucified" (1 Cor 1:23).

Integral human development takes place in and with Christ (2 Cor 6:4–5), witnessing to a spiritual practice of resilience in faith: "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing and yet possessing everything" (2 Cor 6:10). "God's foolishness" and "God's weakness" (1 Cor 1:25) signifies that "now," today, is the time to proclaim "a day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:2), a day of divine goodness and generosity, through embracing the incarnational and paschal truth that "God is love" (1 Jn 4:16). The little goodness and sensibility of integral human development, borne out of charity in truth, testifies to the invincibility of God's presence in spiritual and material poverty, righteousness, gentleness, mercy, peace, and boldness (cf. Matt 5:3–12). One may call this hope an eschatological witness of faith in God's word as one encounters the poverty and suffering of others.

Integral human development breaks open the integrity, dignity, and goodness of the human person. God enters the inner heart and soul of life, breathing the Spirit of hope to unveil the gift of forgiveness in Jesus Christ. A spirituality of integral human development will invite participation in the mysteries of the faith, to be "poor in spirit" (Matt 5:3), gentle yet bold to accept a pathway towards mission, charity, and truth. To this end, the article itself will seek to develop a spiritual theology of integral human development through a dialogue and conversation between Christian theology and Emmanuel Levinas' philosophy. Levinas, a Jewish–French Talmudic philosopher, offers a radical humanism of the other (alterity) that can help direct integral human development into an ethical, metaphysical domain. At the same time, it invites a provocative challenge to the Christian spiritual and theological imagination of faith to seek not just "a better world," but a "new world" (Kasper [1977] 1993, p. 96), a "wisdom of love at the service of love," or in more theological terms, a "Kingdom of a non-thematizable God" (Levinas [1998] 1999, pp. 52, 162).

By "non-thematizable," Levinas means, "The good that reigns in its goodness cannot enter into the present of consciousness," that is to say, God's goodness ("Kingdom") is beyond the ontological strivings of the "history of Being" (Levinas [1998] 1999, p. 52). The good is beyond being; otherwise, it is anarchic (without origin), immemorial (since or "in" the "beginning" (Gen 1:1)), and diachronic (coming to time through responsibility). Moreover, such goodness, bearing witness to the glory of the Infinite God (that "the Kingdom of God is ethical" (Levinas [1998] 1999, p. 183)), cannot be reduced to the totality of ego-consciousness. Levinas signifies such testimony of divine goodness as the trace of illeity ("the *he* in the depth of the you" (Levinas 1998a, p. 165) that "overflows both cognition and the enigma through which the Infinite [God] leaves a trace in cognition" (Levinas [1998] 1999, p. 162). Illeity is also "holiness" or the spontaneity of responsibility in the words, "Here I am" (Levinas [1998] 1999, pp. 152, 162), namely of having encountered God's word and command to be responsible for the other from the depths of the soul. Illeity can further be conceived as moments of justice overflowing with mercy remaining as a

trace, "a past that has never been present" (Levinas 1998a, p. 165). The idea of charity, in truth, is a "difficult freedom" (Levinas 1990, p. 272) of being held "hostage" (Levinas 1996a, p. 91) to the other and the Infinite. For Levinas, the illeity of God's trace and word reveals a command, ordination/order (Levinas 1998b, p. 111), and "liturgy" (Levinas 1990, p. xiv) of responsibility.

Pursuing Levinas' ethical metaphysics of otherness, the article will engage the following areas to introduce a spiritual theology of integral human development: (i) History and truth; (ii) truth beyond evil and death; (iii) into the "depths of God"; (iv) towards a theology of hope; and (v) to be sons and daughters of God. History need not develop into the convenience of lies. Truth acts to interrupt and contradict the totality of egoism in the face of charity, justice, and mercy. Here, where truth and love come together, a theology of hope comes to mind, that is to say, an eschatological vocation and mission to be sons and daughters of God, to be the leaven (Matt 13:33) in the world, unveiling fragments (Matt 15:27), spaces for healing and compassion, from the depths of the Father's Kingdom to build the foundations for an "*earthly city*" of "unity and peace" (Pope Benedict XVI 2009, no. 7).

For the most part, integral human development has had a greater focus on "Catholic social ethics" (Pope 2019, p. 123). In this article, the aim is to recover and develop the emphasis on the spiritual dimension of integral human development. Given that "Jacques Maritain's 'integral humanism' provided the normative perspective from which the pope [Pope Paul VI] could elaborate a rich and differentiated conception of authentic development" (Pope 2019, p. 127), there are pressing areas of Maritain's emphasis on spiritual, theological themes to begin to put into service. In addition to this dimension, Levinas' ethical metaphysics will also be employed. His writings are not easy to understand. This is because he taxes, as it were, the philosophical and theological imagination of faith to grow toward an ethical horizon of otherness, being for the other. This is at once both demanding and provocative. Levinas demands attention to the sufferings of the other to provoke a response of compassion, the bodiliness of suffering for the other revealing truth as an encounter with God's word. Truth, abiding in God's word, appeals through the other's face and awakens the conscience to act beyond the self-interest of being. Otherwise than the essence of being (as anonymous existence), Levinas situates truth in love beyond eros (the totality of the ego seeking its own possibilities and enjoyment) and articulates love in truth as the hyperbolic giving of oneself for the other. This means, in effect, that responsibility for the neighbor never ends, paralleling that human beings are made in the image of "The Infinite," God.

Levinas' writings have resonated through the work of a growing number of Christian theologians, beginning with such prominent figures as "Jean-Luc Marion, Michel Henry, and Jean-Louis Chrétien in France, and Roger Burggraeve in Belgium" and "of the new generation of theologians and philosophers of religion who advance theology in a phenomenological voice" (Purcell 2006, p. 3). This article will engage especially Levinas' writings with Maritain, von Balthasar, and Popes Benedict XIV and Francis. Von Balthasar will find appeal in the section on eschatology (theology of hope), while Maritain, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis, writers for the most part who have contributed towards a spiritual and theological understanding of integral human development (Pope 2019, p. 139), will be major dialogue partners. The spiritual and theological papal reflections on integral human development can seem like fragments of spiritual direction for the Church faithful. Given the emphasis on social, ethical, and economic themes of integral human development, there is a need then to develop the "face" of the spiritual–theological dimension: to "grow in holiness." Accordingly, the article seeks to bring out a new direction of integral human development through a Levinasian lens, bringing the richness of the Jewish and Christian traditions together, namely, a spiritual–theological horizon for the imagination of faith to be articulated in service, responsibility, care, and love for others.

2. History and Truth

At the origins of developing a definition of integral human development is the concept of humanism and how it relates to history. Jacques Maritain reflects:

> To leave the discussion quite open, let us say that humanism ... tends to make man more truly human and to manifest his original grandeur by enabling him to participate in everything which can enrich him in nature and history ... it demands that man develop his powers, his creative energies, and the life of reason, and at the same time labor to make the forces of the physical world instruments of his freedom" (Maritain 1936, p. 1).

The ideal of human nature is connected to transcendence, going beyond oneself to employ "powers" of "creative energies" and "reason." Freedom and truth signify in the "human" a "uniqueness as someone for whom no one else can substitute himself" (Levinas [1998] 1999, p. 59). Suppose freedom itself is to become "truly" a part of human goodness through the generosity of alterity, a life of holiness demonstrated by the Beatitudes (Matt 5–12). In that case, one may wonder what contaminates the "creative energies" and "life of reason" to be "inflated and altered" (Levinas [1998] 1999, p. 59) by the ego. For Maritain, people are tempted by error. By revealing such a position, he invites reflection on the foundation of Christian humanism (and integral human development):

> Instead of an open human nature and an open reason, and this is real nature and real reason, people make out that there exists a nature and a reason isolated by themselves and *shut up* in themselves, and exclusive of everything, not themselves.

> Instead of a human and rational development in continuity with the Gospel, people demand such a development as replacing the Gospel (Maritain 1936, p. 2).

Integral human development is otherwise than the self-centered ego that possesses a "history" of replacing the Gospel with practices and ideas that separate them from God's love and, hence, salvation history. Walter Kasper points out the theological consequence of denying the "Kingdom of God" (the "age of love") (Kasper [1977] 1993, p. 86):

> Love reveals itself as the meaning of life. The world and man find fulfillment only in love. In practice, however, human beings have separated themselves from the love of God by sin and put themselves at the service of egotism, self-seeking, self-will, self-advantage, and self-importance. Everything falls apart in meaningless isolation and a general battle of all against all. In place of unity come loneliness and isolation, and the isolated individual falls victim to meaninglessness. ... Love is the answer to the search for a just and human world, the solution to the riddle of history. It is the wholeness of man and the world (Kasper [1977] 1993, pp. 86–87).

If "modern atheistic humanism asserts" that God is a "restriction ... of human freedom" (Kasper [1977] 1993, p. 16), then the consequences are ominous: the search for a humanism of "liberation and reconciliation" purged of its Judeo–Christian "identity," which must therefore demand another history, not a "salvation history," but one of enlightenment (reason) denying religious faith, or, for example, the barbarism of political and nationalistic ideologies that speak more of torture, murder, and hatred. For Levinas, the essence of modern anti-humanism is that it makes the human person rather than God "the aim of reality" (Levinas 2003, p. 56). Reflecting on the "essence of evil" as the sin and egoism of refusing to be responsible (denying that God has immemorially or anarchically made/ordered/ordained a human person to be responsible), Levinas writes:

> From a responsibility even more ancient than the *conatus* of substance, more ancient than the beginning and the principle, from the anarchic, the ego returned to self, responsible for others, hostage of everyone, that is, substituted for everyone by its very non-interchangeability, hostage of all the others who, precisely *others*, do not belong to the same genus as the ego because I am responsible for them

without concerning myself about their responsibility for me because I am, in the last analysis and from the start, even responsible for that, the ego, I; I am man holding up the universe "full of things." Responsibility or saying prior to Being and beings, not saying itself in ontological categories. Modern anti-humanism may be wrong in not finding for man, lost in history and in order, the trace of this pre-historic an-archic saying (Levinas 2003, p. 57).

The progress of appreciating the spiritual import of integral human development rests in divine love. In the age of love, in the Kingdom of an unthematizable God beyond ontological assertions made in egoism, violence, and hostility, there remains an ethical-spiritual hope to "introduce sense into being" (the Levinasian idea of having a sense in being) and consciousness (Levinas 2003, p. 56). Such anarchic or "pre-original responsibility" directs the heart and soul of the human person to a new "knowing" and "wondering," namely to understand the temptation to separate oneself "from the Good" (Levinas 2003, p. 55). St. Paul knew this spiritual reality where, in paraphrasing Isa 64:4, he reflected:

> But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him'—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also, no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. Now, we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual. (1 Cor 2:9–13)

If indeed the Kingdom of God is the "age of love," the Levinasian notion of having a sense of being and taking hold of the inner vocation of the "uniqueness of the I" means that one cannot escape responsibility (Levinas 1996a, p. 55). To have a sense of the existence and reality of being is to encounter a "persecuted truth" (Levinas 1998b, p. 55) in history, that the I is hostage (responsible) to the other. The metaphor of a "hostage" means a grave responsibility to hold up the universe with God and, hence, to take on a hyperbolic responsibility of love (agape). Such a "persecuted truth" points to the ideals of holiness and humility: "an unexceptional responsibility" (Levinas [1998] 1999, p. 59) to be "humble, as allied with the vanquished, the poor, and the persecuted" (Levinas 1998b, p. 55).

One may imagine that truth is a function of timidity or weak passivity. Rather, truth is otherwise than the essence of prejudice, judgments, and infantile beliefs that reduce others to facts, cold objectivity devoid of ethical subjectivity, inflating the worth of historical data with tempting illusions of truth. Beyond such errors of historical constructs beholden to political, economic, and social representations and even violence, there is the analogy of being par excellence in Jesus Christ. His compassion and courage provide a pathway toward integral human development. Pope Francis reflects:

> Look at Jesus. His deep compassion reached out to others. It did not make him hesitant, timid, or self-conscious, as often happens with us. Quite the opposite. His compassion made him go out actively to preach and to send others on a mission of healing and liberation. Let us acknowledge our weakness, but allow Jesus to lay hold of it and send us tooon mission. We are weak, yet we hold a treasure that can enlarge us and make those who receive it better and happier. Boldness and apostolic courage are an essential part of mission (Pope Francis 2018, no. 131).

To "acknowledge our weakness," the meekness and gentleness to "inherit the earth" (Matt 5:5; cf. Ps. 37:11) signifies an awakening towards "the abundant prosperity" (Ps. 37:11) of being formed in mission by Christ. This is to receive a "treasure" of "boldness and apostolic courage." Integral human development lies in God's depths, in the Spirit that submits to God apophatically (1 Cor 2:9–10), in order to understand spiritual wisdom other

than the being of the essence and historical representations that remain resistant to the face of the poor and stranger. "Proximity to God" is a function of humility and even persecution (Levinas 1998b, p. 56). To approach God and grow in holiness is also to wrestle with the darkness of the world. Where history and truth collide together, leaving a dust storm, so to speak, in its wake of uncertainty and ambiguity, one may discover settled amongst the scattered particles, almost unseen, glimpses, visions, and voices of evil and death.

3. Truth beyond Evil and Death

The horrors of human life put faith and belief into question. Along the spiritual path of integral human development, healthy doubt will orient the soul along a journey of disturbance and awakening. To survive the encounter of death in its evil forms of war, murder, alienation, hatred, and horror, one must first see the other's face in all its humanity: weakness, rage, suffering, hurt, and pain. How does one survive the horror of a world bent on personal and social evil? How does one find the courage and boldness to build "a good society" (Pope Benedict XVI 2009, no. 4)? The danger of relativism can damage the human soul by surgically removing, as it were, from it the inner search for meaning, truth, and wisdom. It is not surprising that Maritain asserts, "And for human life, for the concrete movement of history, this means real and serious amputations" (Maritain 1936, p. 2). Forms of beauty, goodness, and truth transformed by charity are thus disformed by indifference in the soul, resulting in attempts to emaciate charity, misconstrue it, and empty it "of meaning" (Pope Benedict XVI 2009, no. 2). It then becomes then a mission of maturity and boldness to link charity and truth together, as St. Paul demonstrates:

> We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love. (Eph 4:14–16)

Noting St. Paul's emphasis on "truth in love," Pope Benedict points to the "inverse and complementary sequence of *caritas in veritate* [love in truth]" (Pope Benedict XVI 2009, no. 2). Pope Benedict explains: "Truth needs to be sought, found, and expressed within the 'economy' of charity, but charity in its turn needs to be understood, confirmed, and practiced in the light of truth" (Pope Benedict XVI 2009, no. 2). Here, we find a good context for a spiritual appreciation of integral human development as a means to bring theory and practice together. There is a mutual interrelationship or indwelling between truth and charity/love. By beginning in truth, we understand that humility and even persecution are modes in which the world of the other and of God come to mind. The truth in love is discovering the call to holiness. By practicing love, the ideal of service in the community and world, the light of truth can shine through goodness and beauty, revealing unity and the glory of God as peace and healing in the world. Hence, love in truth signifies a pathway to growing in holiness.

The integral human development of mission and vocation reveal together a charism or gift of boldness (*parrhesía*), which Pope Francis states is a form of "holiness" (Pope Francis 2018, no. 129). Moreover, he reflects:

> Parrhesía is a seal of the Spirit; it testifies to the authenticity of our preaching. It is a joyful assurance that leads us to glory in the Gospel we proclaim. It is an unshakeable trust in the faithful Witness who gives us the certainty that nothing can "separate us from the love of God" (Rom 8:39).

Holiness in the face of relativism and the horror of evil is a vocation of witnessing to the practice of "love in truth" as much as the search for "truth in love." The evils of the world, the indifference to human suffering, war, and forms of hatred such as oppression, economic corruption, and social prejudice produce a murderous relativism that gives "up God" (Maritain 1936, p. 3). Levinas speaks of this as the doctrine of "primitive powers"

or "elementary force" of "secret nostalgia" (Levinas 2004, p. 13) of nationalism, that is to say, "Hitlerism" (Levinas 2004, p. 15) in all its diabolical forms yesterday and today. In an epigraph written at the beginning of Levinas' major work, *Otherwise than Being*, he writes, "To the memory of those who were closest among the six million assassinated by the National Socialists, and of the millions on millions of all confessions and all nations, victims of the same hatred of the other man, the same anti-Semitism" (Levinas [1998] 1999). The existence of evil, or "Hitlerism," has many forms. A spiritual theology of integral human development, if it is going to embrace its vocation of witnessing "love in truth" as "God is love" (1 Jn 4:16), must not be afraid to think about (and respond to) evil and death. Speaking with boldness, even to the extent of awakening the soul of Christianity in its mission of charity in truth, Levinas reflects on one of the darkest times of history:

> Hitlerism is more than contagion or folly; it is an awakening of elementary emotions.
>
> And that makes it terribly dangerous and philosophically interesting. Because elementary sentiments harbor a philosophy. They express the primary attitude of a soul faced with the whole of the real and its own destiny. They predetermine or prefigure the sense of the soul's adventure in the world.
>
> So the philosophy of Hitlerism overflows the philosophy of Hitlerians. It casts doubt on the very principles of a civilization. This is not limited to conflict between liberalism and Hitlerism. Christianity itself is endangered, notwithstanding considerations or concordats granted to the Christian Churches at the advent of the regime (Levinas 2004, p. 13).

There is no witness of love without wounds, without remembering the horror of the past, without seeking a new world, an age of justice, mercy, forgiveness, and reconciliation. If baptized Christians seek a political and nationalistic "adventure" while amputating the Gospel and face of Christ and the poor one, then the "eros" and "intoxication" (Pope Benedict XVI 2009, no. 4) of hatred for the other will soon consume the soul into a terrible abyss: the negative choice to be against God. The pull of "elementary emotions," such as hatred, fury, hostility, rudeness, resentment, or the frenzy of murderous intentions animated by anger, fear, and madness, signifies a short journey toward evil and death.

Otherness, as another mode of truth, relates to a choice other than taking on the impulses of such elementary emotions. Otherness plays out for the soul as an ethical drama, a trauma of encountering the suffering other who puts the conscience into question. The boldness of otherness disturbs the abrasive life lost in abhorrent rationalism. This is because otherness breaks open from the depth of [de profundis] our existence with a moment of agape. The sense here of "de profundis" directs the soul towards the Infinite God. Because love, in its patience, "does not insist on its own way" (1 Cor 13:5), it embraces the vocation of the Spirit to search "everything, even the depths of God" (1 Cor 2:10). Levinas has pointed out gravely that "Christianity is endangered" where it makes false covenants ("concordats") with evil. In almost psalmic prose (compare Psalm 137), the Jewish novelist Chaim Potok (1929–2002) laments:

> On 1 September 1939, the legions of Germany invaded Poland.
>
> Rivers ran with blood. Beasts roamed the land. Men slew children. People fled from towns for the security of the forest. Blood and fire and pillars of smoke concealed the sun and fused together into an enormous apocalypse, an auto-da-fé that burned the soul of the world.
>
> Who was King? Who was not King? Centuries of Christian and Roman hate were king in the guise of Teutonic pagans. The world was as silent as the Nile had once been. And the wanderings of European Jewry came to an end (Potok 1978, pp. 512–13).

Christian humanism had failed to take hold in Europe. An apocalypse ensued: war in all its horror and the death, torture, and starvation of millions. In 1936, Maritain observed,

"prayer, miracle, supra-rational truths, the idea of sin and grace, the evangelical beatitudes, the necessity of asceticism, of contemplation, of the means of the Cross—all this is either put in parenthesis or is once for all denied. In the concrete government of human life, reason is isolated from the supra-rational" (Maritain 1936, p. 3). Here, Maritain has pointed out some key ingredients, so to speak, for holiness and boldness in a world bent on the annihilation of others. The "supra-rational" of faith, truth, and charity, essential for Christian humanism, stands as a call to take a stance against any form of apocalypse besieging the world. Such a call takes on an eschatological horizon of hope or patient endurance (Rev 2:3): a journey into "the depths of God."

4. Into "The Depths of God"

A spiritual theology of integral human development initiates a vigilance to take on God's wisdom and the first fruit of the Spirit, namely love (Gal 5:22). The "manifestation of the Spirit," aimed at "the common good" (1 Cor 12:7), leads the person of faith towards "the depths of God" (1 Cor 2:10), a "weeping" (Ps. 37:1) of compassion in spirit. Here, we encounter the heart of integral human development and an opportunity to speak of spiritual theology through an ethical, metaphysical lens. For the life of the soul, "de profundis," "from the depths of God," has a double meaning: (i) vulnerability towards the other and (ii) the vulnerability of human fragility inside the soul (Burggraeve 2023). The vulnerability towards the other helps to reveal what we are called prophetically to do (love in truth), while the Infinite Other, God, enters uniquely into the depths of our lives, orienting our vulnerability, ensoulment, and weakness towards a redemptive road (truth in love). This is a road to "the depths of God," an acceptance of the Christ who can rise within our wounds and tears, pointing to new directions, new life, or even a retreat back to God as a means to jump further into grace.

Being vulnerable and responsible towards the other identifies a crack or wound, a weakness "to inherit" (Matt 5:5) from God and the other's word. Vulnerability that forms into integral human development orients the self from within and outside towards a practice of charity, service, and responsibility. As finite human beings, we fail in our relationships with others. We are sinful beings and ethically imperfect because we are slow to realize what we should do or be. Life is like a Shakespearean comedy tragedy. The comedy is that we suddenly realize we are responsible, yet the tragedy is that we are too late (Levinas 1998a, p. 166). In Levinas' language, illeity, the hidden trace of God, becomes confused with the anonymous and depersonalizing evil of the "stirring of *there is*" (Levinas 1998a, pp. 165–66). We stumble in our responsibility for the other as "the laughter sticks to one's throat when the neighbor approaches—that is, when his face, or his forsakenness, draws near" (Levinas 1998a, p. 166).

Ethical imperfection reveals the need to grow in the spontaneity of faith. In the limitation of the bodiliness of hope, there is the failing of the vigilance of love because the human ethical striving to "be for the other" requires healing, redemption, consolation, patience, and humility. Regarding integral human development, this means taking on the spiritual practice of opening oneself in prayer to grow in holiness. Such a prayerful disposition is one with an ethical life (sensibility, touchability, and vulnerability). Where ethics and prayer come together, there is the risen Christ imparting the Holy Spirit (Jn 20:19–23), a new perspective of grace coming to consciousness and being. In Levinasian terms, this illustrates having a diachronic sense of the immemorial depths of God in human existence. Here, as the depth of our soul encounters ensoulment by the other (who is the soul of our soul), a "dis-inter-estedness" [rupture among beings] ethically "undoes" a person's "esse" [self-interested "being"] (Levinas 1998c, p. 90). In other words, in the other's face, one hears "the Word of God" (Levinas 1998b, p. 110). In a Christian theological sense, one may suggest here that Christ is resurrected in us ("a believing seeing" (Kasper [1977] 1993, p. 139)) or that we become touchable through the Spirit to orient our journey to the Father's Kingdom. To encounter the risen Christ is to have our senses, thoughts, and emotions opened towards faith in the hope that ethical living and prayer become one.

The meaning of "dis-inter-estedness" can be placed into greater ethical proximity and clarity, where Levinas puts into service Martin Buber's and Franz Rosenzweig's exegesis of the Golden Rule (Levinas 1998c, p. 90). Levinas points out that Buber and Rosenzweig were "perplexed" about translating the Hebrew "*kamokhah*" (as yourself) as it relates to the "you" in the Golden Rule, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18; Matt 22:39). They read it "otherwise" so that the "you" becomes more the form of bodiliness of the other (a compassionate unity with the other): "Love your neighbor; this work is like yourself"; "Love your neighbor; he is yourself"; "it is this love of the neighbor, which is yourself" (Levinas 1998c, p. 90). Levinas goes further, employing the biblical method of a Dominican priest by reading the verse here in terms of the context of the whole book of Leviticus. Hence, Levinas provides a probing search to understand how ethics precedes ontology. In the concern for the other, there is a dissymmetrical relation of vulnerability that evidences an opening towards what "no one has heard, no ear has perceived" (Isa 64:4; cf. 1 Cor 2:9), namely a multitude of faces of the other. Hence, Levinas writes:

> Now, in the entirety of the book, there is always a priority of the other in relation to me. This is the biblical contribution in its entirety. And this is how I respond to the question: "Love your neighbor; all that is yourself; this work is yourself; this love is yourself." *Kamokhah* does not refer to "your neighbor," but to all the words that precede it. The Bible is the priority of the other [*l'autre*] in relation to me. It is another [*autrui*] that I always see the widow and the orphan. The other [*autrui*] always come first. This is what I have called, in Greek language, the dissymmetry of the interpersonal relation. If there is not this dissymmetry, then no line of what I have written can hold. And this is vulnerability. Only a vulnerable I can love his neighbor" (Levinas 1998c, p. 90).

From what Levinas suggests here, there is no vulnerability without encountering others' wounds, tears, and suffering. This is also the bodiliness and compassion of the self's wounds, tears, and suffering. For example, in bodiliness, one suffers through the suffering of the other or is wounded through the wounds of the other. This means that in the stumbling of responsibility, the vulnerability of gentleness (meekness) unveils a hidden, sacred wound (illeity) in which God may enter with a gift of agape (charity) to orient responsibility for the neighbor, the stranger ("alien"), widow and orphan (Lev 19:34; Deut 22:21–34), "the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame" (Lk 14:21). Entering into the vulnerability of love as agape, the self encounters the depths of God, "the secret of sociality," to respond like Moses, "Here I am" (Ex 3:4) (Levinas 1998b, p. 131). In such "extremes of gratuitousness and futility, love of my neighbor, love without concupiscence," God's word in the other's cry for mercy and help signifies that the "fear for the death of my neighbor is my fear" (Levinas 1998b, p. 131).

Perhaps one may have to walk decades to hear such voices with greater ethical and spiritual clarity. This is because there is a diachronic working of grace to make time ethically driven by the "de profundis" word of God coming to mind in the other's face. An incarnational encounter emerges of the word becoming flesh: the Holy Spirit ordering/ordaining the divine word to become flesh from the infinite depths of God, proclaiming Jesus the Christ as God and in God, as one of us, and in the profound depths of the soul. This suggests, in terms of the relation of Christian beliefs to the Golden Rule, that to love the neighbor "as yourself" is to encounter "charity in truth, to which Jesus Christ bore witness by his earthly life and especially by his death and resurrection" and how this is "the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and all humanity" (Pope Benedict XVI 2009, no. 1). Moreover, Pope Benedict qualifies this statement by adding, "Love—caritas—is an extraordinary force which leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace. It is a force that has its origin in God, Eternal Love, and Absolute Truth" (Pope Benedict XVI 2009, no. 1).

Love is an "extraordinary" force to crack the brittle world of sin. The truth of love reveals the animating force of hope for salvation and eternal life. Here, it is appropriate now to invite reflection on a theology of hope to develop a spirituality of "love in truth,"

of suffering for the other "because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Rom 5:5). Eschatology has a role to play in a spiritual theology of integral human development, one that can surprise the formation of consciousness with the depths of God, an abiding hope to unmask and conquer the evils of the world with moments of peace, unity, and love that have the "extraordinary force" to last through the decades of life and centuries of human history.

5. Towards a Theology of Hope

The nature of doing eschatology through explorations and debates can appear to be contentious and risky, especially where theologians attempt to offer new explanations and theories about "the end of the human person and of history" (Kelly 2006, p. ix). In the attempt to develop eschatological ideas about the end times and immortality, temptations may arise to surround the articles of faith with apologetics and rationalizations that seem to go beyond what "revelation permits" (von Balthasar 1998, p. 13). In other words, where the conception of eschatology entertains speculations around doctrine and dogma, there remains the danger of falling into an "abstract void" (von Balthasar 1998, p. 14) about the mystery of the end of an individual's life and the "consummation of the cosmos" (Kasper 1985, p. 377). Eschatology betrays an inherent risk of falling into "pseudo-logical speculations" (von Balthasar 1998, p. 14). Yet, eschatology is also the stuff of "patient endurance" (Rev 1:9; 14:12) and humility (a function of truth in love) before the mysteries of faith. Moreover, there exists a certain affectivity and vulnerability (integral human development) in eschatology: "an astonished stammering as we circle around the mystery on the basis of particular luminous words and suggestions of Holy Scripture" (von Balthasar 1998, p. 13). Here, the searching believer and theologian alike can take courage and confidence to journey towards hope seeking understanding, greater clarification, and intelligence of pressing questions about the "final reality" (eschaton), namely "the last things" (eschata), such as death, the intermediate state, heaven, hell, the Parousia and "the parable of hope" (the paschal mystery) (Kelly 2006, p. 21).

In terms of the mystery of eternal life, the 1992 International Theological Commission (ITC) document "Some Current Questions in Eschatology" presents a reflection on damnation, stating, "Death in the Lord implies the possibility of another way of dying, namely death outside the Lord, which leads to a second death (cf. Rev 20:14). For in this death, the power of sin through which death entered (cf. Rom 5:12) manifests to the fullest extent its capacity to separate us from God" (ITC 1992, no. 6.3). The ITC's eschatological statement on "death outside the Lord" offers an opportunity to think otherwise about integral human development and the potential of human sin, namely to consider what can be done about human evil and human acts that could lead to the annihilation of the person and soul, to the "second death" of hell. To grow in holiness is also to witness to the "lost" (Lk 15:24) and "spirits in prison" (1 Peter 3:19) to encourage hope for "repentance" (Lk 15:7) and new life.

Developing a humanism of integral human development, Maritain asserts:

Having given up God so as to be self-sufficient, now man is losing track of his soul, he looks in vain for himself, he turns the universe upside down, trying to find himself, he finds masks, and behind the masks death.

And there comes a spectacle which we witness: an *irrational* tidal wave. It is the awakening of a tragic opposition between life and intelligence (Maritain 1936, p. 3).

A spiritual theology of integral human development is challenged to seek an eschatological horizon of questioning. This does not mean, in any way, departing from the world of the living. The threat of hell and the danger of the "second death" command a challenge to take the consequences of evil seriously and, hence, to find a way so that love and justice might bring liberation, salvation, and truth to humanity tempted and haunted by the "evil," "horror," "anxiety," and "fear" "in being" (Levinas 1995, pp. 19–20). To begin, for integral human development to take on an eschatological character, is to listen to the words of the Risen Christ to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name

of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" with the assurance that "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20). The mission of Christ through the Church unveils liberation and salvation: "Authentic, complete liberty is impossible without the primary liberation from death and perishability (sarx), from the power of sin, and from the law" (note also the "elements of the world"). 'It is with this freedom that Christ has set us free' [Gal 5:1]" (ITC 1976, no. 3). Authentic integral human development grows in boldness to know the "powers" (intelligence, absurdity, "ambiguity," senselessness, and seduction) of sin and evil (Levinas 2003, p. 56):

> Liberation from these powers, however, brings a fresh freedom, in consequence of which we can, in the spirit of Jesus Christ, be effective in love so as to serve our brothers and sisters. Here surely we have a foreshadowing of what God will himself accomplish as his gift to the just when he judges the whole story of humankind. The justice of God, through the Spirit and by his power, bestows a liberating action that enables us to work what is good, an action that finds its perfection through love (ITC 1976, no. 3).

A "sense" and sensibility of hope for salvation in "being" (Levinas 2003, p. 56) in a world falling into the threat and horror of evil and destruction can be communicated in theological terms as a paschal, a Trinitarian encounter of revelation: the death and resurrection of Christ evoke the presence of the Spirit, signifying the Father's love and justice "for us" (1 Jn 4:16). Such an encounter further signifies the force of Parousia, the eternal gift of salvation. The work of such a transformative encounter and awakening evokes a divine interruption of sin and evil. The light of the Parousia communicates "holiness," "boldness" (*parrhesía*), and "seal of the Spirit," the divine energy, as it were, to testify to the Gospel (Pope Francis 2018, no. 129). The glory and light of the Parousia work their way into human history and time as the divine interruption contradicts the brittle shell of sin:

> Man's shell is not hard enough, however, for it is formed of a contradiction. Perhaps the man whose shell can be broken is not yet really in hell but only—in his rebellious attitude to God—turned towards it. 'Therefore it is said,' says Paul: 'When he ascended on high he led captivity captive' (Eph 4:8, AV); the Lord 'takes it back with him and by this means releases men from their captivity to sin', thereby 'fashioning this very alienation from God into a way of approach to him' (von Balthasar 1998, pp. 312–13).

In the contradiction of God finding a way through human alienation and godforsaken, the mystery and surprise of divine interruption unfold, a second chance, so to speak, for the evildoer to hear Christ's first words, "as disruptive as new wine in old wineskins" (Mk 3:22): "What [or Whom] are you looking for?" (Jn 1:38; 20:15). In the process of divine interruption, the "what" of the sinner's decision (to reject God) transforms paradoxically into the "whom" of the personal encounter with the "ultimate strange attractor" (Kelly 2006, p. 186), the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). Christ, the "strange attractor," embodies the covenantal heart of Levinasian ethical transcendence and truth: "The one for the other" (Levinas [1998] 1999, p. 165). Christ reveals that he is the divine miracle and light of God in humans. Christ is the source and outpouring of redemption, responsibility, justice, love, and compassion—a "treasure" before fragile vessels (2 Cor 4:7). Moreover, Christ is a "strange" Other, in the absolute uniqueness and character of mission, death, and resurrection, is the interrupting and surprising force of Parousia (love in truth). This suggests as Roger Burggraeve points out in his reflection on the parable of the Good Samaritan through the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, "'The absolutely foreign alone can instruct us'; (TI [*Totality and Infinity*] 45/73). We do not find the other in ourselves, the other comes to us as a revelation, that means as a master and a calling" (Burggraeve 2020, p. 279). Christ, the "strange attractor" and "master" of mercy, offers the new wine salvation, demonstrating the absolute passivity and contradiction of the light and boldness of Parousia.

Through such divine "calling" and interruption, there remains hope to renew the image of God within the sinner. This identifies an eschatological sense of mission to orient integral human development to begin new steps to grow in holiness to be a person in Christ.

The inescapable presence of Christ, who is "more absolutely' forsaken" than others in his death and descent to hell on Holy Saturday, calls into question humanity's "apparent, pretended inaccessibility" (von Balthasar 1998, pp. 312–13). For the forsaken one lost in hatred and the evil of sin, appearing godforsaken, meeting the Christ in a moment of grace, of love in truth, reflects the character of the Parousia as the perfection of boldness affirming, '"Do not be afraid" (Mk 6:50) and "I am with you always, to the end of the world" (Mt 28:20). In such vigilance of "surplus of responsibility" (as expiation and substitution), Christ witnesses to a "proximity" of the trace of illeity from the depths of God's immemorial love (Levinas [1998] 1999, p. 100). Christ, whose humility, poverty, and compassion are beyond any need for reciprocity and in whom "the whole fullness of the deity dwells bodily" (Col 2:9), stretches the communion of the hope that not "one of these little ones should be lost" (Matt 18:14), for "there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance" (Lk 15:7).

If the forsaken ones begin to awake out of an anonymous existence of evil, to be interrupted and surprised by Christ before them (truth in love), then hope remains to contradict human sin. In such paschal integral human development, the suffering of Christ becomes the catalyst to have knowledge of God and of oneself (von Balthasar 1989, p. 261). This then leads to an encounter with the subjectivity of Christ's being (divine personhood) becoming one with the objectivity of Christ's being of love. By introducing a "sense" of love in their "being" (human existence) (Levinas 2003, p. 56), the unity of Christ's objective identity as savior and his subjective experience of suffering for others opens the theological imagination of faith. It leads to the contemplation of a paschal, spiritual element of integral human development: that the face of Christ interrupts the being of sinners by contradicting and disarming the horror of their "anonymous" and "impersonal" existence (Levinas 1995, p. 82) with the gift of love in truth (mercy) and truth in love (vulnerability). This revelation exposes the "unpredictable" reality that "human existence is never a realm of total control" (Kelly 2006, p. 186).

No one can successfully hide from God's love and mercy. Sin is but a brittle shield. In the moments of life and death, there remains the hope and possibility of transformation for all to die "in the Lord" (ITC 1992, no. 6.3) through encountering Jesus' unconditional and surprising promise of forgiveness. For in Christ, the "strange attractor," there lies hope to testify to the light of salvation: the Parousia and Kingdom of God reveal that "God is love" (1 Jn 4:16). In such integral human development, the reality of divine love appears like an overwhelming surprise, breaking the shell of sin and pricking the inflated balloon of the self on the way to damnation.

6. Conclusions: To Be Sons and Daughters of God

Jacques Maritain uses the metaphor "the intelligence of the serpent" to reflect on "counter-humanism," namely the dark forces against integral human development (Maritain 1936, p. 4). Frustrated and disturbed, he refers to the "terrible voices" of a "mediocre and base multitude" taking the form of "apocalyptic signs" by way of employing "the hatred of reason" (Maritain 1936, pp. 4–5). The "terrifying voice" of the Serpent's intelligence, of evil and lies, takes form in "the cult of the fecundity of war or in that cult of race and blood" (Maritain 1936, p. 5). In a prophet's voice, Maritain laments, "We've had enough of lying optimism and illusory moralities, enough of hypocritical justice and hypocritical right, enough of liberty that starves workmen and burns the stack of grain, enough of idealism that does us to death, which denies evil and unhappiness and robs us of the means of struggling against them . . ." (Maritain 1936, p. 4).

Writing in the midst of Hitlerism (1933–1945) and its worship of the "way of slaughter" and "lower powers," Maritain was beginning to witness and foresee the impending catastrophe awaiting humanity, the death of Jews in "concentration camps" and "Europe

maddened in an armament race and feverishly preparing for suicide," and the rise of Marxism, in which "reason ... decapitates reason" (Maritain 1936, pp. 5–6). Such was the "horror of the night 'with no exits'" in the twentieth century, where humanity reduced divine transcendence to the false transcendence of "being in general," namely "anonymous being," an "impersonal form" of depersonalizing existence that "leads us to the absence of God" (Levinas 1995, pp. 45, 57–58, 63). Levinas names such horror as the "there is" [*il y a*] (Levinas 1995, p. 60). He most likely would characterize Maritain's reflection that the "evil in being," of "counter-humanism," has become "the evil of being" and hence that which transforms people into "evildoers," "impersonal" specters of existence, "disturbing themselves like phantoms" as they exist without any sign or trace of ethical subjectivity (Levinas 1995, pp. 19, 61). Humanity has witnessed that the dark forces opposing integral human development have varied human faces, such as the totalities of war, nationalism, individualism, and rejection of God.

In response to the evil that continues to plague the world, finding new guises with technology and the advancement of intelligent humanity—the serpent's intelligence, so to speak—there is the disarming witness of the New Testament to be sons and daughters of God. "This means," according to Maritain, the evocation of a "spiritual childhood" (Maritain 1936, p. 7):

> ... in the spiritual order, the discovery of the *ways of spiritual childhood* whereby the "humanity of God our Saviour," as Saint Paul says [Titus 3:4], finds, with fewer human trappings, a readier way into man, and causes more souls to enter into this dark hidden task of suffering and vivifying; it implies in the moral and social order, the discovery of a deeper and fuller sense of the dignity of the human person, so that man would re-find himself in God re-found, and would direct social work toward an heroic ideal of brotherly love, itself conceived not as a spontaneous return of emotions to some illusionary primitive condition, but as a difficult and painful conquest of the spirit, of the work of grace and virtue (Maritain 1936, pp. 7–8).

A spiritual theology of integral human development suggests that "the humanism of the Incarnation" (Maritain 1936, p. 8) sets no limits for God to enter humanity. The vulnerability of God breaks open the divine "de profundis," giving the life of the soul a moment of grace and love, an invitation to be born of God (Jn 1:13) in the divine light of "goodness and loving-kindness" (1 Jn 1:4). To be the children, sons, and daughters of God is to take steps to learn to approach, appreciate, understand, and live out the mystery of the Incarnation: "But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God ..." (Jn 1:12). To live by and through the Incarnation signifies how, in the depths of God, one is called to be personal, alive, and forgiving: "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are" (1 Jn 3:1). Moreover, Zimmerman points out, "Christian praxis, framed as it is within the context of the theology of Incarnation, will struggle to credibly articulate a philosophical basis for its own ethical action without a corresponding account of the other, in which the giftedness of the body is given its due import" (Zimmermann 2009, pp. 992–93). Might this point to an integral humane ecology of the soul to be "lived out joyfully and authentically" (Pope Francis 2015, no. 10), a life of the bodiliness of the "redemptive incarnation" (Pope John-Paul II 2003, no. 58)? Or even a process of discovery, from "adoration of God" to "a deeper wonder" at oneself being led by Christ, patiently and sensitively, "to the full truth" (Pope John Paul II 1993, no. 8)?

The spiritual and theological formation of integral human development is not a process of self-directed education fuelled by "those forms of ersatz spirituality—having nothing to do with God—that dominate the current religious marketplace." (Pope Francis 2018, no. 111). Rather, integral human development invites an "incarnated passivity" or bodiliness of openness towards God, "an impossibility of evading" a life of "expiation" and "substitution" for the other (Levinas [1998] 1999, p. 112) that one encounters, for example, in the promise of forgiveness of the other. To conquer and "overcome the evil one," to know the

Father's forgiveness, suggests a spiritual praxis of taking a stance towards a world tempted by "the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches" (1 Jn 2:12–15). This is not simply to make a person "better" despite "the Good it expresses," since it "perhaps makes all our discussion suspect of being 'ideology'" (Levinas [1998] 1999, p. 93). To embrace rather the newness of God's gift of charity and forgiveness suggests possessing the confidence of "boldness before God" (1 Jn 3:21) to be a person in Christ. One then comes to realize that at the heart of integral human development, there is the accusation/inner reflection (that which makes us responsible to the point of substitution for others (Levinas [1998] 1999, p. 112)), culminating in the question, "How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?" (1 Jn 3:17).

The focus of our eternal life in Christ should not be removed from our present encounter with history (Maritain 1936, p. 8). An eschatological existence of hope (just as much as love and faith) demonstrates a reference point for what remains "integral" to human development. The concern of the other is "integral" to faith in God as it becomes a test to witness that "God is love" (1 Jn 4:16), serving as much as the incarnational truth, "the word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14).

In a practical way, such an "incarnational" life is exemplified by the metaphor of being "in one's skin" and hence responsible without evasion and "recourse to anything" (Levinas 1996a, p. 89). People, lost in self-interest, can fall into "indolence" and, further, "fatigue" (Levinas 1995, pp. 29–31), paralleling the dispositions of acedia and spiritual torpor. A spiritual theology of integral human development has the boldness and courage to awaken the children of God (truth in love) towards a passivity of divine goodness and desire that aims for peace in this world (love in truth). Levinas explains in terms of deconstructing evil, such as war:

> Peace therefore cannot be identified with the end of combats that cease for want of combatants, by the defeat of some and the victory of the others, that is, with cemeteries or future universal empires. Peace must be my peace, in a relation that starts from an I and goes to the other, in desire and goodness, where the I both maintains itself and exists without egoism (Levinas 1996b, p. 306).

Levinas' ethical, metaphysical approach to understanding peace as a function of otherness (illiety of God), a "beatitude" of goodness and holiness, signifies the formation and transcendence of the "I" beyond "egoism." Such "integral human development" is "a driving force of charity in truth" (Pope Benedict XVI 2009, no. 77), unveiling the Spirit's fruit of "peace" (Gal 5:22): "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid" (Jn 14:27). The peace that Christ gives is the truth that gives freedom (Jn 8:32) beyond the impulses, nationalisms, and hunger for death that turn the desire for the good and charity into projects of horror and world suicide.

Accordingly, a spiritual theology of integral human development possesses an eschatological vocation and mission to proclaim, "Peace, peace, to the far and the near, says the Lord; and I will heal them" (Isa 57:19). In other words, the divine calling for the sons and daughters of God is to live a responsible life to build up "the *earthly city* in unity and peace" (Pope Benedict XVI 2009, no. 7). In a spirit of waiting for Parousia, this reflects "to some degree an anticipation and a prefiguration of the undivided city of God" (Pope Benedict XVI 2009, no. 7). Such "anticipation" is oriented by the divine generosity of God's Spirit, the "largesse-in-us" (the emotional sensibility overflowing to the soul from the depths of God) of loving one's neighbor.

Following Descartes, Levinas writes with exceptional insight on the "intellectual feeling" of generosity ("disinterestedness"): "Descartes speaks with generosity. He attaches it both to the 'free disposition of [a man's] will' and to the fact that those who are generous 'do not hold anything more important than to do good to other men and to disdain their individual interests'" (Levinas [1998] 1999, pp. 157–58). What is remarkable here is that

Levinas adopts a Cartesian position rather than a Kantian one that fails to acknowledge "goodness . . . charity and mercy" (Levinas [1998] 1999, p. 158) in sensibility [*Sinnlichkeit*].

Levinas' position offers the insight that ethics and prayer come together where sensibility animates the moral conscience to listen to "the will of God" (Levinas [1998] 1999, p. 158) to grow in holiness. Hence, integral human development beholden to God's will (the incarnational divine logic of the Word becoming flesh in Jesus the Christ (Jn 1:14)) abides in the sensibility of love and truth: growing in holiness. This suggests that integral human development unveils a life otherwise of formation, otherness, and vulnerability, aiming towards discovering peace and unity in the world (truth in love) through, in, and for Christ. In a final word, integral human development testifies to a praxis of prayer, generosity, and holiness (love in truth), as Pope Francis attests: "We are called to be contemplatives even in the midst of action and to grow in holiness by responsibly and generously carrying out our proper mission" (Pope Francis 2018, no. 26).

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The Relationship between Philosophy and Theology in Inter-War German Catholic Scholarship

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Abstract: This paper provides an introduction to the thought of four German Catholic philosophers of the inter-war era described by Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI as the most influential on his generation of seminarians. The focus of the article is on how they understood the relationship between theology and philosophy.

Keywords: sacred tradition; philosophy; theology; Romano Guardini; Josef Pieper; Peter Wust and Theodor Haecker

1. Introduction

In the autobiographical work *Milestones*, Joseph Ratzinger, who became Benedict XVI, remarked that the philosophical voices that moved his generation of seminarians most directly were those of Romano Guardini, Josef Pieper, Theodor Haecker, and Peter Wust (Ratzinger 1988, pp. 42–43). Each one of these scholars was riding on the crest of a wave of disillusionment with German Idealism. They opposed the sharp separation of philosophy from the theology fostered by Immanuel Kant and those who followed the tradition of Kant. This paper offers a window into the attitudes of this inter-war generation of German Catholic scholars. In each case, the members of this quartet acknowledged the distinction between theology and philosophy but thought that the two should be integrated and not separated into silos. In taking this position, they ran counter not only to the prescriptions of Immanuel Kant and others in the tradition of German Idealism but to the practices in universities world-wide where philosophy and theology are studied in separate departments and rarely brought into relationship with one another.

Since this special edition of *Religions* is focused on the relationship between Theology and Continental Philosophy, this paper will showcase the ideas of this quartet, not because they influenced the thought of Ratzinger/Benedict, but because they represent a particular tradition within the European ideas of the twentieth century that challenged the Kantian paradigm of how philosophy and theology ought to be related, or indeed, not related.

2. Roman Guardini (1885–1968)

The refusal to abide by the sharp separation of the disciplines was strongest in the work of Guardini who accordingly held professorial chairs, neither in philosophy, nor in theology, but in the Catholic *Weltanschauung* (at the University of Berlin from 1923–1939) and in the Christian *Weltanschauung* (at the University of Munich from 1948–1962). These titles allowed him to integrate the disciplines into a "world-view". Ratzinger remarked that 'Kantianism had shattered [Guardini's] childhood faith into pieces' and thus 'his conversion developed into an overcoming of Kant'. (Ratzinger 2013, p. 392).

This orientation ran parallel to movements in French Catholic thought of the time, above all to Maurice Blondel's criticism of 'extrinsicism', that is, the intellectual habit of drawing sharp separations between nature and grace, faith and reason, the secular and the sacred. Henri de Lubac, following Blondel, criticised "two-tiered thinking", the idea that grace is merely a "top up" for nature while faith is merely a "top up" for reason.

This extrinsicist approach to the relationships between the couplets nature and grace, faith and reason, and the secular and the sacred began late in Western history and was usually associated with innovations in the baroque era. In *Freedom, Grace and Destiny*, one of the few of Guardini's anthropological works to be translated into English, he argued that in contrast to the baroque era Catholic thinking and subsequent developments, Christian in the earliest years had what he called a universal view. St. Augustine, for example, drew no methodological boundaries between theology and philosophy, between dogma and its practical application to life. St. Augustine considered the whole of Christian existence as a totality with different inter-related parts. Even St. Thomas Aquinas, who was good at drawing distinctions, still offered a comprehensive synthesis. However, after Aquinas, 'philosophy is separated from theology, empirical science from philosophy, practical instruction from knowledge of reality' (Guardini 1961, p. 9). Guardini acknowledged that 'the effort [of separation] was not unjustified and has resulted in numerous valuable consequences', (presumably in the area of the natural sciences), but nonetheless, 'it has its perilous side because it deepens and solidifies the disintegration of modern man' (Guardini 1961, p. 9).

This disintegration is a major theme of Guardini's *The End of the Modern World*. In this work, he declared that 'no man truly aware of his own human nature will admit that he can discover himself in the theories of modern anthropology—be they biological, psychological, sociological or any other' (Guardini 1998, p. 80). For Guardini, any attempt to explain the human person without reference to grace was inadequate. In *Freedom, Grace and Destiny*, he declared:

> God did not design man as a "natural" being to fulfil his purpose, as do animals, within his natural environment. There is no such thing as the "natural" man. This is an abstraction which the theologian needs to draw certain distinctions and establish relationships. The only real man that exists is the man called to the order of grace. Either he obeys and is then raised above the merely natural level or he refuses obedience and falls below the level of nature into a debasing dependence on evil. "Pure Nature" when applied to man is an imaginary yardstick by which he cannot measure himself. (Guardini 1961, p. 130)

This idea that the concept of pure nature cannot in fact do justice to humanity ran counter to both the trajectory of baroque theology and the principles of German Idealist philosophy. In his *Theology of Karl Barth*, Hans Urs von Balthasar endorsed Guardini's route through this anthropological Scylla and Charybdis style strait. Balthasar wrote:

> To try to bring the truths of creation before the light of the truths of covenant and redemption is a task that neither pure philosophy nor pure theology can perform. It is a job for a "philosophy" that thinks and works in dependence on and as a function of theology. Romano Guardini has often expressly drawn our attention to this "third option" between philosophy and theology and devoted to this the main portion of his life work. (Balthasar 1992, p. 321)

Concomitant with his criticisms of dualistic modes of thinking, Guardini often spoke of the problem with rationalistic–mechanical thinking, an approach he associated with the discipline of mathematics. While it has its use in the study of mathematics, Guardini thought it was not master science, not some kind of 'first philosophy' because it has the effect of making what he called the "concrete living" 'disappear from the field of knowable objects'. It only gives access to one part of the whole of reality. For Guardini, the work of the intellect includes both *ratio* associated with logic, deductive reasoning, and thus mathematics, and *intellectus* associated with intuition. He believed that these two dimensions of the intellect played in concert, not only in the scholarship of the medieval Christian philosophers but also in classical Greek thought. In this context, he remarked:

> How strong were the forces of mystical lived experience and symbolic intuition in ancient Greece! A line runs from the Orphic cults to the Hellenistic mystery religions; the Eleusinian feasts manifestly culminated in a symbolic knowledge supported by a religious transmutation. However, these "mysteries" were not

considered superstition in contradiction with scientific seriousness; instead they stood within the overall framework of what constituted an accomplished personality. And the Greek people themselves did not feel hindered by the intellect in their artistic creations. It is evident that the abstract formation of concepts and the shaping forces of intuition and feeling did not cause any mutual harm here. (Guardini 1997, p. 19)

Against this background, Guardini concluded that 'the clear conceptual structures of a Thomas Aquinas, not to mention a Bonaventure or the Victorines, reveal their true and full meaning and all their energy in tension only when they are understood as the elaboration of the metaphysical or religious lived experience' (Guardini 1997, p. 21). Theirs was an imaginative or contemplative gaze open to the clarity of the concept. However, this field of vision is dramatically narrowed with the arrival of post-Kantian rationalistic-mechanical modes of thought. The task of today is, therefore, to expand the scope of reason by re-legitimising the work of intuition and by allowing each of the sub-disciplines within the humanities and social sciences to be integrated with one another by the "glue" of metaphysical principles.

3. Josef Pieper (1904–1997)

Pieper was based at the University of Münster from 1946 to 1976. Not only did Pieper's ideas inspire a young Joseph Ratzinger but it was Pieper who was responsible for bringing the philosopher Cardinal Wojtyła together with the theologian Cardinal Ratzinger, thus setting up what became a quarter-century partnership between the two men in what is otherwise known as the pontificate of St. John Paul II.

Pieper's field of expertise was described as philosophical anthropology. He had been a devoted student of Guardini. In his own words, 'I sat at your [Guardini's] feet from the time I was sixteen years old until about my twenty-third year—first at Rothenfels on the Main and later in the lecture rooms and seminar of the Berlin University' (Pieper 2015, p. 239). A decisive moment for Pieper was that of attending a lecture Guardini delivered at Rothenfels in 1924. It was on the subject of what Goethe and Aquinas had in common, something Guardini called 'the classical spirit'. Pieper interpreted this spirit as the idea that 'whoever wants to know and do what is good must direct his gaze to the objective world of being; not to his own "convictions", not to "conscience", not to "values", not to the "ideals" and "models" he has chosen. He must forget about his own involvement and look at reality' (Pieper 2015, p. 241). Reality, for Pieper, included the world of sacred tradition.

Where Pieper's project could be distinguished from Guardini's was in the degree of attention he gave to the concept of tradition. In this context E. Christian Kopff, the translator of Pieper's work, *Tradition: Concept and Claim*, drew attention to the influence of Werner Jaeger on Pieper's understanding of the relationship between faith (connected to a sacred tradition) and reason. According to Kopff, 'Pieper believed that "the most exciting conclusion of Jaeger's Aristotle book" [*Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of his Development*, Oxford, 1924], is that "[t]he history of his development shows that behind his metaphysics, too, there lies the *credo ut intelligam*", the principle normally associated with St. Anselm of Canterbury' (Kopff 2008, p. xxv). In practice, this means that the work of philosophy is, at its best, influenced by the great wisdom traditions. This was also the position of the French philosopher Etienne Gilson (1884–1978) who defended the idea of a Christian philosophy against other French Thomists who took the view that philosophy to be philosophy had to be uncontaminated by theological influences (Sadler 2011). Gilson argued that even Descartes could not be understood without reference to the Christian scholasticism that preceded his own philosophical projects. Kopff noted that 'for Pieper, Plato and Aristotle begin from the sacred tradition as they knew it' while 'Thales, the first scientist, was probably inspired by Babylonian sacred tradition. The role of mathematics in science begins with the ancient Greek guru and mystic Pythagoras' (Kopff 2008, p. xxvii). Today, scholars would speak of traditions offering a hermeneutical horizon

for philosophical reflection. Alasdair MacIntyre's understanding of traditions and how they develop and influence philosophical research is consistent with this outlook.

In his entry on Pieper in the forthcoming *Ratzinger Lexikon*, Bernard Schumacher remarked:

> Intent on seeking the truth of human existence as a whole, and also the truth about the ultimate meaning of the world, Pieper denounces the reductionism of reason undertaken by Kant and scientific positivists, who reject the very possibility of any metaphysical rational knowledge and rule out considering faith in the act of philosophizing. The philosopher from Münster, on the contrary, defends an openness of philosophy to theology. (Schumacher 2023)

With Pieper, as with Guardini, there was the same appeal to expand the scope of reason. One of the maxims Pieper followed was that 'freedom acquired by the deliberate play of forgetting is empty'. He took this from the poet-philosopher Wjatscheslaw Iwanow (1866–1949) (Pieper 2015, p. 19). All human reflection, he believed, needed to take place within the horizon of a sacred tradition, a *theios logos*, rather than within a space from which all traditions had been dismissed as unscientific (Pieper 2015, p. 17). In his own words, he explained:

> I do not maintain that the philosopher is forced, in Plato's view, by virtue of the nature of the philosophical act, to have recourse to a theological interpretation of the world. But the thesis is as follows: the philosophical point of departure, as Plato understands it, not only does not require, but even forbids, the exclusion from the outset of super-rational information about the world as a whole. Such an exclusion is unphilosophical—because the philosopher is, to say it again, *per definitionem* concerned with the totality in all its aspects. (Pieper 2015, p. 163)

In another of his works on Pieper, Schumacher concluded the following: 'in opposition to a certain school of interpretation, according to which Greeks are without faith, Pieper points out, for example, that Plato recognizes in myth a holy revelation transmitted by elders and issuing from a divine source which he believes without being any less a philosopher'. (Schumacher 2009, p. 215)

4. Theodor Haecker (1879–1945)

Theodor Haecker, the third on Ratzinger's list of intellectual heroes, was not a professional academic but a translator and public intellectual. He was most well known as the person who translated Kierkegaard from Danish into German and some of the major works of St. John Henry Newman from English into German. He was also a mentor to the students associated with the anti-Nazi White Rose movement, and he is often presented as an example of a German intellectual who took the path of 'internal exile' or 'interior migration' during the Nazi era. In his *Journal in the Night*, a secret diary written during the Nazi era, he wrote:

> I am coming more and more to the conclusion that the history which derives from German idealism—a professorial history—is simply humbug. In that thin, pale atmosphere, personalities and passions evaporate. And no one could tell from reading it, that Satan was the Prince of this world. The idealistic school of historical writing ends, like idealistic philosophy, with 'as if'. (Haecker 1950, p. 109)

Eugen Blessing, author of *Theodor Haecker: Gestalt und Werk*, described Heacker's oeuvre in the following terms:

> It is not so much theology that Haecker wants to impart, but philosophy, or more precisely, philosophical anthropology, but it is his conviction in the exploration of the matter that the human and the Christian, nature and super-nature, are not two incommensurable worlds, since Christ lives in both. Philosophy and theology are not two completely separate disciplines. The supernatural is the

perfection of nature, the super-natural, of course, by which it is said that the natural is not at all a whole of itself, and therefore cannot be grounded out of itself alone: so that apart from the particular in the two areas of philosophy and theology there is also a peculiar common domain of Christian philosophy and of Christian philosophical anthropology. (Blessing 1959, p. 125)

This is very similar to the position taken by Guardini, Pieper, and Ratzinger's *Doktor Vater*, Gottlieb Söhngen. Söhngen spoke of a 'triple use of philosophy' with reference to the terms "*usus philosophicus*", "*usus theologicus*" and "*usus cosmicus*". The first is something like philosophical reflection without reference to a sacred tradition, the second is the use of philosophy to aid in theological reflection (the notion of philosophy as the handmaiden to theology), and the third is a kind of integration of reason and wisdom. All four philosophers listed by Ratzinger as influential for seminarians of his generation tended to work in this integrated field and focused their attention on philosophical anthropology (Söhngen 1978, p. 945).

Where Pieper was influenced by what he regarded as Plato's openness to sacred tradition, Haecker was inspired by what he perceived to be Virgil's anticipation of Christian *humanitas* in the figure of Aeneus. In his *Wahrheit und Leben*, Haecker declared that 'Virgil was not a prophet like Isaiah, he did not prophesy the birth of the Savior like the angels and the patriarchs and the prophets...but he designed a mythical material that had relation to the eternal truth of the angels and patriarchs and prophets' (Haecker 1930, p. 59). According to Haecker, Virgil's works evinced an *anima naturaliter christiana.* Haecker gathered elements of classical mythology, Hebraic and Christian revelation, and philosophy and wove them into a symphonic world-view. This *Christian humanitas* was then pitted against the culture of an impious German Idealism. What he perceived to be Kant's lack of piety had opened the tradition of German Idealism to the stupidity that was the neo-pagan "mythology" of fascism. An openness to something greater than the human self is the fruit of a pious disposition. Closure to the same narrows both the scope of reason and the possibilities for the world of culture.

5. Peter Wust (1884–1940)

Wust was a professor of philosophy at the University of Münster from 1930–1939. He was born in Rissenthal in Saarland, the eldest of eleven children. His parents hoped he would become a priest but he lost his faith when he was 21 and did not recover it until he was almost 40. He was outspoken in his opposition to fascism but, unlike others who opposed the Nazi regime, he was not executed or imprisoned because he died from cancer in 1940.

Although Wust was described by Benedict XVI as one of the four most influential philosophers for the Bavarian seminarians of his generation, his Wikipedia entry begins with the statement: 'Peter Wust was a German existentialist philosopher who is unknown in the English realm, for his works have never been translated into English to this day'. There was, however, one short essay by Wust titled "The Crisis of the West", published in English in 1931 while Bloomsbury Press is currently preparing to publish an English translation of Wust's *Ungewissheit und Wagnis* (Wust 1937) (Uncertainty and Risk). This translation should be available in 2024.

Wust had planned to write what he called a triptych or three major works. The middle panel of the triptych was *Die Dialektik des Geists* (*The Dialectic of the Spirit*) published in 1928, the panel 'on the right' was *Naivität und Pietät* (*Naivete and Piety*), first published in 1925 and reprinted in 2010, and the panel 'on the left' was to be *Die Philosophie des Diabolischen* (*The Philosophy of the Diabolical*). This panel on the left was never completed. A manuscript of lectures delivered in 1938–1939 on existentialism was posthumously published in 1947 and *Gestalten und Gedanken; Rückblick auf mein Leben,* his autobiography, was published posthumously in 1950. Between 1963 and 1969, Regensberg Verlag published Wust's collected works (*Gesammelte Werke*), edited by Wilhelm Vernekohl in 10 volumes.

Wust was at war with skepticism and he wrote that 'the interruption of dogmatic slumber, of which Kant spoke so enthusiastically, was ultimately nothing other than the beginning of the feverish dreams of skepticism, in a constantly troubled intermediate state that can be described as neither wakefulness nor sleep' (Wust 1927, p. 138). Moreover, he declared that Kant

> Allowed the tiny flicker...of our finite "ratio" to completely extinguish. With regard to the philosophical question as to the existence of God, he placed knowledge at zero in order to create room for faith alone, faith blind to reason. Thereby, without any doubt, he slipped into the error of absolute irrationalism of decision. (Wust 1937, p. 176)

Wust described his first major work *Auferstehung der Metaphysik* (The Resurrection of Metaphysics), published in 1920, as an attempt to clear the way for metaphysical thinking that had long been subjected to obstacles created by the prejudices of Kantianism (Wust 2010, p. vi). In a preface to a later work, *Naivität und Pietät* (1925), he reflected on the moment of his turn to metaphysics:

> So, all of a sudden, I do not know how or where from, the basic theme of the metaphysics of the spirit stood before my soul with full clarity, as the result of a long, lonely, agonizing search and struggle. But it now stood before my soul with all the severity and severe consequences that are given by themselves with the principle of the spirit. For it was now obvious to me that the alternative of nature and spirit, when the concept of the absolute comes into consideration, must be regarded as the most significant question of principle in all speculative reflection. If, as I now recognized, the spirit principle has the right of priority in this alternative of nature and spirit, then I said to myself that the *eidos* of the spirit must have an absolute culmination point beyond which its essential perfection cannot really be increased, because it is completely fulfilled in it. With that, however, I had finally gained the insight that in philosophy everything revolved around the crucial question of whether *pantheism or theism* could have the last word in the dispute of opinions about the ultimate questions of humanity. (Wust 2010, p. xi)

Wust came to the further conclusion that 'either the theistic way of thinking triumphs and with it philosophy as philosophy triumphs, or else pantheism triumphs and with it philosophy as absolute non-philosophy' (Wust 2010, p. 23).

Not only did Wust reject the Kantian separation of theology from philosophy, but he also rejected the Kantian separation of intellect and will. Consistent with St. John Henry Newman, he recognised the heart as a point of integration of all the faculties of the soul. In what he called his metaphysical anthropology, he rhetorically asked, 'what would remain of the spirit's volitional nature if all mental activity were merely a spectatorship and adjudication of the workings of two alien powers that only penetrated the human being from outside'? (Wust 2010, p. 60). Moreover, he declared:

> The living God of love and of grace does not apply Himself with His eternal call principally to the intellect, but rather above all to the "Heart", as the essential core of the human person. He turns Himself to that central "*intimum mentis*" within which—upon the boundary line between the unconscious and the conscious, the actual decisions of life always come to pass; those existential decisions which were born out of the totality of human nature. And thus it is profoundly sensible, if, precisely within the realm of the religious certainty of God, the intellect—which so easily tends to strike out against the thorn of love—is transferred into the deepest darkness that ultimately can be experienced within an existential situation. (Wust 1937, p. 212)

This anthropology is amplified in the theology of Joseph Ratzinger, who was influenced by both Wust and Newman. In an essay on human dignity written in the late 1960s,

Ratzinger wrote that 'the organ by which God can be seen cannot be a non-historical "*ratio naturalis*" which just does not exist, but only the *ratio pura*, ie. *purificata* or, as Augustine expresses it echoing the gospel, the *cor purum*' ("Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God") (Ratzinger 1969, p. 155). Augustine understood that 'the necessary purification of sight takes place through faith (Acts 15: 9) and through love, at all events not as a result of reflection alone and not at all by man's own power' (Ratzinger 1969, p. 155). In later publications, Ratzinger would emphasise that love and reason are the twin pillars of all reality (Ratzinger 2003, p. 183).

The fact that the heart is seen to be a place of the integration of the various faculties of the soul, which are not isolated from one another, raises the question of how Wust sees the relationship between the work of the intellect that has been informed by revelation and that which has not. In this context, he spoke of a 'narrow bridle path between faith and disbelief' (Wust 1937, p. 91) and made the following comment:

> Natural reason is indeed capable, by virtue of the natural luminosity lent unto it, of pressing forth into the depths of the mysteries of the world. Yet in these final depths it then suffers the mysterious catastrophe of uncertainty in the midst of all the brightly streaming certainty of rational evidence. However, this mysterious death of its uncertainty amidst certainty need not necessarily drive it to spiritual suicide. It ought only to die in conformity with the natural side of its essence, in the uncertainty before the ultimate mystery of the world, in order to then celebrate in the supernatural certainty of faith its resurrection into a completely new clarity as a force of reason purified in the deepest intellectual destitution and now supernaturally exalted. (Wust 1937, p. 51)

This would seem to be a good discursive account of what Ratzinger called 'purified reason'. Wust also endorsed the Thomistic notion that the human person is created with a "*potentia obedientialis*" (obediential potential) for a relationship with God. He acknowledged that human persons may refuse to activate this potential, or they may let it lie dormant and atrophy. Nonetheless, even if a person lives in an irreligious manner, Wust believed that such irreligiosity still belongs to the realm of the religious. The realm of the natural, in other words, is also the realm of the religious. As he said, *Homo philosophus* and *homo religiosus* exist in a relationship of co-relativity or correlation. For Wust, a complete divorce between the two, as Max Scheler had attempted in his work *On the Eternal in Man*, was not possible (Wust 1927, p. 197).

Referring to the relationship between the will and the intellect, Wust suggested that 'within the depths of the person there unfolds, amidst the struggle between chivalrous high-mindedness and egoistic, mistrustful low-mindedness, a pure combat of will; either for the "yes" or for the "no"' (Wust 1937, p. 69). The chivalrous high-minded "Yes" demands piety, one of the classical Roman virtues, as Haecker had also emphasised. Wust noted that God reveals himself to children and to those pious souls who have preserved their simplicity of heart.

Within his philosophical anthropology, Wust also spent some considerable time on a discussion of what he called the "boundary situations" for the human person. These boundary situations are the three big issues of the religious realm of life: (i) the certainty of God's existence, (ii) the certainty of revelation, and (iii) the certainty of personal salvation. When approaching the boundaries, the person can either 'break himself in defiant egotism—or in loving surrender to the inscrutable, transcendent power that has nourished him in this darkness, be purified for the further reception of grace' (Wust 1937, p. 195). Wust concluded his anthropological vision with the statement:

> The living God of religion is the God of faith, of love and of grace. Through the medium of the conscience within the deepest core of the soul, man is addressed by this living God and, indeed, he is addressed by Him in a manner which nothing else in the entire world can simulate. Within this inner state of being-addressed,

man experiences a personal living counterpart: a 'Thou" with which he as a 'self" knows himself to be in mysterious communication. (Wust 1937, p. 198)

There are strong parallels between Wust's conclusion here and the personalist philosophy of the Jewish scholar Martin Buber, whose work has also been the subject of praise by Joseph Ratzinger and Ratzinger's colleague and mentor Hans Us von Balthasar. Ratzinger and Balthasar saw Buber as an example of someone who was trying to bring to the table of twentieth-century philosophical issues the wisdom of his own theological tradition.

6. Conclusions

The quartet of mid-twentieth-century German Catholic philosophers surveyed above were all seeking to escape from what they perceived to be the straitjacket of German Idealism. They wanted to bring philosophy and theology and even elements of classical mythology to play in concert in order to foster a humanism that would affirm the highest wisdom of the Jews, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Christians. Included in this affirmation was a defence of the notion of truth, including what the Greeks called "logos", along with the good and the beautiful, and an affirmation of piety as a virtue required for the sound operation of the intellect. As a consequence, they all found themselves in opposition to the ideology and culture of fascism, and they all regarded the tradition of German Idealism as a woefully inadequate weapon to wield against German neo-paganism.

Today the scope of reason has not merely been narrowed, but as part of a generational reaction against the intellectuality of the tradition of German Idealism, reason itself is now regarded as something dangerous, even toxic. For those who stand on the side of reason and truth, and truth's partners' goodness and beauty, and who prefer Virgilian piety to the Nietzschean will to power, the largely untranslated works of this quartet offer a field of treasure to be explored by Anglophone scholars. They represent one particular approach to the relationship between theology and Continental philosophy that is not all that well known within the Anglosphere.

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Heidegger's Existential Diagnosis and Bonaventure's Positive Existential Remedy: Using Hermeneutics to Address the Problem of Anxiety over Intellectual Finitude [†]

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Abstract: In today's postcritical environment, the philosophical disciplines have at times acquired a negative reputation for abstraction, relativity and impracticability. While indispensable to the modern university curriculum, the meaning and utility of the philosophical enterprise continues to register ambivalently in modern popular consciousness. In this article, I challenge this popular assumption with a case study in philosophical interpretation, by applying the hermeneutics of German existentialist Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) to issues of practical religious life. Within a life-context of anxiety over intellectual finitude and its ensuing projections, I demonstrate how the innovative sapiential reading of Christ by medieval Franciscan theologian Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (c. 1217–1274) supplies a productive intervention to ensure a new state-of-mind. This new state-of-mind arising from a new mode of understanding and being-in-the-world, amounts to a transmutation of the Heideggerian hermeneutic mode in the light of biblical truth. Bonaventure's threefold way of Christological exegesis serves as a requisite framework in which to practically redeploy the Heideggerian way of understanding towards a positive existential end.

Keywords: Bonaventure of Bagnoregio; Martin Heidegger; hermeneutics; Christological exegesis; phenomenology; existentialism; subjectivity; *sapientia*

1. Introduction

The historical, cultural and intellectual gulf that separates twentieth-century existentialist Martin Heidegger and thirteenth-century Franciscan theologian Bonaventure of Bagnoregio conceals an affinity stemming from their common derivation in Catholic scholasticism, particularly Franciscan. Born in Messkirch, Germany in 1889, Heidegger was raised in a Roman Catholic household. At age twenty, having undertaken six years of seminary education, he entered a Jesuit seminary but was discharged due to heart trouble. He proceeded to study theology at the University of Freiburg. In 1911, he switched to philosophy owing to the influence of Carl Braig (1852–1923). Having completed his doctorate in philosophy in 1913 and his habilitation thesis on Franciscan John Duns Scotus (1265/66–1308) in 1915, Heidegger started his teaching career in the same university. From 1923, Heidegger moved to the University of Marburg, but moved back to Freiburg in 1928. His teaching career ended with his retirement in 1959, but his prolific literary output was to continue until his death in 1976.[1]

Heidegger's philosophical interest had been ignited as early as 1906, when as a seventeen-year-old, he read *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle* by Franz Brentano (1838–1917). Heidegger's interest was to deepen through later readings of the works of Aristotle and his medieval scholastic interpreters such as Scotus, Bonaventure (c. 1217–1274) and Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274). As his first mentor, Braig had encouraged the young

Heidegger to set these scholastic writings in dialogue with modern philosophy. Heidegger's subsequent engagement with philosophers such as his other mentor Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and Frederick Nietzsche (1844–1900) extended his thinking in an existentialist direction. Furthermore, Heidegger's study of the ideas of Protestant reformers such as Martin Luther (1483–1546) and John Calvin (1509–1564) augmented his growing disillusionment with Catholicism, so much so that he broke with its system in 1918 (McGrath 2006, pp. 25–29).

Significantly, Heidegger's synthesis of hermeneutics and ontology led him to combine medieval questions about the meaning and foundations of being with modern anxieties about the unity of knowledge and the basis of intellectual certitude. Heidegger's radical transformation of the medieval scholastic tradition in light of modern existentialist sources renders his system a key resource for marking how theological revelation and philosophical acumen can profitably intersect within the dialogue of tradition and modernity. Heidegger can be a good guide in showing how modern hermeneutics (with its historicizing focus) can be enriched by the wisdom (*sapientia*) of medieval Christian exegesis (with its centrally ontological concern). For Heidegger, a key hermeneutic question is that of hermeneutical selfhood's ontological foundations; a question Bonaventure also took up in his quest to discover the ineffable ground of human flourishing in his pivotal treatise *The Soul's Journey into God* (first written in Latin in 1259). Both Heidegger and Bonaventure, for historical and hermeneutical reasons, recognized the limits of Aristotelian speculative philosophy as a tool for hermeneutical understanding, and the prospect of a 'something more' in the meaning of being than can be cognized or evidenced empirically (McGrath 2006, pp. 1–24). While Emmanuel Falque, Leonard Bowman, Sonia Sikka and others have thematized Heidegger's connection with scholastic metaphysics by identifying speculative connections between Heidegger and medieval Christian thought, scholarship can nonetheless benefit from a focus on practical issues (Falque 2018; Bowman 1977; Sikka 1997, pp. 11–42). In this article, I demonstrate how a synthetic approach incorporating Heideggerian and Bonaventurian insights can be enacted in everyday contexts of living.

2. The Problem of Hermeneutical Foundations: Heidegger's Diagnosis and Bonaventure's Positive Solution

In our modern post-enlightenment moment, texts are often viewed as data repositories which contain principles and structures to be functionally applied in practical settings. The modern scientific way of reading first comprehends the text's underlying conceptual structures, and then tries to functionally instantiate these in our structures of thinking or living. To the extent that the logical order of the text is correspondent to the causal order of reality, reading simply gets at the structurality of structure. The move toward the structurality of structure lays the text open to the prospect of being deconstructed. Since its function is not to disclose the sheer gift of presence but merely to conceptualize it, the text stands as essentially extrinsic to the substance of that which it seeks to convey, and *ipso facto*, it forsakes the irreducible historicity of its disclosure in 'being-there' (Da-sein) as Heidegger would assert (Clark 1986, p. 1010). Nevertheless, it can be argued that some texts operate in an entirely different medium from that of an information sheet or an instruction manual for constructing something. Rather than a set of scientific principles to be transposed onto the level of actual causality, textual reality can be of an entirely different order from that of scientific truth. According to Richard Palmer, such a reality 'is to be understood as an historical story; a happening to be heard' (Palmer 1969, p. 19). A text is not to be *grasped* or *conceptualized* as object (per the representational notion of language), but is to be *inhabited* (per the phenomenological mode) as a mode of human expression (Clark 1986, p. 1010). Beyond the rationality of general principles which are timeless, universal and changeless irrespective of context, we can proceed to the rationality of an event which is contingent, unrepeatable and particular. In granting such a historicizing focus to hermeneutics, we now tread on territory that properly belongs to the realm of hermeneutic ontology.

Heidegger indicates an entire level of understanding that precedes the level of explanation. This is the level of pre-understanding, of the basic dispositions, values and assumptions that shape one's entire perceptual relation to the object. Meaning is in some measure determined by this originary order of approach to the text. But the text also speaks; it has a being that demands interpretation, that grasps its reader, and to which the reader must in some way conform. The relation between the reader and the text is the essential hermeneutic question (Palmer 1969, pp. 33–45). Heidegger appeals to a more primordial level of understanding that is rooted not in human consciousness and human categories, but in the manifestness of the things encountered. Instead of starting with a general theory to predetermine one's way in things, understanding forms on the interior of the disclosure of things.[2] Heidegger goes beyond simple descriptions of the form and matter of things. In his 1936 essay, 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (delivered as lectures in the mid-1930s and published in 1950), Heidegger asserts that the pair of peasant shoes in a painting by Vincent van Gogh can be observed to be 'constructed of leather' and 'joined by thread'. Yet these observations do not bring one any closer to discovering the shoes' nature. For Heidegger, these shoes, far more than reflecting an element of the peasant culture to which they belong, disclose the actual being of what exists in the artwork, thus revealing 'the truth of what is'. In *The Essence of Reasons* (first published in German in 1950), Heidegger adds that it is impossible to get at the fixed, universal truth of things.[3] Instead, they shine out to oneself from within the context of a 'unified fabric of relationships which gives meaning to the world', as Robert Schulberg aptly puts it. As such, 'to make something apparent, we must set it forth in a context of being, an 'open, relational context' which will enable it to be (Stulberg 1973, pp. 259–61; Palmer 1969, pp. 159–61). For Heidegger, since the meaning of being cannot be tied down to a particular formality, any form of ideal objectivity immediately restricts the voluminous truth of being. While he does not deny the existence of an origin whose presence can be thought, he resists its formalization by biblical revelation as the 'commonest, cheapest form of metaphysics' (Hemming 1998, pp. 373–418, especially 380). The superabundant truth of being cannot be pinpointed in a static conception.[4]

But what if there is an even more primordial level of interpretation—that which properly belongs to the first origin of hermeneutical reality, the foundation of hermeneutical selfhood? How do we articulate this origin or foundation? Thirteenth-century Franciscan theologian Bonaventure came closest to capturing this unspeakable level of hermeneutical reality when he expressed his longing to encounter that Word beyond all knowledge and experience. This is vividly articulated in *The Soul's Journey into God*:

> In this passing over, if it is to be perfect, all intellectual activities must be left behind and the height of our affection must be totally transferred and transformed into God. This, however, is mystical and most secret, which no one knows except him who receives it, no one receives except him who desires it, and no one desires except him who is inflamed in his very marrow by the fire of the Holy Spirit whom Christ sent into the world. (Bonaventure 1978, chp. 7, n. 4, p. 113).[5]

In a single moment of synthetic insight, Bonaventure unveils the innermost structure of interpretation: love and knowledge of the object interpreted, actualizing and being actualized by one's attentiveness, leading the reader deeper into its reality. Perhaps the words of nineteenth-century African-American botanist George Washington Carver are most pertinent for this relational context of knowing: that if you love something enough, it will divulge you its secret.[6] For Bonaventure, this affective movement of interpretation, this being motivated by a love for that which lies beyond all sight and all words, drives the soul deeper into the heart of things to seek their spiritual secret. This secret is not to be divulged to the prideful, nor to the presumptuous, nor to those who would seek for mastery. Only by listening to the object, being attentive to the *being-there* of the One present within and through all, can the soul have any prospect of knowing the innermost secret of flourishing. Contrary to the complexity and perplexity of the modern religious life, this simplicity of

starting point in Christ the Word beyond all words is axiomatic for Bonaventure. Needless to say, the intelligibility of this Word exceeds that of a purely intellectual certitude and pertains to God's own self-revelation rather than to humanity in its self-determination and finitude. Determination of things is resplendent with the divine intentionality. Thereby, the understanding and experience of things is mediated by Scripture as the regulative idea. Bonaventure's innovative way of reading Scripture is evident in his biblical commentaries. In the scriptural medium, one is brought to relate to an everyday phenomenon such as the wind or the sun in a thoroughly Christological manner—living, imagining and thinking them as a means of living in God.[7]

In Bonaventure's way of interpretation, van Gogh's painting of peasant shoes would recall biblical images such as Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians that their 'feet [be shod] with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace' (Eph 6:15).[8] It would also recall correlative verses such as: 'How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings and who proclaim salvation...' (Isa 52:7). Here, feet that are shod signify the readiness of the sojourner to step along the way of Christ. In literal terms, they represent a willingness to walk or run, often for very long distances, towards the desired destination. Bonaventure's perception of van Gogh's peasant shoes would be pregnant with the axiology of faith, laden with the values of Christ's kingdom. To see all things through the biblical prism is to structure one's way in them according to one's inner comportment to Scripture's subject—the Supreme Good (*Summum Bonum*). Christ the Word exemplifies the ideal form of living since the deep structure of reality and experience is pre-eminently Christological. When one's mind grasps an outward sign with the senses, one proceeds to 'see beyond' the appearance of the sign. From the sensible form, one reduces to the spiritual content; this is only possible since content is expressed through form in the very act of being. As it is on the ontological level, so it is on the theological; the Word expresses God the Father through the bond of the Holy Spirit in the very act of creation.[9] As I shall demonstrate in my subsequent case study, the expressive and dynamic order of a Heideggerian hermeneutics can be given a more normative foundation by virtue of its origination in Christ, the centralizing principle of Bonaventure's 'hermeneutic ontology'.

3. Heidegger's Hermeneutic Theory

3.1. The Relation between State-of-Mind and Understanding

As Heidegger expresses in his *magnum opus*, *Being and Time* (first published in German in 1927), the hermeneutic process is made up of three basic elements.[10] The first element is one's 'state-of-mind' or 'attunement'.[11] This is defined as one's natural state of response to the world one encounters. When one has an ice cream, one is happy; when one feels the sun's heat on one's skin, one is invigorated. The second element is one's understanding of the world that state-of-mind discloses. State-of-mind in its very depths expresses one's understanding of the world into which one is delivered or 'thrown'. If one experiences the world to be an essentially benevolent place full of opportunity and sustenance, this issues in a hopeful or optimistic state-of-mind. The third element is one's 'being-in-the-world' of which understanding is a basic form (Heidegger 2010, pp. 126–39). To quote Heidegger:

> Attunement [state-of-mind] is one of the existential structures in which the being of the 'there' dwells. Equiprimordially with it, understanding constitutes this being. Attunement always has its understanding, even if only by suppressing it. Understanding is always attuned. If we interpret understanding as a fundamental existential, we see that this phenomenon is conceived as a fundamental mode of the being of Da-sein. (Heidegger 2010, p. 134)

Understanding dwells together with one's state-of-mind or attunement from the very beginning of the mind's being-made-aware of the world in which it is. Understanding is thereby primary and constitutive of the being of the world in general. If understanding is interpreted as a fundamental form of being-in-the-world, the disclosure of the thing in

itself is a fundamental way that being-in-the-world comes to be. In summary, one's mode of 'being-in-the-world', or personal horizon of what can be or not be, is constituted by one's understanding of the world as expressed in one's state-of-mind. To extend my illustration, my presumption of the world's benevolence (understanding), expressed in an optimistic disposition (state-of-mind), issues in a certain habitual form, a set of choices and beliefs or *modus operandi* (mode-of-being-in-the-world).

3.2. Nature of Understanding

Hermeneutics is not an objective explanation of the geometrical shape of being, divested of personal value or significance, and fixed in text, but an effervescing horizon of existential possibility that remains specific to the changing personal life-context of the interpreter. Heidegger asserts that the hermeneutic task consists in detecting and revoicing the effervescing existential forms that pertain in the course of one's being-in-the-world. Instead of taking flight from one's own temporality by seeking to formalize things according to the dictates of a discrete research agenda, one is called instead to listen to oneself in one's own act of being, making ontologically present to the intellect what is ontically present to existence.

Accordingly, the essential hermeneutic task is not to understand what things are in the world, but the *way* one is *with them* in the world. Not so much 'what' things are in the abstract, but 'how' they are to oneself. One does not look at contingencies or causal dependencies in the world out there (this causes that, this depends on that for its being), but possibilities or what can be or not be. Being is not abstracted from time, but always 'being-in-time'.

> In understanding as an existential, the thing we are able to do is not a what, but being as existing. The mode of being of Da-sein as a potentiality of being lies existentially in understanding. Da-sein is not something objectively present which then has as an addition the ability to do something, but is rather primarily being-possible. (Heidegger 2010, p. 134)

The world presents itself to oneself already interpreted by oneself. One already has state-of-mind or a fundamental existential disposition towards that which is ready-to-hand. Whenever one encounters something in the world, one already has an understanding of its purpose for oneself.[12]

3.3. Application of Heidegger's Hermeneutics to Interpretation of Texts

Applying Heidegger's method to the interpretation of written texts, one discovers in the text what one already knows about the subject matter.

> When the particular concretion of interpretation in the sense of exact text interpretation likes to appeal to what 'is there,' what is initially 'there' is nothing else than the self-evident, undisputed prejudice of the interpreter, which is necessarily there in each point of departure of the interpretation as what is already 'posited' with interpretation as such, that is, pre-given... (Heidegger 2010, p. 141)

The language of text always refers back to the one interpreting, to one's self-consciousness or to one's self-understanding. This marks a revolution in how a text can be understood. For instance, consider the biblical proposition in 1 John 4:8 that 'God is love.' This statement can be considered principally in terms of a conceptual identification of divinity and charity. One asks how, why, and for whom God is reckoned as 'love'. One can inquire into the meaning of the term 'God', or whether and in what manner it is determined by the predicate. In this case, the reader is seeking to analyze the textual experience from a standpoint outside it. Yet, 'love' is not an entity to be atomized and analyzed in its constituent parts. Rather, it is a fundamental existential, a mode of being-in-the-world, whose possibility is only actualizable in the personal event of decision. There is a world of difference between conceptualizing 'love' in the abstract and experiencing 'love' in reality. For Heidegger,

a prior experience of love ought to presuppose a genuine understanding of the reality signified by the text.

3.4. Deficiencies in Heidegger's Hermeneutics and (Dis)continuities with Bonaventure's Hermeneutics

Heidegger's way of understanding, while profound, cannot be of any use to the individual interpreter unless it is subject to the light of a superior wisdom. In his critique of Heidegger's phenomenology of religious experience, John Martis affirms Heidegger's wish to transcend the objectivizing tendency of philosophy as science with a 'phenomenological cognizance of experience in its facticity—experience as actually undergone.' However, since religious experience is always configured to a transcendent, any phenomenologizing that seeks to bring out the thing in itself must take this dimension into account. At this juncture, Heidegger seems to err in seeking to limit a phenomenology of religion to the horizon of the visible—that which one can hear, see, feel, touch and thereby experience in and of oneself. Interpretation is entirely formed on the interior of worldly or everyday experience, without any significant recourse to the otherworldly or extraordinary, the supernatural or the miraculous that daily seems to invade the horizon of some believers. This results in a 'missing element' in the phenomenology of religion, or the omission of the transcendent or 'numinous' as an authority or an agent in the individual believer's quest for meaning. This transcendent dimension in the conceptualization of experience is, indeed, Christ himself—the 'absolute other' whose structural incursion sustains the phenomenological approach, saving it from falling into its 'theorizing other' that is the 'scientific worldview' (Martis 2016). In other words, it is only in being open to the fullness of reality that phenomenology survives itself. Only then can one avoid foisting one's own pre-determined categories on factical experience, hence precluding the agency and authority of the real in its determination.

Similar to Heidegger, Bonaventure advocates an attitude of unconditional openness to being-itself. Both of their approaches can be seen as phenomenological, since they are negotiated in the act of encounter with the actual. For Heidegger, there is no singular ground of being that can tie being to a specific formality; not one theological conceptuality—not even biblical—can adequately convey the beingness of being. A premature grasp of the phenomenon according to the dictates of a research agenda only leads to abstraction, whereas allowing the thing to show itself through itself leads to its reality. Knowledge of the truth of being is grounded in the manifestness of being itself, which of itself resists one's will to essentialize and to predetermine. On the contrary, in Bonaventure's Christocentric faith-based hermeneutics, Christ is foundation of hermeneutical selfhood, the hermeneutical principle *par excellence.* The determination of reality belongs to Christ, the form of whose incarnation is instantiated in the created order. Christ is the center and exemplar of reality, the total incarnation of wisdom (*sapientia*), the way to God the Father.[13] As Emmanuel Falque affirms in his pivotal *ressourcement* study on Bonaventurian and Heideggerian hermeneutics, it is fitting to bring both thinkers into dialogue because Heidegger had indeed digested Bonaventure's insights and applied them to his own work.[14] This connection is unsurprising, considering the various thematic and methodological affinities between the works of the two thinkers.[15]

4. Bonaventure's Hermeneutics of Christological Encounter

Bonaventure was born in 1217 in Bagnoregio in Italy. In 1236, at age nineteen, he embarked on a course of study at the University of Paris—the premier institution in Western Christendom of his time. After four years of studying 'liberal arts' and philosophy, he graduated with a Master of Arts. In 1243, he joined the Order of the Friars Minor—a mendicant order founded by fellow Italian Francis of Assisi (c. 1181–1226) in 1209.[16] As a Franciscan, Bonaventure studied Sacred Scripture and theology and eventually taught at the Franciscan school. Combining his 'liberal arts' and theological training, he constructed an innovative philosophical-theological synthesis.[17]

Medieval scholastic Bonaventure first theorized his simple yet substantial synthesis in his foundational theological work, the *Commentary on the Sentences* (written between 1250 to 1253).[18] He applies his whole being—body, mind and soul—in posing three simple existential questions of Scripture: 'What?' namely, 'Who am I?'; 'How?' or 'How do I live'; Why? or 'Why do I exist?' These three basic existential categories of content, mode and end are extracted from the Aristotelian epistemological frame of subject matter, method and goal respectively. There is also a twofold efficient cause or origin: God or the interpreter of the biblical text. Bonaventure applies an Aristotelian framework of causality to biblical interpretative mechanics (Bonaventure 2013, bk.1, prologue, pp. 1–15; Minnis 1984, pp. 28, 29, 79, 81).

Bonaventure enjoins one to be unconditionally open to the whole Christ (*totus Christus*), in such a way that one's entire being—one's ways of thinking, living and seeing—is pervaded with the reality of heaven. Christ as the content, mode and end determines being in its deepest depths. When the believer as reader of Scripture poses three similar questions of Christ, a threefold answer is obtained. Firstly, what is the nature of Christ? One arrives at certain biblical truths: '[Christ], who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.' (Phil 2:6–7) Secondly, how did Christ manifest his nature in his Incarnation? One receives truths like this one: 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.' (Mark 10:45) Thirdly, why did Christ do this, or to what end or purpose? Such verses spring to mind: 'I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' (Luke 5:32) This threefold nature, path and purpose of Christ is spiritually intuited in one's memory, cognized by one's intellect, and experienced in life by a commission of one's will. Bonaventure's exegetical strategy consists in bringing faith principles already incarnate in the believer's life to conscious reflection by affective participation in Christ's literal experience. One can know, envision, and live the *why, how* and *what* of one's own being with significant recourse to the *why, how* and *what* of Christ's being mediated in Scripture. Bonaventure's hermeneutics consists in reflecting upon what one believes and how one lives in search of ultimate norms and final ends.

5. Differences between Bonaventure's and Heidegger's Hermeneutics

Heidegger counsels a return to one's own being-in-time, one's being-made-aware of the world in its 'thrownness'. Phenomena are expressive of human existence in its fallibility and diversity. On the other hand, Bonaventure understands that phenomena in their givenness are manifestative of the divine heart and work in its ontological unity and completeness. Bonaventure's prospect of divining the source and end of all things, through all things, means that the being to which phenomenology tends is not the world of factical experience in its everydayness. Bonaventure conceives the being intended by phenomenology as the 'being-there' of God himself. Christ is the sure methodological foundation or frame of reference.[19] Heidegger begins with factical experience as actually undergone, and then reduces to an existential understanding of this experience. In a reversal of Heidegger's hermeneutic process, Bonaventure encounters Christ first—the medium of Scripture and reality. Bonaventure then revoices and exegetes what lies on the interior of that experience. By beginning from one's vision of God, Bonaventure sets factical experience on a solid descriptive foundation with which to build a maximal concept of one's existence as it 'ought to be'. In some sense, even though Bonaventure's Christocentric approach can be characterized as phenomenological akin to Heidegger's, it presents a Christocentric completion of the humanist ideal.[20]

6. A Case Study in Self-Interpretation: Anxiety over One's Intellectual Finitude

The productive correlation of Heideggerian and Bonaventurian hermeneutic approaches can be illustrated by a real-life example regarding one's anxiety over one's intellectual finitude. In Heideggerian terms, one can be afraid of what others think of

oneself—particularly their assessment of one's intelligence. This state-of-mind or mood shapes one's way of being-in-the-world. When faced with a difficulty of interpretation, one is reluctant to seek or accept the help of others. Rather one simply pretends to understand or refuses to confront it. When singled out to do a special task, there is the fear of failure or striving for the impossible ideal of perfection. This might lead to giving up prematurely or excessive protectiveness or reworking of one's work. When one reads the apostle Paul's declaration: '. . .I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. . .' (Phil 3:8), one struggles to understand its deeper meaning. One's own mode of being-in-the-world, which leads to a specific handling of the horizon of possibility open to oneself, expresses what one has experienced or understood to be the case about the world in general. One understands that the world generally values intellectual prowess and rewards it.

A Bonaventurian Intervention Addressing Deficiencies in Heidegger's Approach

The experience of Christ on the Cross as biblically exposited by Bonaventure provides a form of radical intervention to the Heideggerian diagnosis of existence. This intervention can be considered 'transformational'. Positive growth in personal wellbeing consists precisely in an attempt to impose new forms of life and thought; these forms are originated, oriented and modelled by Christ himself as perfect Wisdom or *sapientia*. It is not enough simply to know about Christ, but also to think, feel and live as Christ. In the specific life-context to which I refer—anxiety over one's intellectual finitude and its ensuing projections—Bonaventure's Christ supplies an intervention that is radical and world-changing. This entails re-basing identity and self-worth in something other than oneself, one's potentiality or one's accretions. One's self-valuation is relocated in the valuation of a perfectly benevolent Other.

Bonaventure's sapiential reading of Christ supplies a threefold intervention, dissipating one's anxiety over one's intellectual finitude. Firstly, one now knows on the basis of Christ's atoning sacrifice on the Cross that one is accepted and valued no matter whether one succeeds or fails or how one is judged by others. Therefore, one can simply be, without striving to 'feel better about oneself' through deeds of intellectual heroism. This new certitude of identity or 'being-enough' designates the content or nature of Christological existence—what one is. Secondly, this new confidence in the face of one's own finitude leads to a change in mode or path, namely a change in one's existential behavior or how one is. In a transmutation of one's original 'anxiety-toward-death', one can move forward with confidence, taking new ground in one's own way without incessant fear of failure or not meeting human expectations. Thirdly, one can put oneself to work, not frenetically out of fear of losing the acclamation one has worked so hard to win, but with care and integrity and out of love and grateful service to Christ who already calls every believer 'enough'. This intentional shift designates end or purpose—why one is. In Christ, one becomes fully oneself, no longer transfixed by fear and self-doubt, but confident in appropriating God-possibilities for the world in which one lives.

7. Conclusions

Bonaventure's positive existential end is a new state-of-mind arising from a new Christocentric mode of understanding and being-in-the-world. This amounts to a transmutation of Heidegger's approach to understanding by the light of Bonaventurian wisdom. Bonaventure's hermeneutics as a means of living can offer significant resources towards the practical deployment of an existential hermeneutics in contexts of everyday life. Such a Bonaventurian intervention returns philosophy to its foundational expression as the love and study of wisdom.

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Notes

1   For a brief biography of Heidegger, see (Wheeler 2011).

2   For Heidegger's understanding of truth as concealment/unconcealment, see (Caputo 1988).

3   "The Origin of the Work of Art", Heidegger (2002); For the German edition *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, see Heidegger (1986); *The Essence of Reasons*, see the bilingual edition, *Vom Wesen Des Grundes, The Essence of Reasons*, Heidegger (1969).

4   Kuravsky notes that Heidegger's 'origin is only available if a radical self-questionability is enacted in a way that illuminates the illusionary state of the non-questioned pre-understanding of Being.' (Kuravsky 2021).

5   For the Latin edition *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, see (Bonaventure 1882–1902c).

6   'Anything will give up its secrets if you love it enough. Not only have I found that when I talk to the little flower or to the little peanut they will give up their secrets, but I have found that when I silently commune with people, they give up their secrets also—if you love them enough.' (McMurry and Edwards 1981).

7   Bonaventure's interpretation of the 'sun' and 'wind' figures can be found in Ecclesiastes 1:6–7, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (Bonaventure 2005, chp. 1, pp. 99–104); For the Latin edition *Commentarius in Librum Ecclesiastae,* see (Bonaventure 1882–1902b).

8   All biblical quotations in this article are sourced from the (Holy Bible, New International Version 2011).

9   Contemporary theologian Balthasar offers an insightful exposition and retrieval of Bonaventure's Trinitarian hermeneutics. See (Caseralla 1996).

10   *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1962, 2010); For the German edition *Sein und Zeit*, see (Heidegger 1993).

11   Macquarrie and Robinson translated 'Befindlichkeit' as 'state-of-mind' and Staumbaugh translated this as 'attunement'.

12   For a summary of the basic elements of Heidegger's hermeneutic ontology, see (Jensen 2007, pp. 118–29).

13   For Bonaventure's theme of Christocentricity, see (Hayes 1981, especially pp. 1–24).

14   Please refer to Heidegger, *Curriculum vitae* in (Ott 1990, pp. 90–92, especially 91; quoted in Falque 2018, lii).

15   McGrath analyzes the philosophical relationship between Bonaventure and Heidegger (McGrath 2006, p. 33).

16   For the life and works of Francis of Assisi, see (Sabatier 1913).

17   The date of birth and other key events in Bonaventure's chronology have yet to be established. For the different authoritative perspectives, see (Quinn 1972; van der Heijden and Roest 2019; Hammond 2009); For Bonaventure's life and works, see (Bougerol 1964; Schlosser 2014).

18   For the Latin edition *Commentaria in quatuor libros sententiarum*, see (Bonaventure 1882–1902a).

19   For a detailed treatment of the distinction between faith-based and experience-based approaches, see (Jeanrond 1991, p. 130).

20   For a detailed argument on the relation between humanist and Christocentric reading approaches, see (Falque 2016).

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From Philosophy of Religion to Philosophy of Religious Experience: On New Tendencies in French Phenomenology of Religion

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Abstract: Contemporary thinking on religion is confronted with the challenge of shifting from a 'philosophy of religion' to a 'philosophy of religious experience'. This challenge, on which the common future of philosophy and theology depends, is not to draw a line between the two, but rather to cross that very line. Crossing the boundary between philosophy and theology, which is what is being discussed here, means transcending its naive geometric understanding in order to take up the old task of thinking in a new way. This is a challenge to both philosophy and theology because it is an existential, or rather an experiential, task. It is about a specific experience and a specific way of life that emerges from it, which must be described in philosophy and at the same time elaborated in theology. This is perhaps the greatest challenge to religious thought. The most representative recent attempts to meet this challenge will be traced below. As we shall see, the best method for both philosophical and theological description of religious experience seems to be phenomenology. The latter allows a free exploration of this experience, while avoiding the trap of falling into the limitations set by either philosophy or theology unduly separated by the boundaries set by a conventional academic rigor. The problem of this article is the quest of exploring religious experience itself: the possibility of such an undertaking, its method, and its future. The considerations presented beneath will lead us to conclude that religious thought, to survive and develop further, needs a specifically understood conversion: its future lies, namely, in converting to experience.

Keywords: philosophy of religion; phenomenology of religion; theological phenomenology; religious experience; theology

1. Introduction: Rebuilding the Bridge between Philosophy and Theology

Dan Zahavi once wrote that phenomenology promises to rebuild the bridge between consciousness and reality. The problem, however, is that this bridge does not lead to the other side of the river (Zahavi 2003). Phenomenology in France attempts to bridge the gap between consciousness and transcendence, between the accessible and the inaccessible, between what is revealed in phenomena and what remains veiled. But does this impressive structure, painstakingly constructed with the considerable efforts of several generations of thinkers, touch the other shore?

Remi Brague and Jean-Yves Lacoste, two contemporary thinkers in the philosophy of religion, in a lapidary manifesto opening the *Théologiques* series launched in 1990 and published by the prestigious PUF, stated that: "a peculiarity of France, the reasons for which are attributed to history, is the expulsion of all theological questions from the domain of knowledge that claims to be universal. Everything that concerns the absolute and requires a final decision is thus removed, and other areas of culture lose the weight given to them by its influence, or, on the contrary, are burdened with a weight that does not suit them and that distorts them" (Lacoste 1990). They went on to set an ambitious goal: "The reintegration of the theological field into university culture is a task that still remains to

be accomplished" (Lacoste 1990). In order to accomplish this task, it is necessary "...to measure the influence that theology has had and continues to have on everything that has been said and thought in history—in philosophy, in science, in literature, in law—as well as on what has been done—in politics and in the arts. It is also important to show, through the publication of contemporary French and foreign contributions, that the theological view of reality still remains instructive" (Lacoste 1990). We are likewise confronted with the following question: can religious thought still be instructive to us?

This question gains in weight in the context of French culture, which is characterised by a specifically distanced approach to religious problems, if only because of the well-known principle of *laïcité*. Paradoxically, however, it is precisely there, in the specific context of secular France, that religious thought does not stop developing and continues to show surprising potential. Phenomenology seems to show the most creative energy in this field.

2. Three Hypotheses Regarding the French Phenomenology of Religion

The first hypothesis is that of a happy mistake, as Edward Baring (2019) calls it in his book *Converts to the real*. Encountering Husserl's phenomenology, especially in its early form, if one may so call the *Logical Investigations* and the postulate of a return to the things themselves and the closely related theory of eidetic reduction, has provoked extreme reactions. On the one hand, we have examples of thinkers who were reasserted in sceptical or agnostic attitudes towards the whole religious sphere, while on the other hand, we have a wide range of Husserl's disciples who were converts to Christianity, especially to Roman Catholicism. Husserl himself, although he decided to become a Christian at an advanced age and was baptised in the Lutheran church, considered himself a free Christian and was reluctant to speak out on religious matters. He was only to make a succinct remark towards the end of his life, written down by sister Adelgundis, that with his phenomenology he was leading people to God in a philosophical way, which was the only way available to him. It is worth noting that phenomenology owes its popularity above all to the hopes that Catholic neo-Scholastics placed in it. The main contributors in the early years were Herman Leo Van Breda and Alphonse de Waelhens in Belgium, Sofia Vanni Rovighi in Italy, Joaquín Xirau from Mexico, and Herman Boelaars from the Netherlands. It could be said that the phenomenon of phenomenology's great worldwide career lies in a certain fortunate mistake, which led it to be initially regarded as an attempt to return to the realism familiar from classical metaphysics, and therefore to appear useful in the attempts of Catholic circles to restore scholasticism after the great exhortation of Pope Leo XIII. Matters became complicated, however, when Husserl supplemented the phenomenological method with transcendental reduction and thus sealed its idealist slant, ultimately nullifying any hopes of using the phenomenological method to restore realism. The eventual grounding of the foundations of the phenomenological method in philosophical idealism did not, however, discourage Christian and especially Catholic commentators from seeking inspiration for the philosophy of religion in phenomenology. Among them, we find representatives of philosophical traditions from different countries: Henri Duméry and Henri Birault in France, Angela Ales Bello in Italy, Krzysztof Michalski in Poland, Júlio Fragata in Portugal, and Robert Sokolowski and William J. Richardson in the United States.

The second hypothesis is that of the so-called theological turn. Proponents of this hypothesis claim that phenomenology in France has taken a new direction, different from that originally intended by Husserl. It is now thirty years since Dominique Janicaud published his essay *The theological turn in French phenomenology*. The term itself, however, has had time to become firmly established in the literature on contemporary continental philosophy. The diagnosis in this book was not at all promising: phenomenology in France, from the first attempts at its reception still made by Lévinas, has been moving away from Husserl's intentions and taking a new direction which, to Janicaud's disappointment, is precisely a religious one. Several different turns in French phenomenology have already been diagnosed. Emmanuel Falque (2013, p. 40) mentions further the hermeneutic turn in phenomenology made by Paul Ricoeur, the phenomenological turn in hermeneutics diagnosed by Jean

Grondin as a result of his reinterpretation of Gadamer's works, and various kinds of phenomenological turns in theology. Phenomenological Christology probably plays a leading role in these turns (Manzi and Pagazzi 2006). But can phenomenology make any sense here? Are we not dealing here with a confusion of methods of philosophical inquiry?

Not necessarily: there is a third hypothesis that I would like to present here. Let us call it the second step hypothesis. In the light of this hypothesis, the research inherent in classical phenomenology is the first step towards understanding the way in which this immanent logos, whose explanation phenomenology aims at, becomes accessible to our cognition. It is at the same time the first step in understanding human life, because it leads us to understand how experience sets boundaries and leads to the emergence of the Self from the stream of consciousness and, further, of the human person. This hypothesis is explicated in various ways by many contemporary French phenomenologists of religion, such as Emmanuel Falque (Falque 1999, 2004, 2011, 2015, 2017), Jean-Yves Lacoste (Lacoste 1994, 2000), Emmanuel Gabellieri (Gabellieri 2019), Emmanuel Housset (2010), and Philippe Capelle-Dumont (Capelle-Dumont 2011, 2013, 2016). It bears some similarities with the hypothesis described earlier but differs from those two in one fundamental aspect. It does not interfere in any way with the phenomenological method, nor does it attempt to bend or alter it. There is no attempt here to spiritualise phenomenological concepts by giving them new meanings, placing them in new contexts, or attributing spiritual dimensions to the qualities inherent in consciousness. The first step has already been taken, it is recognised as necessary, and no attempt is made to shorten, lengthen, or change its direction. The question is no longer: can the primary structures of consciousness tell me anything about God or my life? But the question is rather: can the same method that has proved so successful in investigating the primary structures of experience also be used to investigate what is considered to be secondary? (Hence, the actual lived experience with particular reference to the spiritual and the religious experience.) As can be seen, this is a question of boundaries. However, it is important to remember that it is experience that sets the boundaries of the Self and not vice versa. It seems, therefore, that if our experience allows us to take this second step, it is legitimate. This is where the real revolution in method proposed by the new French phenomenology of religion appears before us: is it not the case that, paradoxically, by accepting the boundary set for us by phenomenological inquiry, we can cross certain boundaries, or at least inhabit the boundary between the natural and the supernatural? As we shall demonstrate in the subsequent course of the analyses, this approach, although somewhat innovative, is nevertheless deeply rooted in the French tradition of religious thought.

3. Towards Philosophy of Religious Experience: Crossing the Boundary between Philosophy and Theology

In the introduction to the book *The Burning Bush and the Light of Reason*, Jean Greisch explains the significance of the unusual title: "The general title of the book *The Burning Bush and the Light of Reason* was chosen to resonate with the title of the first book of the trilogy: where there is a 'tree of life', there is a 'burning bush' not far away! Or, to put it less metaphorically, assuming that the philosophy of religion deals with the manifold 'hierophanies' that have marked the history of mankind from its beginnings to the present day, and assuming that religion is one of the most powerful machines for the production of 'meaning', which is above all an attitude, this meaning becomes comprehensible only if we can perceive in it more or less obscure or illuminating traces of the absolute Life itself" (Greisch 2002, p. 27). Jean Greisch identifies three typical pillars upon which the edifice of the philosophy of religion rises. The first is the question of onto-theology, the second is secularisation, and the third concerns the problem of spiritual experience and its relation to philosophy. The prior and perhaps most elaborate, as it is also the oldest of these great scaffoldings, rests on the question of how God comes to philosophy: "Nothing better illustrates the relevance and highly controversial status of philosophical theology in contemporary philosophical debate than Heidegger's questioning of the 'onto-theo-logical'

constitution of Western metaphysics, from Plato and Aristotle to Nietzsche. From the beginning, philosophers have been interested in the divine" (Greisch 2002, p. 37). However, problems related to onto-theology, such as the nature of God and, subsequently, the specifics of His relationship with the world, remain primarily issues relevant to philosophical theology and only marginally concern the philosophy of religion as such. Ontotheology therefore does not exhaust the field of the study usually covered by philosophy religion and remains insufficient. Paradoxically, it seems that the philosophy of religion is much more interested in strengthening the second of the aforementioned pillars, which is the study of secularisation: "The question, which is also highly controversial, of the socio-political, cultural and religious effects of secularisation seems to me to fall squarely within the scope of the philosophy of religion. It is a matter of questioning the genesis, nature and foreseeable evolution of the complex process referred to by this name, by asking what it owes or does not owe to the Christian religion" (Greisch 2002, p. 39). Secularisation offers the already discussed onto-theology an unexpected and surprisingly effective support: it challenges its claims and thus puts them to the ultimate test. Hence, by challenging the established paths of religious thought, it compels it to pave new ones. Exploring one such recently rediscovered pathway, we thus finally reach the last, but not necessarily the youngest, pillar of philosophy of religion, which is religious philosophy, or rather the philosophical study of religious experience. According to Greisch this area of the contemporary reflection on religion revolves precisely around the often-blurred boundary between philosophical theology, philosophy of religion, and religious philosophy. Hence, in order to advance the analysis presented in further parts of this article, of the three most prominent areas of current developments in the philosophy of religion identified here, we shall focus on the latter.

Therefore, it is in the context of the rich background sketched by Jean Greisch that contemporary French religious thought calls us to abandon the 'philosophy of religion' in favour of a 'philosophy of religious experience'. This call first resounded as early as 1957 in Henri Duméry's book *Critique et religion. Problèmes de méthode en philosophie de la religion*. Duméry, the great translator and interpreter of the writings of Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, inscribes the transition discussed here from philosophy of religion to philosophy of religious experience in the old dispute over the boundary between philosophy and theology. Duméry's focus, however, is not so much on drawing the old divisions between disciplines or the boundaries between the two types of philosophy of religion in a new way, but on distinguishing two types of philosophers of religion. The first, whom he calls philosophers of religion, because of the requirements imposed by the scientific method, shy away from any particular religious belief. They look at religion in a purely philosophical way from a safe distance of sceptical attitude. Duméry includes among them some of the classical scholars such as: Hegel, Schelling, and Fichte. Philosophers of religious experience, on the other hand, decide, as it were, from within the very faith they have chosen, to bring to light and carefully examine the reasons for their own decision. Among the philosophers of religious experience, Duméry mentions Augustine, Pascal, Kierkegaard, Blondel, Edith Stein, and Simone Weil. There seems to be little difference between these two ways of thinking about religion. The transition from one to the other, on the other hand, is seemingly as simple as crossing that little stream in Cisalpine Italy called the Rubicon. Once we decide to take this step, however, we quickly see that the change turns out to be revolutionary, as Emmanuel Falque convinces us in his book *Passer le Rubicon. Philosophie et théologie: Essai sur les frontières*. The very change of optics proposed by Duméry constitutes a breakthrough. Instead of two disciplines (philosophy and theology), instead of two philosophies (philosophy of religion and religious philosophy), he shows two ways of thinking. Thus, it turns out that crossing this Rubicon does not at all mean abandoning philosophy in favour of theology. Nor should it be equated with an abandonment of the rigours of the scientific method in favour of considerations of a poetic nature or some form of religious essayism. Just as once for Caesar, for us today crossing the Rubicon means taking up a challenge. This challenge, on which the common future of philosophy and

theology depends, is not to draw a line, but precisely to cross a line. The crossing of the boundary between philosophy and theology, which will be discussed here, means rather transcending the naïve geometrical understanding to take up the old task of thinking in a new way. This challenge is the challenge of thinking (*la tâche de la pensée*), as Jean-Yves Lacoste in turn convinces us in a book with the telling title *From theology to theological thinking*. This is a challenge to philosophy and theology in equal measure, but it is far from sticking merely to the requirements of the respective disciplines (to remain a philosopher and not a theologian, a phenomenologist and not a metaphysician, etc.). The challenge must be existential, or rather experiential: it is about a specific experience and a specific way of life emerging from it, which must be described in phenomenology and at the same time elaborated in theology. Contemporary religious thought thus faces the challenge of moving from a 'philosophy of religion' to a 'philosophy of religious experience'.

Many thinkers are aware of this fact, and the crossing of this Rubicon is already underway. Already Lévinas (1929, 1932, 1970), in his works on intuition in Husserl's phenomenology, which was the first broad study of its kind in French, as well as in his early works on Heidegger, emphasises the primacy of experience in phenomenological research. Claude Romano (2010), in his syntheses of phenomenology, for which he has been awarded the *Grand Prix de Philosophie* of the French Academy in 2020, states that the basic premise of this method is the conviction of the existence of a pre-predicative order governing all experience. By returning to the very origins of the phenomenological method and thus concentrating on experience, it avoids the methodologically important and simultaneously significantly difficult problem of delimiting the boundary between philosophy and theology. At the same time, it avoids the temptation to excessively "theologise" philosophy, a temptation to which religious thinkers sometimes succumb. The phenomenological method, as it were, forces the researcher to take a step back to focus on discovering that primordial order of experience which is prior to language and even prior to the conscious Self. It is at the same time an order that precedes the division between philosophy and theology. Contemporary French phenomenologists also emphasise that this division was only born in the late Middle Ages because of the reception of Aristotle's metaphysics in the West and the birth of the institution of the university. However, they do not do so to attempt a return to the better old days, but only to show that this division, like the drawing of a hard line between the disciplines described here, is not necessary. Instead of nostalgia, therefore, the new French thought offers us an original methodological postulate: let us apply the phenomenological method to the classical problems of philosophy of religion, and even to the classical problems of theology. Let us start with the classical problems, because there is no philosophy completely detached from the philosophical tradition, just as there is no theology detached from the theological tradition. Philosophy, however, has only micro-traditions, which we more commonly used to call philosophical currents or schools. Theology, on the other hand, finds its primary source in Tradition. An ill-conceived rooting in Tradition, however, is detrimental to both philosophy and theology because it renders them incapable of thinking. After all, philosophy can be reduced to neo-phenomenology just as much as theology can be reduced to neo-Thomism. The task of thinking, however, as Lacoste emphasises, is not reduced to re-reading and rewriting the classics (Lacoste 2014, p. 79). Even a good understanding of theological or philosophical traditions is still no guarantee of thinking. Unlike 'non-thinking theologies' and 'non-thinking philosophies', which get lost in the thicket of constant repetition, the task of thinking is not working with a text, but with experience. The challenge of thinking means that, to follow the tradition, we must take a step backwards to reach the experience from which the tradition was born, and therefore from which the text that constitutes the record of that tradition was also born; we are persuaded of this by Falque in his book *Le livre de l'expérience: D'Anselme de Cantorbéry à Bernard de Clairvaux* on the phenomenological study of the tradition of religious thought. Hence arises the demand, which is the culmination of Lacoste's book *From Theology to Theological Thinking*: "getting rid of labels and letting people think where they think" (Lacoste 2014, p. 87). The specific liberation of the disciplines such as philosophy and theology (after

all, this is only the beginning of this liberation) flows from a return to experience as the source of thinking. It therefore flows from the reception of the phenomenological method in the specific context of a border area where different ways of thinking meet.

4. Phenomenological Explorations of Religious Experience

In the following section of this article, we will take a closer look at phenomenological explorations of religious experience conducted by Philippe Capelle-Dumont and Emmanuel Falque. These two prominent contemporary thinkers provide representative examples of the above-mentioned thinking within the border area between philosophy and theology. Neither is afraid to boldly take the second step in the phenomenological study of religion referred to at the beginning of this article. Thus, they shall help us to better understand what exactly prompted the French school to shift away from philosophy of religion towards philosophy of religious experience. However, before delving into a detailed answer, it is worth making a few introductory remarks that will introduce us to a better understanding of the reasons for this: yet another turn in French phenomenology. First of all, the clear primacy of the analysis of experience confirms that both Capelle-Dumont and Falque consistently use the phenomenological method, despite the prevalence of religious themes throughout their work. This is also indicated by the fact that they both refer to the pre-predicative order of experience, to which both philosophical and theological discourse remain secondary. Thus, it is precisely here that we reach the very origins of religious thinking. At the same time, we can clearly see the enormous significance of this new direction of analysis of religious experience for religious thought in general. One may argue that there seems to be a slight blurring of the boundaries between philosophy and theology, but this is not due to a lack of clarity in the analyses, but on the contrary: it is the result of a sharper focus on what is more primary, more original, more meaningful and at the same time more significant. Contemporary French religious thought offers us not only a reception of the religious tradition of Christianity, but a genuine evaluation of it through a critical analysis of its very source, which, after all, is precisely the religious experience specific to it. The distinctive turn towards experience proposed here represents both a challenge and a great opportunity for religious thought. Thus, the new methodological approach to religion that values its fundamental experience rather than a restrictive adherence to philosophical or theological traditions constitutes both its critique and its liberation.

4.1. Philippe Capelle-Dumont and the Three Irreducibles Transcending Experience

Philippe Capelle member of the French Academy and both the founder and the first president of the Catholic French Academy, in his book *Finitude et mystère*, explains that the roots of that seemingly new approach lie deeply in the origins of the phenomenological method itself: "Historical phenomenology is essentially the testimony of a constant effort to think, reduction by reduction, of irreducibility, that is, of finitude. To think truly phenomenologically, on the other hand, means for him: to think of irreducibility, of excess, as a possibility that lies at the foundation of phenomenology as such. Phenomenology, therefore, is concerned with both the reducible and the irreducible" (Capelle-Dumont 2013, p. 107). The irreducible, on the other hand, this excess (l'excès), opens it up to the religious and makes it at the same time have the potential to become a philosophy of religion. Among the thinkers following this path we find, among others, Emmanuel Lévinas, Jean-Louis Chretienne, Michel Henry, Jean Greisch, and Jean-Luc Marion.

What we have here, therefore, is the formation of a new paradigm for the phenomenology of religion. As we can see, it is gradually but increasingly becoming the very philosophy of religious experience mentioned in the title. With this modification, the phenomenological method itself is also changing. Thus, the question arises as to the extent and nature of these changes. Philippe Capelle-Dumont asks a similar question in his essay "Que devient la phénoménologie française?" published in "Cités" (Capelle-Dumont 2014). In response, he notes that, in this process of "becoming", it manifests three main characteristics: a radicalisation of phenomenology (*la radicalisation de la phénoménologie*), a theological

retreat (*le détournement théologique*), and a metaphysical vein (*la veine métaphysique*). He counts Jean-Yves Lacoste, together with Jacques Derrida and Emmanuel Housset, among the latter thinkers with 'theological overtones' (*à résonnance théologique*). It seems that Capelle-Dumont would also include himself in this group. However, he does not necessarily identify himself with what he calls the 'metaphysical vein'. On the contrary, he wants to remain a phenomenologist and, as a phenomenologist, pose the question of the world of religious life. He devoted the second volume of his aforementioned 2013 trilogy *Finitude et mystère* entirely to the historical and contemporary relationship between philosophy (especially phenomenology) and theology. There he concludes that "this discussion has taken the form of two distinct, even hostile strategies: a. the strategy of reconciliation between faith and reason, which is clearly evident in Hegel and Blondel although in each of them they derive from very different conceptual and thematic foundations; b. the strategy of a complete separation of the two speculative exercises, as in Husserl and Heidegger" (Capelle-Dumont 2013, p. 111). Capelle-Dumont points out, however, that, notwithstanding Janicaud's critique, "Something happened in the French reception of historical phenomenology that did not so much constitute a turning point but revealed the impossibility of understanding phenomenology without reference to the idea of a 'turning point'" (Capelle-Dumont 2013, p. 115). And phenomenology itself, in France, "never ceased to be shaped in a unified and yet multiple reference to three precise operations: reduction, intentionality and constitution" (Capelle-Dumont 2013, p. 127). Capelle-Dumont rightly considers the former to be the most important. In the context of reduction, he puts forward his main thesis: reduction reduces the phenomenon to unity: to essence, ad essentiam. In this process, however, the irreducible is also revealed. The irreducible, on the other hand, is different from that which undergoes reduction. This difference consists primarily in the fact that the irreducible does not reduce to such a unity. This is why Capelle-Dumont calls for the development of phenomenology to be understood more broadly, that is, not only through the prism of what is reducible, but also through that excess which remains irreducible. He explains at the same time his interpretation of phenomenology: "From now on, then, we should think in a more radically phenomenological way. To think truly phenomenological, on the other hand, means: to think of irreducibility, of excess, as a possibility that lies at the foundation of phenomenology as such" (Capelle-Dumont 2013, p. 130). Then, a question arises: is such thinking theological thinking? After all, it is theology that claims the right to explain the irreducible, that which is excess, that which "by looking we do not see", "by hearing, we do not hear". In response to these questions, Capelle-Dumont invokes three irreducibles: "1. the irreducibility of consciousness itself; 2. the irreducibility of the excess of the world [or, in other words, the irreducibility of the world of what is in excess]; 3. the irreducibility of God, who speaks, at the same time never speaking—he speaks in his own proper way only, as the excess of all excess (l'excès de tout excès)" (Capelle-Dumont 2013, p. 139). Capelle-Dumont is convinced that, by recognising this irreducible excess, which is revealed in all phenomenological research, he indicates, as it were, a third strategy for conducting the discussion between phenomenology and theology. At the same time, it dismisses accusations of a simple dialectic of overcoming (l'aplomb) or interweaving (l'entrelacs), of which Dominique Janicaud (2009) accused thinkers he identified with the theological turn. From his reflections on the relationship between theology and phenomenology, it is clear that he is not really trying to transcend or, still less, to overcome anything, but only to point out the excess that emerges from any phenomenological investigation. At the same time, he postulates that the attempt to study this excess is not yet to transcend the limits of phenomenology. Phenomenology deals with both the reducible and the irreducible. Capelle-Dumont, on the other hand, attempts to navigate the boundary between what is given in the phenomenon and what is given in this excess: that is, the boundary between the reducible and the irreducible, rather than the boundary of the phenomenological method itself.

4.2. Emmanuel Falque: Triduum Philosophique as an Example of Philosophy of Religious Experience

The observations on the application of the phenomenological method to the description of religious experience made by Capelle-Dumont, although of paramount importance for the analyses carried out here, nevertheless remain heavily theoretical. The time has now come for us, too, in this study, to finally abandon the philosophy of religion, to cross the proverbial Rubicon and turn towards the philosophy of religious experience. If one adopts the systematisation of religious thought proposed by Duméry, as quoted at the beginning of this article, the aforementioned Emmanuel Falque appears to be one of the most significant contemporary philosophers of religious experience. In his monumental three-volume work, *Triduum philosophique*, he attempts a phenomenological study of the experience of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection[1]. Drawing abundantly on biblical sources, the writings of the church fathers, as well as other outstanding writers of Christian antiquity, a centuries-old tradition of great mystics and thinkers of both a philosophical and a theological background, Falque is the first to undertake the project of Christological phenomenology on such a grand scale. A secondary, but not unimportant, aim of Falque's *Triduum philosophique* is an attempt at describing human experience in general in the light of the phenomenological analysis of the crucial three days in the life of Christ Himself—one of the most important religious figures of all time.

The philosophical analysis moves through those three days, revealing the *existentials* of each of them. The *existentials* of the first day are suffering and death, of the second are birth and rebirth, and of the third are eros and the body. In the preface, Falque explains that the way to God is through man. In his view, this follows directly from the meaning of the words: God created man. However, he states that Christian thought over the centuries has tended to indulge in various types of angelism, thereby abandoning an accurate interpretation of human life. Falque calls angelism the abandonment of the doctrine of the incarnation in favour of the doctrine of divinisation. This tendency is expressed, among other things, in interpreting Christ's death "in the light of the Resurrection", which means overlooking its tragic dimension and involuntarily shallowing its meaning. The source of these tendencies, interestingly enough, is not at all the confusion of the concepts of soul and body or the predominance of the spiritual aspect in the interpretation of man. The source is the confusion of the concept of boundary with the concept of limitation. As he writes in the introduction: "by confusing 'boundary' and 'limitation', we most often take our created being for what it is not: that is, for a sinful tendency towards unlimitedness ('you shall be as gods' [Gen 3:5]) rather than for a respect for the boundary by which we are constituted ('this is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh' [Gen 2:23])" (Falque 2015, p. 9). The rejection of boundaries, wrongly understood as limitations, in favour of the search for some sort of utopian unlimited humanity is the source of the errors creeping into the Christian interpretation of life. The first boundary that man should inhabit, and love, is the body. Corporeality introduces many limitations: birth and death, suffering, and relationship to place. A boundary, however, is necessary, it is what defines us and what allows us to live. To be human is to be within certain boundaries.

It is significant that this way of thinking is certainly no stranger to philosophy. Already, the Greeks recognised the existence of boundaries in the world and in man. Therefore, infinity conceived as limitlessness both terrified them and was absurd to them. Paradoxically, Greek concept of infinity always remained limited. Hintikka (1966), in his classical essay on the subject pointed out that Aristotle, in *De interpretatione* as well as in many other of his works, defined infinity as uncountability, understanding the concept in a practical way—infinity is something that cannot practically be counted. Purely theoretical uncountability as unlimited infinity was an absurdity to him. Similarly, long before Aristotle, the Pythagoreans already regarded unlimitedness as something bad (the source of disorder), whereas they conceived of the limiting principle as good (the pinnacle of harmony). This is reflected in Plato's unwritten teachings, from which we learn of two opposing principles: the One and the Dyad (Gk., *ahóristos dyás*).

It appears, thus, that in our culture, the fear of the infinite is as primordial as the fear of the finite and goes to the very roots of thinking, both theological and philosophical. The fear of finitude is, according to Falque, primarily the fear of mortality. However, there is a difference between the fear of the limit and the fear of limitation. Falque points out that man emerges, as it were, from death, because each day of life brings us at the same time closer to death, each step towards life is at the same time a step towards death. In this sense, paradoxically, death simultaneously creates us (*la mort nous fait*) and annihilates us (*la mort nous de-fait*). Life is thus mixed with non-life, with death. Man, therefore, inhabits this boundary, balancing on it. Hence the question of why it is worth living is closely linked to the question of why it is worth dying. Learning to live is at the same time learning to die. The question about the meaning of life is at the same time a question about the meaning of death, but also the fear of the meaninglessness of life is the fear of the meaninglessness of death.

Therefore, it is not without reason that Falque, in his 'Philosophical Triduum', builds Christological phenomenology precisely around the death and resurrection of the Son of God. The struggle with the ultimate limit of experience and, at the same time, the ultimate limit of existence, which is death, represents a real return to the source of the utterly relevant, thus the most universal philosophical and theological problems, hence a return to the source of thinking itself. Thinking, after all, before it becomes philosophical or theological—thus prior to it being structured and subjected to one academic discipline or another—is precisely experiencing and existing. This is why the philosophy of religious experience focuses on the subjective, experiential aspect of religious phenomena rather than on the dogmatic content of this or that religious doctrine. Falque, among other representatives of this approach, draws on the assumption that subjective religious experience is the gateway to understanding experience as such and, hence, the surest path to understanding not only religious existence but religion as such. For this reason, just as phenomenology excludes from reflection the problem of the truthfulness of the world, Christological phenomenology brackets and excludes from reflection the questions of the facticity of the historical figure of Christ and of the claim that he is the Son of God, and therefore the assertion of his divine and human nature. In this way, instead of stopping at the threshold of religion and looking at it from a safe distance of sceptical detachment, philosophy ventures into the world of religious experience and uses the best available tools for its exploration, namely those provided by phenomenology. In doing so, she not only unlocks the potential for a better understanding of the multi-level depth of the teachings of Christianity, one of the world's major religions, not without reason, as it may turn out, inspiring great minds for generations. At the same time, it brings together the exploration of the divine and the human, the sacred and the profane, building a bridge over the divide that has hitherto separated them. In doing so, it challenges both the traditions of Christian philosophy and theology on the one hand and the nowadays widespread secularisation of religious thought on the other. This challenge, however, is not aimed at undermining the truth of Christianity; for this truth, as we have mentioned, has been unreservedly accepted as a necessary precondition for any analysis within the framework of Christological phenomenology and then bracketed as self-evident. On the contrary, it is intended to deepen the understanding of the issues central to the life of Christ himself and, subsequently, to Christianity as a religion altogether. After all, for a Christian as a follower of Jesus, their religious life-world is a reflection of the life-world of Christ himself. Therefore, the approach suggested by Falque indeed calls us to traverse the boundary, to cross the proverbial Rubicon, and to truly bring the researcher into the world of religious experience. There is no room for distance here, no place for scepticism of any sort, no chance for the researcher to emerge from the waters of that Rubicon unchanged. Perhaps now it is only becoming clear as to why all the previous philosophers of religious experience were also people of profound faith. It turns out that the very attitude of the approach matters here as much as the attitude of the one attempting to employ it.

Eventually, it seems that, despite some doubts, it is nevertheless worthwhile to not shy away from the approach offered by Christological phenomenology. First of all, this manner of conducting the phenomenological study of religion opens a new level of analysis. It thereby reaches into areas inaccessible to both prior philosophy of religion and theology. Moreover, the potential of this approach goes even further, extending well beyond the boundaries of Christianity. Suppose we regard this application of phenomenology to religion, which we have called here after Falque a Christological phenomenology, as a kind of thought experiment, and there are many indications that this is exactly what our attitude should be. In that case, we can expect the same thought experiment to be conducted successfully with different inputs since the output here was Christological, merely because of the fact that the examination of the life of Christ served as an input. Consequently, the philosophy of religious experience conducted based on the application of the phenomenological method presented by Falque can also apply to other religious traditions and, at the same time, render them great services. Hence, it is safe to say that it can serve as a model for a new approach to reflecting on religion. Thinking back to the 'second step' hypothesis posed at the beginning of this article, it can be concluded that, from a methodological point of view, taking this step is always legitimate, whether it means venturing into the world of Christian experience or into those of experiences specific to any other religion. Consequently, the new method of practising the phenomenology of religion presented here—although, of course, in this case, we shall no longer call it Christological—is merely on the verge of unveiling all its still unexplored potential.

5. Conversion to Experience: The Great Hope for Religious Thought

Embedded, as it were, in the analyses proposed by Falque, an example of which we have outlined above, are all the new trends in French religious thought. A phenomenological analysis of the experience of Christ's passion confidently and effectively guides an eager observer through the often-convoluted paths of onto-theology, secularisation, and of the problem of spiritual experience and its relation to philosophy. At the same time, it transcends the limitations set by philosophy and theology defined merely as academic disciplines, thus opening a new path. This path is no longer the path of practising this or that academic discipline, but rather simply the path of thinking itself, which is not afraid to take up a challenge and is by no means timid in crossing some boundaries. Therefore, it is now clear that religious thought, to survive and develop further, needs a specifically understood conversion: its future lies, namely, in converting to experience. The specific 'conversion to experience' discussed here means that it is not only oneself (hence, a researcher or a scholar) that matures through immersion in the tradition, but rather it is the tradition that develops and at the same time matures in my experience. It is not so much me that sinks into the text (hence, often the main carrier of religious experience) and lives its life, but rather it is me that brings the text to life and allows it to live my life. Not so much *Lego, ergo cogito*, but *Cogito, ergo lego*, as Falque brilliantly points out in his book with a telling title: *Le livre de l'expérience*. Instead of trying to root myself in tradition or enter the world of tradition, tradition roots itself in my experience and thus becomes my life. The source of the world of religious life is therefore not a religious text, even if it is a sacred text. Nor is it a religious tradition, even if it is a time-honoured tradition. Nor is it some religious concept, the so-called *theologuomenon*. The source of religious life is religious experience. This statement becomes more powerful in the context of the phenomenological method. To move from a philosophy of religion to a philosophy of religious experience is to move from a philosophy focused on religious phenomena to a philosophy focused on religious experience. On the grounds of the phenomenological method, this—strictly speaking—means a transition from a phenomenology of religious essences to a phenomenology of religious life. This paper aims at demonstrating that the transition in question, like crossing the waters of the Rubicon, is not merely a possibility, but rather a necessity.

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Note

1 Falque devoted a separate volume of the trilogy to each of the three days, respectively: (Falque 1999, 2004, 2011). All three volumes have been subsequently expanded and reissued in 2015 in a single book: (Falque 2015).

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Article

Qualifying Religious Truth and Ecclesial Unity: The Soteriological Significance of Difference

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Abstract: The trans-phenomenology of Emmanuel Levinas has helped expose the totalising dynamic that has marked much of Western philosophy. The quest for a unity of knowledge in the truth assimilates any hint of otherness into more of the same. Plurality becomes a source of violence and dissent regarded as decay. Levinasian perspectives, however, and recent developments in magisterial teaching in the Roman Catholic Church point to a more ethical approach that can begin to escape the dialectic binary of the same and the other and so help avoid static conceptions of truth and unity. Religious truth and ecclesial unity, in other words, are explored in this paper for their ethical–dialogical quality. Indeed, the asymmetrical priority of dissent within this dialogical approach offers positive soteriological significance for the church rather than seeing dissent as a threat. Such an approach can enable the church to take plurality and diversity seriously in the current context.

Keywords: dialogue; difference; dissent; religious truth; ecclesial unity; salvation; Levinas; dialogical; ethical; plurality

1. Introduction

The trans-phenomenology of Emmanuel Levinas has helped expose the totalising dynamic that has marked much of Western philosophy. From Parmenides to Heidegger, the quest to comprehend being within a unity of knowledge in the truth has only served to assimilate any hint of otherness into more of the same. The ontological binary within which "traditional" philosophical approaches have been trapped means that difference becomes a source of violence, and plurality is regarded as decay. Such a paradigm could be said to often characterise the Roman Catholic Church's approach to truth and unity. Dissent from the church's normative doctrine and practice leads to canonical sanction—in extreme cases, excommunication—given the soteriological threat it can pose to the wider faithful. A Levinasian approach, however, puts priority on otherness as an essential critique of any totalising perspective that would, in fact, regard traditional perspectives on unity and truth as sources of violence. Thus, difference and dissent can play a crucial role in avoiding static conceptions of truth and unity (truth as unambiguous or unity as uniformity, for example) and provide a critical function for the church's authentic faith and practice. This paper, therefore, sets out to qualify religious truth and ecclesial unity in a way that prioritises dissent as an ethical–dialogical principle. It will become clear that, rather than jeopardising the salvific mission of the church, this principle has positive soteriological significance.

The very structure of language, as well as recent developments in magisterial teaching, already points to a more ethical approach that seeks to escape the dialectic binary of the same and the other. Ethical here is meant in both its moral and descriptive senses. Language—best expressed in dialogue as a speech-act with the other—reveals what Levinas calls the "sociality" of the interhuman relation rather than an instrument to bring disparate voices back into some misconceived primordial unity. The importance of dialogue throughout the teaching of Pope Francis, moreover, suggests a certain priority on accompaniment and discernment over an exacting clarity that can all too quickly exclude and end further

discussion. Open dialogue, in other words, takes precedence over closed definitions. Such insights invite both religious truth and ecclesial unity to be understood dialogically.

The asymmetrical priority of dissent within this dialogical approach offers positive soteriological significance for the church. Not only can such an approach help save difference from, at best, being excluded or, at worse, being eradicated altogether, it opens space for God to be heard. The Hebrew word for salvation (*yāšaʿ*) can be equated with "wideness" or "spaciousness". Making space for difference allows people to live and think in freedom. Widening the concepts of truth and unity to allow dissenting voices reflects the complexity of life and offers opportunities for new insights and, as yet unheard, answers to seemingly intractable questions to emerge. Rather than a set of minimum requirements or a kind of lowest common denominator, the concepts of truth and unity can become wide, saving spaces for genuine dialogue in the contemporary context marked by plurality and diversity.

2. Moving beyond Totalising Paradigms

The thought of Levinas is emblematic of a postmodern philosophical tradition that puts priority on the "other" rather than the individualism of the "I" that had characterised much of modern philosophy since Descartes. Levinas's central concern for otherness, first articulated in his 1961 publication, *Totalité et infini*, could be said to have begun a kind of philosophical revolution where ontology is replaced by ethics as first philosophy (Treanor 2006). Indeed, to say that his approach upends many of the assumptions of the Western philosophical tradition risks understating how radical his thinking truly is. From Parmenides to Heidegger, the attempt to comprehend, or "totalise", being has dominated philosophy, according to Levinas, whereby any hint of otherness is absorbed by "the same" (Critchley 2002). In the words of Levinas (Levinas [1961] 1969, p. 43), "Western philosophy has most often been an ontology: a reduction of the other to the same by interposition of a middle and neutral term that ensures the comprehension of being." Borrowed from Plato, "the same" (*le Même*) refers to the self, consciousness, or the "I", as well as the object of subjective thinking, so that "the same" becomes a self-sufficient domain of relation that includes otherness with any hint of alterity vanishing. Philosophy, in other words, has been trapped in an ontological binary of the self and the other that is always ultimately resolved by reducing the other to the same (Öztürk and Erdoğan-Öztürk 2023). Such philosophy can be summed up as "egology" (Levinas [1961] 1969, p. 44). Ethics, defined by Levinas (Levinas [1961] 1969, p. 43) as "[a] calling into question of my spontaneity [the same] by the presence of the Other [*Autrui*]", is the essential critique of philosophical egology. The other shatters, or interrupts, the solitude of the same (Morgan 2011). This ethic, or critique, completely reverses the traditional approach so that the existent comes before being, metaphysics before ontology, justice before freedom, obligation to the other before the same (Levinas [1961] 1969).

Ontology's totalising approach to reality cannot meaningfully account for otherness, which, to respect its alterity, must be understood as completely transcendent. Indeed, for Levinas, even the traditional understanding of transcendence is not radical enough: transcendence cannot be simply a mode of "being otherwise" (ontological transcendence) but is, in fact, "otherwise than being" (*autrement qu'être*). This distinction brings both tension and dynamism (Burggraeve 2021a).

> If transcendence has meaning, it can only signify the fact that the *event of being*, the *esse*, the *essence*, passes over to what is other than being... Transcendence is passing over to being's *other*, otherwise than being. Not *to be otherwise*, but *otherwise than being*.
>
> (Levinas [1974] 1998, p. 3)

Only an ethical metaphysics can take real transcendence, "exteriority" in Levinasian terminology, the other qua other, seriously. It is a distinct metaphysics that can encounter absolute alterity by a desire for the absolute other, a desire that cannot be satisfied. A metaphysics that precedes ontology, therefore, is "the relation with the other... a relationship

with the other that does not result in a divine or human totality, that is not a totalization of history but the idea of infinity" (Levinas [1961] 1969, p. 52). "Totality" describes an ontological relation to the other in terms of understanding, correlation, symmetry, reciprocity, and equality, while "infinity" (in the Cartesian sense) speaks of a metaphysical relation to the other that is always more than what can be thought, and it forever escapes comprehension (Burggraeve 2014). Infinity is a relation characterised by height, inequality, non-reciprocity, and asymmetry (Critchley 2002).

Levinas regards his approach as primarily one of transcendental phenomenology in the traditional sense: he sets out to describe the conditions of possibility for concepts such as subjectivity, language, and truth (Treanor 2006). Building upon and critiquing the phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger (since they both fall into the ontological closed circle described above), he goes much further by embracing both transcendental and empirical perspectives. Let us take one of Levinas's central motifs: responsibility. As mentioned above, his primary concern for ethics—that is, the relation with absolute otherness, exteriority, or transcendence—puts responsibility for the other (justice) before freedom. This responsibility takes on concrete form in everyday life. I have a "[r]esponsibility for the Other, for the naked face of the first individual to come along" (Levinas [1984] 1989, p. 83). I cannot truly encounter otherness without recognising my responsibility, my ethical relation to the other. At the same time, it is the very condition of subjectivity for Levinas. Responsibility is not something I can choose to be. "Qua subject, I am responsible" (Treanor 2006, p. 36). In this regard, it cannot be reduced to any experiential, phenomenological description. Levinas, therefore, goes beyond phenomenology, what Burggraeve (2021b) describes as "trans-phenomenology": his philosophical method is both radically empirical and yet transcends any perception or description. The term "trans-phenomenology" helpfully qualifies Levinas's unique phenomenological method, with its particular understanding of transcendence, which is distinct from Husserl's classic transcendental phenomenological approach. Such an approach will occasion the charge that Levinas underhandedly introduces theology into phenomenology, as claimed by Dominique Janicaud (Janicaud et al. 2000). Clearly, Levinas goes beyond Husserlian transcendental phenomenology. It has been described as a transcendental phenomenology mixed with existential phenomenology (Evink 2015). Levinas "pushes beyond any phenomenological description that presumes to adequately map interpersonal responsibility as human experience" (Chase 2021, p. 147). The trans-phenomenology of Levinas, therefore, is at the same time deeply empirical and beyond perception; it is profoundly concrete yet reveals a transcendence beyond the horizon of immanence.

The same totalising dynamic with which Levinas and others have diagnosed Western philosophy can also be found in how the Roman Catholic Church has traditionally approached two closely related concepts: truth and unity. This is perhaps unsurprising in the light of Levinas's critique, given Christianity's weddedness to Greek philosophy over the centuries. Oneness and catholicity, two marks of the church, can be understood as "neutral" concepts that facilitate a synthesising of all propositions and counterpropositions within an all-embracing narrative. Described by Lyotard ([1979] 1984) as "metanarratives", of which Christianity is perhaps the best example, these grand or master schemas purport to frame all knowledge and experience, including transcendence, within a single totalising model. Such an approach saps the very concept of transcendence of its force, its otherness. Within such a paradigm, God, the *locus* of truth and unity, "became the keystone of a narrative that offered truth and certainty, and legitimized structures of power and control: the other was enclosed as something to be converted, or excluded as diabolic or damned" (Boeve 2016, p. 50). Within a profoundly conflict-averse institution like the church, any hint of dissent needs to be quickly resolved (Ott 2023). Dissent from the church's normative faith and practice, in other words, leads to canonical sanction—including excommunication—given the soteriological threat it poses. The axiom "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" easily becomes the yardstick of a clearly marked-out institution that holds a monopoly on what is ultimately

true and meaningful. The definition of *ecclesia* and those who enjoy being in unity with it, of course, being safely guarded by the church's own magisterium.

Such a seemingly uncompromising image of church teaching, however, does not do justice to the paradigm shift brought about by the Second Vatican Council and the ongoing development of this shift represented by the diverse theologies that have emerged since then, as well as the recent repositioning evident in magisterial teaching. Indeed, "dialogue" first entered the ecclesial lexicon in 1964 with Paul VI's encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* to describe a new approach for the church, both *ad intra* and *ad extra* (McInerney 2013). Elsewhere, I have charted the emergence and development of the concept of dialogue in the magisterium's fundamental theology, an importance that goes much deeper than its mere utility for engagement with other religions and denominations (McAleer 2024). The International Theological Commission's (2011, §5) document *Theology Today*, for example, recognises that "The sheer fulness and richness of that revelation is too great to be grasped by any one theology, and in fact gives rise to multiple theologies as it is received in diverse ways by human beings." These theologies must dialogue and communicate with each other. This broad invitation for theological diversity, however, is quickly qualified by the priority of unity and the aversion to any dissent. The one universal, saving truth of God—that which is accepted by the church's faith—is the final arbitrator.

The social teaching of Pope Francis, it must be noted, goes further and is particularly significant for the embracing of a more profound dialogical principle at the heart of church teaching. The image of the polyhedron, "whose different sides form a variegated unity" and where "differences coexist, complementing, enriching and reciprocally illuminating one another, even amid disagreements and reservations", has been used by Francis (2020, §215) to provide direction for a culture of dialogue within the church. Difference and disagreement are acknowledged as having a place. His flagship project of synodality promises to widen and, potentially more significantly, institutionalise such a culture of dialogue. The fact that no theologian has been sanctioned for their research during the current papacy to date is not without import. Francis's approach to dialogue, nevertheless, meets its limits in the dialectical model—rather than being underpinned by genuinely dialogical principles—within which it is restrained (McAleer 2023). Otherness remains something to be resolved and brought into synthesis, that is, more of the same. While some might point to the ongoing difficult reception of Francis's synodal project, not least the seemingly irreconcilable experiences of synodality between Germany and Rome, as a clarion call for a return to traditional concepts of truth and unity, it can rather be seen as an opportunity to explore means by which religious truth and ecclesial unity can be qualified in a way that respects difference and gives a positive role to disagreement.

Although the theological shifts already evident in the church are an inevitable effect of the changing critical consciousness of the present age, perhaps more precisely the dialogical turn in Western philosophy of which Levinasian thought is just one example, historical–critical research makes clear that theological claims of what is normative have always been fluid throughout the history of Christianity (Gruber 2020). Indeed, it has been argued that the current postmodern context has enabled the church only now to relearn a lesson it had for a long time forgotten: "that it takes *many* interpreters to hear the *one* word of God in all the fullness of its glory and truth" (Vanhoozer 2003, p. 169). Debates and disagreements on synodality—the clash between dreams for the future and nostalgia for past ideals—open up space for theology to examine afresh fundamental categories like truth and unity. The need to move beyond totalising paradigms such as static conceptions of unity as uniformity or conformity becomes ever more pressing in the current context. Recent developments in magisterial teaching and practice suggest that this movement has already begun from the perspective of the institutional church. Ethical–dialogical insights from Levinas may offer some helpful perspectives with which to provide a solely needed, alternative approach to the present fracturing between the hierarchical church, theology, and the faithful.

3. The Ethical–Dialogical Approach of Levinas

While Levinas did not develop a systematic philosophy of dialogue per se, his philosophy can certainly be described as dialogical. Dialogue takes on important significance. To simply describe his philosophy as dialogical, nonetheless, requires some qualification. In fact, some have argued that transcendental philosophy and dialogical philosophy are completely incompatible (Theunissen 1965). For Levinas ([1982] 1998), dialogue understood as a mere vocative acknowledgement of, or even reciprocity with, the other is insufficient. A much more radical, more fundamental approach to dialogue is required. It rather can be understood as the "transcendental framework for the intentional relation to the world" (de Boer 1997, pp. 1–2). In other words, dialogue is not some "event" removed from ontology but the very metaphysical foundation for ontology itself. To use the terminology of Levinas, the same (knowledge, objectification, immanence, etc.) *requires* the other: the face of the other interrupts the dogmatism of the same to bring about responsible rationality and critical consciousness (de Boer 1997). According to de Boer (1997), for whom Levinas is undoubtedly more dialogical than transcendental, much of the originality of his thought lies in this integration of phenomenological ontology into an "emancipated" dialogical thinking.

One place where Levinas ([1982] 1998) reflects directly on his philosophy of dialogue is in his essay "Dialogue: Self-Consciousness and Proximity of the Neighbor" in *Of God Who Comes to Mind*. It is to this important text that we turn for an understanding of Levinas's approach to dialogue, which, unsurprisingly, is also key to appreciating the broader dialogical approach in his philosophy. In view of what has been noted above, it is fitting that this reflection on dialogue is found in Part III of the collection of texts "The Meaning of Being". Dialogue, for Levinas, is more fundamental than some kind of technical or methodological process. It is a metaphysical dynamic preceding any ontology. Perhaps it would be more accurate to describe a "dialogical principle" at the heart of being to better capture this dynamic rather than simply "dialogue". As will become clear, Levinasian "dialogue" is a rich concept that goes beyond the simple dictionary definition of "conversation" or "discussion". It is based on a double asymmetry, both a "natural" (dialogue of immanence) and an "ethical" (dialogue of transcendence) asymmetry (Burggraeve 2014).

Neither is it accidental that this text on dialogue should be placed among a collection of texts that seek to understand the significance of the word "God". For Levinas ([1982] 1998), one's relation to God, what he describes in Cartesian terms as the "idea-of-the-Infinite-in-me," is found precisely in one's concrete, dialogical relation to the other. Moreover, as will be explored below, what Levinas says about questions related to God could equally be said of dialogue: "[they] are not resolved by answers in which the interrogation ceases to resonate or is wholly pacified" (Levinas [1982] 1998, p. xi). Pointing to the harrowing history of the century just passed, Levinas sees a possible explanation for the dialogical turn towards the other in Western philosophy—epitomised by the works of Gabriel Marcel, Martin Buber, and Franz Rosenzweig—which is opposed to the traditional philosophy of the same, and in which his own philosophy can be placed (Levinas [1982] 1998).

It is precisely in language where a different approach to dialogue is perceived. Rather than seeing language as a way of bringing disparate voices back to a unity that had existed from the beginning, an entirely different dimension of meaning is revealed by language in the interhuman relation: sociality. Not a type of knowledge or experience, the sociality of language has meaning by itself as both the very condition of authentic dialogue and being produced by such dialogue. This irreducible meaning is found in the summoning of a "You" by the "I", the calling of the other by the same, without being dependent on any (prior) knowledge of the "You". Since it does not depend on the experience of the other, authentic dialogue becomes a nonobjectifiable, unthematisable "event of spirit", "the opening of transcendence" (Levinas [1982] 1998, p. 143). The "You", as absolutely other, is approached in dialogue but never known. In fact, dialogue is the *only* way to be in relation with the other that respects otherness and arguably the only way to approach

transcendence. Dialogue is "the proper place and concrete circumstance of transcendence" (Levinas [1982] 1998, p. 149). Levinas outlines two conditions for such a dialogue: (i) the alterity of the unique other and (ii) the self (same) as the necessary starting point but, unlike a dialogue of immanence, is not the endpoint. In other words, dialogue does not simply offer a phenomenological perspective on otherness (i) but is the ethical way in which the same relates with and approaches the other (ii) (Burggraeve 2014).

Beginning with the first condition, Levinas states that there exists an absolute distance between the same and the other, the "I" and the "You". This distance, the absolute alterity of transcendence, is not to be understood as a logical distinction (e.g., P and ¬P), but alterity itself signifies the difference between "I" and "You". This distance cannot be overcome or objectified: "there is no *and* possible between them" (Levinas [1982] 1998, p. 145). This has both positive and negative implications: negatively, the other can never be known, but positively, dialogue reveals "the surplus or the *better* of a beyond oneself" (Levinas [1982] 1998, p. 147). It offers insight into transcendence that is always more, always better: the gift of the otherness of the other. Burggraeve (2014) explains how the alterity of the other surpasses and breaks through the differences of the other, allowing the "I" to understand these differences while the other's alterity is never reduced to them. One can never know the other but can phenomenologically observe and understand differences in the other. However, the absolute distance between the same and the other can be transcended by "the extraordinary and immediate relation of dia-logue" (Levinas [1982] 1998, p. 144). Paradoxically, it transcends this distance without suppressing it in a way that enables the "I" to be truly the same and the "You" to be truly other. In other words, the absolute distance *is* the relation of dialogue and permits no totalisation of the other by the same.

This maintenance of the absolute distance between the same and the other, resisting any hint of totality, already touches upon the second condition for authentic dialogue: an *ethical* relationship with the other. In the words of Levinas: "Ethics begins in the I-You of dialogue insofar as the I-You signifies the worth of the other man [sic]" (Levinas [1982] 1998, p. 150). Trying to capture the paradox of dialogue, the term "proximity" is used to describe this distant, dialogical relation between the same and the other. It is a proximity that deepens and enhances the distance, a bond where partners remain separate, protecting the otherness of the other from being totalised by the "I". Moreover, the immediacy of the dialogical relation brings with it an "urgency" with which the "I" should be at the service of the "You" (Levinas [1982] 1998). There exists, then, a priority or mastery of the other: the other is my superior who teaches me (Burggraeve 2014). The other does not teach me knowledge in the immanent sense but something beyond the horizon of the world. It is precisely because the other is utterly transcendent and different that it takes priority. Dialogue, therefore, begins with listening, a complete passivity before the face of the other (Levinas [1982] 1998). Levinas states clearly that there is "an inequality, a dissymmetry" in the dialogue of transcendence (Levinas [1982] 1998, p. 150). This completely reverses the natural asymmetry that is at play within the dialogue of immanence.

Levinas sums up his reflections on the dialogue of transcendence with what he regards as its most important aspect: "dialogue—contrary to *knowledge* and contrary to certain descriptions of the philosophers of dialogue—is a thinking of the *unequal*, a thought thinking *beyond* the given" (Levinas [1982] 1998, p. 151). Such a radical passivity before the other is not without its detractors. In his *Adieu* to Levinas, Derrida (1999) lays bare the consequences of the self as "hostage" (Levinas's word) to the other. The debt I owe to the other, before any borrowing or commitment, is, in actual fact—according to Derrida— a violent and traumatising concept that precedes the innocuous passivity described by Levinas. Moreover, while Levinasian dialogue maintains, nay, augments the distance between the same and the other, it is difficult to conceptualise how meaningful a dialogue contrary to knowledge and beyond the given could be. Critchley (2015, p. 26) sums up the problem with Levinas thus: "how does the self escape the tragedy of finitude?" As Zimmermann (2013) notes, an uncritical partnership between Levinas and theology is difficult to conceive. While Levinas can be a valuable interlocutor for theology, his

mistrust of anything that tries to make transcendence comprehendible—the very task of theology—requires the theologian to approach Levinas with vigilance (Purcell 2006). A certain "balance", therefore, is required. Regarding the asymmetry in Levinas's ethical approach, it is worth noting that *I am also the other's other*. Far from advocating a tidy, symmetrical vision of dialogue (in the vein of Buber), it becomes marked by shifting asymmetries. It must also be added that a balanced approach to dialogue includes both the natural asymmetry of the dialogue of immanence (the identity formation of the self) and the ethical asymmetry of the dialogue of transcendence (the priority of the other *qua* other); thus, a double asymmetry is always at play (Burggraeve 2014). This balance is vital for the church, whose identity, or sameness, is necessarily meaningful and unifying for a community of believers while at the same time allowing otherness, or difference, to play a critical role in the face of any totalising conceptions of ecclesial identity.

4. The Soteriological Significance of Difference

In many ways, at the crux of this paper is the theme addressed by Plato in *Philebus* and his counsel to resist finding assurance in either the one or the many all too quickly. How can we find a balance between the many and the one in a way that avoids any totalising theologies of truth or unity, concepts that remain essential marks of the church, and at the same time prevent a hollow and relativist pluralism? Of course, this paper does not propose an easy answer to this age-old philosophical(–theological) problem, but perspectives from Levinas's dialogical thinking help put a certain priority on difference, which also carries a soteriological significance from a Christian perspective. Truth and unity are qualified in a way that cannot be ignored. At the heart of the Christian faith, its purpose, if you like, is the salvation it promises. Concepts like truth and unity *serve* this *raison d'être*. As we have already noted above, for example, the intention underlying canonical sanctions is medicinal, with the salvation of the person and the wider faithful always in mind (cf. 1 Cor 5:5). Soteriology, in other words, is what is most fundamental when doing theology, not ecclesiology or epistemology (Bauer 2023). What is ultimately at stake is one's salvation. Such an approach puts the concepts of truth and unity into proper perspective. The Hebrew word for salvation (*yāšaʿ*) can be rendered to "be capacious", to "make wide" or "spacious" (Brown et al. 1959, p. 446). Its antonym, "narrowness of space", is often used to describe danger (Gesenius 2012, p. 374). Putting a theological priority on salvation can widen the concepts of truth and unity to include difference. Truth and unity become dialogical realities. This can save difference from being excluded or being eradicated altogether, opening up a critical space for God to be heard.

Dialogue, therefore, becomes the transcendental framework for the church's theology so that normative claims—that which meet the standard of truth and rest within the narrow confines of visible ecclesial unity—*need* the other, not least dissenting voices. We have explored how the very structure of language reveals an interhuman relation, a "sociality" to use Levinas's terminology, that is, the condition for an obligation to respond to the other. Language testifies against any notion of a primordial unity that needs to be recovered but rather the relationality and alterity that has always endured among people. There exists in each of us a desire to go beyond the unity of the same, to break through our present horizons, to open up to transcendence, for which we rely on the other's perspective. Indeed, the history of ecumenical councils demonstrates that the process by which doctrines are defined (a crucial element of tradition) is often the result of drawn-out and difficult theological debates that are rarely concluded once the anathemas are pronounced. Many passages of scripture are also the result of disagreement: one only needs to think of issues that prompted interventions from the Old Testament prophets or the growing pains of the nascent church that occasioned many of the New Testament letters. Such "pains" continue to play a role in ecclesial life as the church grows in its understanding of divine revelation (cf. *Dei verbum*, §8). The church needs both scripture and tradition precisely *because* we disagree. There has always existed an intricate relationship between "heresy" and "orthodoxy".

From a Levinasian perspective, dissent can be seen as having a function of continually interrupting any dogmatism or totalising concepts that would assimilate or exclude difference. Dissent is not something that needs to be immediately "solved". Such an approach provides insights into the way God reveals Godself, as well as having ethical and soteriological significance. Otherness, after all, has a quality of transcendence. For Levinas, otherness *is* transcendence. In the context of the theological role of conflict in the church, Gruber (2020) highlights the anonymity God often takes on in the dynamic of revelation as exemplified in Matthew 25. Time and again, God is found in the face of the other, unbeknownst to us, so that we are left asking, "Lord, when did we see you?" (Matt 25:44). Those who remain invisible, in other words, those who apparently enjoy "no part" in the church's visible unity, become possible and as yet untapped *loci theologici*. The risk of ignoring or missing the voice of God in such places is too great. There is enormous potential for the church to (re-)learn aspects of God's revelation that have perhaps been forgotten, overlooked, or yet to be fully understood when confronted with difference.

Ethically, this becomes a responsible rationality, a truly critical consciousness that recognises that the other has something to teach me. The importance of this ethical principle for a theology of revelation, therefore, affords dissent a certain priority. Difference and dissent can play a crucial role in avoiding stale understandings of truth (as something conclusive or unambiguous) and unity (as uniformity or conformity) and provide a critical function for the church's authentic faith and practice. Dissent should be afforded a certain asymmetrical recognition for ethical–moral reasons, too. For too long, the Christian metanarrative, in its relentless effort to master everything, has created countless victims in the name of the truth and for the sake of unity (Boeve 2016). Unity, in this respect, becomes a type of violence. Recognising the dignity of every individual encourages each person to speak their conscience without fear. Moreover, by clearly embracing a dialogical approach since the Second Vatican Council, the church has a responsibility to *mean what it says*. "Dialogue" cannot be used as an attractive new public relations policy on the part of the church that would hide an underhand intention of simply continuing to master the narrative. To use the language of dialogue to *merely* suit the contemporary temperament would be incredibly disingenuous. Perspectives from Levinas present us with what authentic dialogue looks like. The church must always be an *ecclesia discens* before it is an *ecclesia docens*, and thus, not only is there an asymmetrical priority owed to the ultimate "Other", God, but all "others" who potentially bear the voice of God.

In many ways, Pope Francis has led the way with his preference for placing "priority on accompaniment, discernment, and conscience over the definition and application of rules. Openness is preferred over clarity" (Kelly 2016, pp. 928–29). This provides space for dialogue to take place. After all, the need to always "define" can literally put premature limits to realities and close the discussion. The biblical refrain for the church's *Working Document for the Continental Stage* (General Secretariat of the Synod 2022) of its ongoing synodal project also captures this new dialogical openness: "Enlarge the space of your tent" (Is 54:2). Enlarging theological problems, rather than shrinking them, facilitates a respectful appreciation of the other. Indeed, disagreement—what is too often but erroneously seen as the opposite of unity—plays an essential role in the church, with synodality *inviting* a theology of conflict (Gruber 2020). In the words of Ott (2023, p. 254): "'Unity' does not equal agreement, and members of the same church should be understood as united without removing disagreement, difference, and contestation from the equation." The church is big enough for many, even if seemingly irreconcilable, voices. Widening the space of the church to include difference also qualifies truth as a dialogical reality. Burggraeve's (2007) argument for the need to complement, surpass even, the theory of coherentism and immanent truth with the idea of "communicability" touches upon this point. In a world of incredible pluralism and diversity, there is a temptation for the church to develop a coherent network of internally consistent truth claims that remain closed to what the other has to say. The crossing of boundaries and widening of horizons becomes impossible.

Communicability—what I would prefer to call a "dialogical principle"—ensures that truth claims are accessible to the other and can enter into dialogue with other truth claims.

Before concluding, a note of caution is required so as to avoid—on the other extreme of a "violent" unity—a meaningless pluralism. Qualifying the concepts of truth and unity as dialogical categories involves a double asymmetry: not only the ethical asymmetry of the dialogue of transcendence, explored here at length, but also the natural asymmetry of the dialogue of immanence. There remains a shared language, a basic narrative within Christian revelation wherein every Christian finds their core identity. The church has the responsibility of safeguarding the central tenets of faith in a meaningful and unifying way. The Creed, for example, the Symbol of Faith, while being the fruit of theological disagreement, articulates the central faith of every Christian. This enjoys an asymmetrical priority—"the rules of the game", if you like—for Christians when engaging with dissent. Nonetheless, truth and unity are aspects of transcendence, identified with the very Godhead in the Christian tradition. Jesus declares himself as "the way and the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6). They are personal qualities of an Other who cannot be fully experienced or known in the here and now. They are marks of a complex organism—the body of Christ—that is more than a visible institution and whose life finds its source in God, not definitions or agreement. The eschatological deferral that this necessitates amplifies the need to widen such concepts, not least for the salvation that is at stake.

5. Conclusions

In Greek mythology, the goddess Strife (*Eris*; translated as *Discordia* in the Roman pantheon) is a daughter of Night and mother to many unpleasant children, including Conflict and Pain. There is very little to arouse any devotion to such a divinity. However, there is another, lesser acknowledged divinity of the same name and heritage whom Hesiod (2017) mentions in his classic poem *Works and Days* (20, 24): "She rouses even the shiftless to toil!. . . *this* Strife profits all mortals!" It is this side to conflict, a striving that motivates one's struggle and aspiration for betterment, that we touch upon in this paper.

It should be noted that Levinas is certainly not the only thinker whose critique can challenge the church to reconsider its conceptions of truth and unity by giving due regard to the place of dissent. He is one representative of a wider dialogical turn in contemporary philosophy, which has been developed by several others. It is worth mentioning the work of Raimon Panikkar, for example, which can also offer insights into a more dynamic understanding of religious truth and a recognition of the plasticity of ecclesial unity. A philosopher of religion with a particular focus on inter-religious themes, Panikkar's (2010) trinitarian ontology sees "unity" as utterly differentiated. Neither one nor many, reality is "non-dual" in a way that unity is seen as both substantiating differences and arising through them (Panikkar 2010). Such an ontology necessitates a dialogical approach. Levinas, however, as I have tried to outline here, offers a uniquely ethical flavour to dialogue that is worth highlighting in the present contribution, not least for its salvific value.

The trans-phenomenology of Levinas can help stir up previously static theologies of truth and unity that give a certain ethical priority to dissenting voices that provide a critical function for a more authentic ecclesial life. Soteriology becomes a rich theological resource for a reappraisal of these two essential marks of the church. Rather than leading to chaos, dialogical approaches to truth and unity can create wide, saving spaces that take plurality and diversity seriously. Further exploration is clearly needed on the praxeological implications of such an approach, but, suffice to say, making space for difference can allow people to live their Christian vocation in freedom and help the church resist polarisation and premature closure of dialogue. As long as the dialogue continues with patience and respect for each other, solutions can emerge for issues that seemed impossible to resolve before. It can make audible the anonymous voice of God who wills all people to be saved and come to knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Tim 2:4).

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Article

Church Governance—A Philosophical Approach to a Theological Challenge in an Anglican Context

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Abstract: Church governance is not often debated within a philosophical or theological sphere. This is perhaps because church governance has been part of tradition since Constantine and the initial Greek philosophical world view of sovereignty and hierarchy. Such a stance has led towards a managerial mindset that follows and conforms to the world, which plays out within the Anglican polity in the setting of an adversarial parliamentary style synod. This style encourages bounded communities of power that often refute the burgeoning inspirations of the Spirit. In changing the underlying theological basis of such a stance, by invoking the understanding of an undeniable community in the singularity of the Triune God, governance becomes more open. Engaging with, primarily, Agamben but also others from philosophy, a new viewpoint is presented to challenge the manner through which tradition is wielded as the only possibility. In seeing through a differing lens, communities can be conceived as both porous and interconnected, thus allowing the body of Christ to respond with transformative action as opposed to a continuum of conformance with secular legality. In this manner, the bishop's role may become more centralised towards a Eucharistic one, as opposed to the managerial mindset and role, to enhance the possibilities of God's love. This then removes the need for a hierarchy driven by a sovereign mindset that tradition bolsters, whilst maintaining loving and authoritative oversight that tradition suggests.

Keywords: governance; church; Anglican; philosophy; theology

1. Introduction

It would perhaps be appropriate to ask what place church governance has in a Special Edition on theology and European philosophers, especially when considered in terms of a specific denominational context. This is particularly true when we think about governance as being a secular matter and not something of great theological concern or reflection, as it appears not to touch on matters of faith, dogma, etc. This is not to say that religious faith, spirituality, and the effect of religion on management and governance are not researched. Indeed, much has been written with regard to religion and business (Alewell et al. 2023), yet most papers do not touch on the underlying theology and its interaction with management processes. For example, accountability, a cornerstone of governance, has been examined from the spiritual dimension (Alewell et al. 2023, p. 102) as well as from the faith dimension (Keplinger and Feldbauer-Durstmüller 2023), rather than from a theological context. Theological input is seen when business practices are scrutinised from an ethical viewpoint, with reference to religious ethical teachings and its effect on a corporation (Cremers 2017), but looks more at human anthropology rather than deeper theology in terms of governance per se. The most recent theological input into the governance debate has come from Deslandes, who has looked at Gianni Vattimo and John Caputo's work on "weakness" and theological *oikonomia* in the practice of secular management (Deslandes 2018), as opposed to the governance of the church.

Furthermore, it would appear to have little current connection to philosophy, except, perhaps, through the question of sovereignty entangled with power/politics. Whilst the tangent of sovereignty is somewhat oblique, it has a major impact upon how the church has

been and is being governed. Political entanglement with power and sovereignty appears early in the structures of the church, leading towards a certain amount of epistemic hubris, both in the Anglican polity (into which polity I fall) and Catholicism, which manifests in a leadership who believes that they have "*the* answer to the problem or that only they can solve it" (Ogden 2018, p. 53). Such hubris arises from a specific construction of an episcopal calling from 'God alone' that is not open to inquiry from within or outside the structures of the church. The basis of this governance framework is founded, in part, upon an understanding of a monotheistic, all powerful paternal deity; the spiritual works of Dionysus the Aeropagite; and the Constantinian disposition of power, as the newly embraced church became part of the empire. The construct of church governance that Derrida suggests is an "un-avowed theologism" (Derrida 2005, p. 110) and is an implicit paradigm which advocates and fosters an understanding of monarchical power and sovereignty over the realm of organisational governance. In the Anglican polity, this creates a disputed space that is allowed to operate through confrontational politics embedded within the synod, rather than creating a means to advocate for and be guarantors of God's love in the world.

The word governance is derived from the etymological root of the word κυβερνάω (*kubernáo*), which means "to steer or pilot a ship/chariot" (European Commission 2002), with perhaps an understanding that such steerage and pilotage is towards the guarantee of a safe passage over stormy seas. This meaning has changed and morphed within the world, moving away from the original intent of a steersman using a rudder to guide the ship through the sea. It has now become the embodiment of the slave-driving captain enforcing his will through the whip, which governance is now perceived to be. In becoming the whip, governance requirements change at a fast-moving pace to keep up with the general expectations of the secular public (the owner), whilst becoming increasingly entangled with power, politics, authority, and community structures. To regain control of its governance and return control back to an ever-loving and forgiving God, consideration needs to be given to how the world has changed, whilst interacting with it in a manner that delivers God's promises of justice, peace, and love.

The intention here is to engage the imagination, achieving a moment of hopeful inspiration, awakening "*gelassenheit*" as perhaps Heidegger might call it. A moment where we allow ourselves to be released from our captive and historically common stance into a new place of understanding for those that are in leadership positions within the structures of the church. By engaging with the thoughts of several European philosophers, this paper seeks to disrupt the historical paradigm by involving alternative understandings that would increase the role of a theological impost on governance in the church to steer it back into deeper and calmer waters, whilst embodying a Christlikeness within the structures that allow governance to happen. All denominations have arisen as a result of the manoeuvring of political power and authority to attain the desired outcomes of their founders. The worldwide Anglican Communion is as influenced as any other by its tradition and has inherited a structure of governance which includes the threefold ministry of bishop, priest, and deacon. Being part of the governance structures of the Australian Anglican Church, much of the discussion and thoughts are within the context of the broader Anglican Communion as a denomination but are applicable to any other, with the understanding that office holders may have differing titles but often wield similar power.

2. Common Characteristics of Governance

It is also of importance to note, at this point, that, in governance, there is thought to be "seven characteristics of good corporate governance", which could be seen to apply to all governance structures, which have been most succinctly defined by the King Report from South Africa (King Committee on Corporate Governance 2002). These seven characteristics are (i) discipline, (ii) transparency, (iii) independence, (iv) accountability, (v) responsibility, (vi) fairness, and (vii) social responsibility (King Committee on Corporate Governance 2002, pp. 10–11). The South African report by Justice King was probably one of the first

governance reports that emphasised these characteristics, following the Cadbury report in 1992; it also went further by suggesting that these were not just the board's responsibility, but extended to the whole company in its approach to governance (King Committee on Corporate Governance 2002). Whilst other jurisdictions have followed similar lines, they have not always directed governance towards the whole organisation in the manner of the King report and its subsequent updates, which have included the concept of operating with *Ubuntu* (King Committee on Corporate Governance 2016); with regards to the former, see, for example, the Australian Securities Exchange document on good governance (ASX Corporate Governance Council 2019). These eight principles are seen as the standards to which corporate office bearers are held accountable to the shareholders and public. Within the Christian sphere, these standards can be equated to a practical implementation of the beatitudes in church governance. They are principles that should underpin church governance irrespective of jurisdiction or denomination and be theologically incorporated into such governance.

Discipline is seen as being the adherence to behaviours that are accepted as being right and ethical on a universal basis. This would mean a commitment to governance itself and the ability to self-manage the organisation's board in terms of the role and responsibility of each member. Transparency is the ease with which those outside the organisation can discern a true understanding of the organisation. This is understood to be undertaken by the organisation's release and timely disclosure of information by the board and the organisation to those that require such information (investors, legal bodies, etc.). Independence is typically shown by having mechanisms in place to ensure that appropriate appointments are made in a manner that avoids conflicts of interest, both internally at the board level as well as externally through the appointment of auditors, etc. Accountability inculcates the responsibility of each decision maker within the company to have effective processes in place that show why and how decisions have been made. This ensures that interested parties have a means to make inquiries and assess the decisions made. Responsibility means that there are clear behavioural codes and risk frameworks in place so that breaches can be managed to ensure that the corporation is maintaining its public and shareholder responsibilities. Fairness is the ability of the corporation to treat all its personnel and shareholders with equity for their rights (financial, social, and private) within the context of the corporation. This entails listening to the minority as much as to the majority, in terms of shareholders and other stakeholders. Social responsibility places a responsibility upon the corporation to respond to social, environmental, and human rights issues, with a high priority on its own ethical standards, with a consequential increase in indirect benefits.

Whilst some of these can clearly be seen to be emphasised in the church's governance, i.e., social responsibility, it is equally obvious that many of these characteristics are often lacking in ecclesial governance, as, perhaps, recent scandals have demonstrated.

3. A Common Progenitor—The Status Quo of Power and Authority in the Anglican Church

The Anglican Communion is a collective of independent provinces containing independent dioceses, each of which are governed in terms of spiritual and secular direction, through the processes of each synod and the ecclesial authority of each diocesan Bishop. Power and authority are, thus, held in a hierarchical structure, at the head of which is the Bishop of the diocese. This invests extraordinary secular power in the hands of the Bishop, which is easily embodied within the existing hierarchical power structures of the organisation. What is the derivation of such power (philosophically) and, perhaps more importantly, how does the background theological tradition influence the denomination's thinking of governance processes?

In his study of the genealogy of power in the West, Agamben notes a "double structure" to government that he initially segments with regard to *auctoritas* (authority) and *potestas* (power) in his book '*The State of Exception*', which is followed by an "articulation between

the Kingdom and Government" with specific regard to the relationship between "*oikonomia* and Glory" (*oikonomia*, i.e., economy) (Agamben 2005a, 2011). One of the issues he draws out is the different originators of political life in the modern era with particular regard to the foundations of modern political philosophy and biopolitics. The first of these arising out of the paradigm of political theology and the latter arising from economic theology, which replaces the sovereignty of God with "the idea of an *oikonomia*, conceived as an immanent ordering" which is, in turn, based upon the household, rather than politics (Agamben 2011, p. 1). The episcopally led church, in the main respect, has followed the former paradigm in terms of its internal governance, rather than the latter, which can be found displayed in the first formations of governance in the Pauline churches with their more egalitarian approach.

The burgeoning churches began governance with a clear egalitarian understanding of governance, as can be derived from Paul in Galatians (5:13–15) (amongst others). In interpreting this passage with regard to the Roman empire as the love that Paul proclaims is a "continual mindfulness in discerning, disobeying and unfreezing the antithetical *nomos* of self versus other" (Kahl 2014, p. 269). It becomes the basis of a re-organisation of community that is not reliant on self-boasting, through the system of "euergetism/benefactions" becoming instead a community that is "nonhierarchical, nonantagonistic, nonexclusive" with an increase in "horizontal mutuality and solidarity", one that does not consume, fight or compete against the other (Kahl 2014, pp. 269–70). This changes when it joins to empire at the time of Constantine, as its clergy became increasingly involved in "protecting the integrity and welfare of the empire" (Hovorun 2017, p. 158). This became pronounced after the Council at Nicaea with the adoption of the metropolitan model tailored to the administrative units of the Empire (Hovorun 2017, p. 60), thus embedding an understanding of hierarchy as part of the church and its systems of governance by its integration into the Constantinian empire's traditional bureaucratic structures. This is further compounded through the acceptance of the mystagogical structure laid down in the works of Dionysus the Aeropagite (Dionysius the Aeropagite 1897). Agamben suggests that this 'sacred power', i.e., hierarchy, is an evolution of the concept of *diakosmēsis* found in the Neoplatonic work of Proclus that is "to govern by ordering (or to order by governing)" (Agamben 2011, p. 154). The church accepted this ordering in a manner that is sacrosanct and indelibly imprinted onto its governance matrix through the threefold order of bishop, priest, and deacon. Political changes during the reformation period have moved some denominations away from such a structure, but it has been retained by most episcopally led denominations, including the Anglican Communion.

By accepting this paradigm, the episcopally led church has accepted a power, as Foucault understands it, that leads to oppression or domination if abused or overextended in its pursuit and operation. Over time, the physical presence of the sovereign becomes unneeded, being supplanted by "a tightly knit grid of physical coercions", that improves its efficacy over time, whilst, at the same time, increasing the numbers that are under its subjugation (Foucault and Gordon 1980, p. 106). In this manner, the laity, both historically and genealogically, have a long generational history that embeds the (mis)understanding of the divine institution of the church and the appointment of its leaders from God, thus granting those in ordained authority a semblance of sovereign power. The bishops, in their epistemic hubris, have, at times, utilised such power, irrespective of consent or circumstance, for ecclesial governance to their own political ends, thus exercising their "apostolic" tradition rather than their "conciliar" tradition, which is ignored or relegated (Ogden 2018, p. 54). Such a paradigm of ecclesial governance is suggested to come from the foundations based on "the transcendence of sovereign power on the single God" (Agamben 2011, p. 1), thus unifying authority in the "epistemological centrality of the bishops" (Ogden 2018, p. 56). This, in turn, leads to a belief, by those in authority, of a permission to make the final decision due to their determination as to what is true, irrespective of context, knowledge, and/or consent (Ogden 2018, p. 56).

This power distribution is, perhaps, derived from a world view based on the understanding of male dominance and patriarchy, rather than equality. In taking this political route, the church moved away from the initial predominance of *ecclesia* (assembly of the people) towards a domination of *kyriachy* (a social system(s) built around domination, oppression, and submission), from "*kyrakon*, i.e., belonging to the lord/master/father" (the etymological origin of 'Church') (Schüssler Fiorenza 2007, p. 78). In doing so, it has embedded within its spiritual hierarchy a system which naturally discriminates against the other, especially with regard to race, gender, and sexuality. The imperial understanding of self that this reflects "projects evil onto the 'others' who do not follow Christ, the poor, prostitutes, homosexuals, the feminists", etc. (Schüssler Fiorenza 2007, p. 143). The basis of Liberal democratic thought espouses the formulation of "the state and society based on sets of principles: equality, autonomy, liberty, toleration, neutrality" which contain the "moral *ought*" (people *ought* to be equal, autonomous, etc.) (De Roover 2012, p. 142). Whilst ideal, these principles do not often become reality as "profits always count more than people" (Crockett 2013, p. 104), which leads to the enactment of hierarchical/power- based policies that "benefit some sectors of the community and disadvantage others", for example a diocese or parish, for the sake of power and/or authoritative position (Brown 2020, p. 24). The more selfish route elevates one above the other, as opposed to the Christian ethos of the other over the one.

A Theological Underpinning of Hierarchical Structure

Theologically, this could be said to be based heavily on an assumption of singularity at the start of the Genesis narrative. The initial phrase *Bereshit bara Elohim* (In the beginning, God created heaven and earth (Gen 1:1)) begins the narrative. This narrative "tells of an ordering and a goodness that shapes all the categories of creation" (Zornberg 2011, p. 3). In our interpretations, there is an assumption of a singularity at the beginning "Elohim" who then, alone, separates and hierarchically orders the "primordial mass into a 'good' pattern", thus bringing governance, through hierarchy, to chaos (Zornberg 2011, p. 3). This is the empiric ordering of the sovereign upon the disorder of chaos and each level of order is imposed from the Godhead in a hierarchical manner, as each conforms to the 'good' as understood by the unitary sovereign (Genesis 1:10b, 12b, 18b, 21b, 25b, 31). Here, we can see the necessary underpinnings of the *creatio ex nihilio* (creation out of nothing) doctrine, not really present in the phrasing of the first two verses, which emphasises the patriarchal sovereign leadership of society at the time and the dependence on this hierarchy in the ordering of society/governance. In this reading, we can see an understanding that could perhaps theologically underpin the current view of governance within the Anglican Communion and other denominations; that is, one based on a hierarchy of power and an imposition on those below what is viewed as being the best or what is good for the company/organisation/diocese. This, then, would suggest that the ordering of structure is undertaken from the upper echelons with little or no input from those below, as the one God is responsible for creation and that is seen to be good, especially as humankind has been handed responsibility to act for and on behalf of God (Gen 1:28). In this conception, the creativity that is found in the deep (*tehom*), which is *tohu vabohu* (formless chaos or void), is either classed as evil or as somewhere that needs to be put under control, so as not to escape (Keller 2003, p. 91). Such control is undertaken by a dominant governing patriarchal figure at the top that does not wish for the dangerous potential of creativity to intrude upon the order that has been imposed (Keller 2003, pp. 90–91). Thus, from a governance understanding, the bishop/archbishop/Pope are considered to be infallible in terms of how the organisation is run. In this manner, the status quo is managed and innovation is not encouraged unless it is considered 'good' by the hierarchy. In taking this route, there is an apparent discrepancy in terms of the key characteristics of good governance, especially when transparency and independence are examined.

4. An Uncommon Inheritance—Moving into New Life

Is it possible to re-conceive the route that governance has taken by looking at our interpretive effort, in conjunction with what a few selected modern philosophers tell us about the community, politics, and power. What happens when there is a reversal of the dominance of the traditions such that conciliarity is promoted over apostolicity? Modern corporations are more prone to a diverse governance structure, as are modern communities, who rely more and more on the preponderance of a culture of networked solutions to governance (Sørensen and Torfing 2003). In Anglican denominational governance, communities are often designated, as such, by being 'bounded communities', those being communities within a specific territory marked by a physical or hard ideological boundary often marked and labelled, i.e., parish or diocese; Anglican/Catholic/Muslim. It is precisely this bounded community that led Derrida to dislike the term community, which derives from a military-style fortification, and is precisely what he is aiming at, as regards deconstruction, with the "affirmation—*viens, oui, oui*—of the *tout autre*" (Caputo 1996, pp. 25–26). In allowing porosity within the bounds of the tight fortress of the bounded community, new ideas and new formulations are accepted and developed.

Whilst the bounded community still exists, especially within the Anglican Communion, today's community tends to be more porous, moving towards and encompassing the understanding of the communal nature of humanity, that "[T]o be in relation is already to be a multiplicity" (Keller 2011, p. 81). The understanding of multiplicity is that the individual as a singularity cannot exist, as one cannot exist, without a relationship (Schneider 2008, p. 143). This is underscored when it is realised that, mathematically, the integer 1 (one) is "fully dependent on its relation to and distinction from all other numbers" and, as such, "one comes into being in relation to Other/s, or not-ones" (Schneider 2008, p. 143). This is perhaps a useful reminder to us that the Christian faith worships one God, who is a Trinity, and, thus, in relation, for all oneness is but a relational reality. The porosity of the modern community, with its many modes of connection, is reminiscent of the imagery in the thought of Deleuze and Guattari as they speak of the "rhizome" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 6). In viewing a community as rhizomatic, the suggestion is of an ever-expanding network of inter-related nodes across space and time. This is very reminiscent of the interconnected web of the online community, which has been emphasized following the recent COVID-19 pandemic. The description of a community in this rhizomatic manner creates a community that is truly unbound, as the rhizome "ceaselessly establishes connections" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 7) much like the modern social media network and some governance structures in corporations, blending and melding input from a multitude of sources. This not only ensures compliance, but generates new approaches or ideas for the propagation of the organisation's premises.

A Theological Underpinning to Networked Authority

Re-looking at the same beginning passage of the Genesis tale discussed above, some traditional Judaic interpreters, such as Rashi, suggest that there is no suggestion of sequence and that the "opening sentence tells us nothing about beginnings", as the true sentiment of *Bereshit* is not 'In the beginning" but rather "when" or alternatively "At" (Zornberg 2011, pp. 3–4; Keller 2003, p. 9). If such is the case, then the idea of *creatio ex nihilo* by a sovereign God of power at the head of a hierarchy is disrupted, as is a governance based on such sovereignty. The nothingness is not nothingness per se but *tohu vabohu*, which is dependent or associated with the deep (*tehom*) of, perhaps, uncertainty that has the potentiality of something new and abiding, over which the *ruach* (breath) of God hovers. This is a relational understanding that attracts newness and form which, in itself, leads from chaos into order, but has a dependency upon its initial conditions (Delio 2011, p. 26). Out of the "dialogic address" of God's breath, that is love, comes forth new life and new form from within the "womb of the *tehom*" (Kosman 2018, p. 10). This a more interactive and relational understanding of creation, moving away from the display of 'power over' (i.e., authoritative) that is present within a sovereign power, towards a 'power with' imagery.

In the use of the imagery of 'power with' (i.e., inclusive) and the "delinerarization of the time of creation", Jewish interpretation makes the chaos stuff of the *tohu vabohu* "neither nothing nor evil", but rather allows the solicitation of the formlessness into virtual form (Keller 2003, p. 115).

In this manner, instead of supressing innovation and the emergence of ideas within an organisation, there is a wooing of those who are able to connect with the inspiration to create newness of life for the organisation. In such a scenario, there is still a hierarchical platform, since there is no challenge to the presence of the unitary God, rather the challenge that is put forward is to the method by which the hierarchy manages its power and authority. This does not negate the understanding that the top of the hierarchy, the unitary sovereign, has the final determination as to what is good. It does mean that there is more availability for uniqueness to become 'good' in the eyes of the hierarchy as it is listened to and encouraged. There is a greater willingness in the structures to participate in dialogue rather than to determine that which is right without consultation. In this scenario, the issues over transparency and independence which are raised using the traditional interpretations begin to unravel.

5. Conclusions

The probable origin of the word *episkopos* (overseer/bishop) was either an overseer who saw to the distribution of finances and goods in Roman culture (Stewart-Sykes 2014, p. 59) or was derived from the position of the *mebaqqer* (overseer) with a similar function in the Hebrew synagogues (Thiering 1981, p. 66). Similarly, the role of the elder or *presbyterous* (elder/priest), whose advice was sought, having knowledge of the community that was served (Stewart-Sykes 2014, pp. 135–37) in a more egalitarian manner than is present today that can be seen from passages such as Galatians 5:37–38 (Kahl 2014, pp. 192–96), with love's collegiate response being worked out practically in Galatians 5:13–15, as, perhaps, pointed out by Stott (Stott 1992, pp. 158–59). Viewing episcopal church leadership through this lens, the bishop's role of oversight, inherited through the apostolic tradition, appears to have come full circle. From the initial humble beginnings as the authority that distributed the gifts to the needy in the community with the advice of the elders to the present, where control of the dispensation of the diocese's/organisation's funds/ministry is in the bishop's hands, with advice from the diocesan council (or equivalent) fulfilling the role of governance. However, the role has taken on a distinct managerial flavour, as opposed to oversight, which takes up an increasing percentage of the bishop's time (Pickard 2006, p. 23), thus drawing the role away from the ontological prime aspect that has been an acknowledged part of the episcopal role since the days of Ignatius, that of being the president of the Eucharistic assembly. This is not to suggest that the role of the bishop is not at the apex, but rather that the role, perhaps, needs to become more of the original overseer and steersman, in a theological and Eucharistic sense, as opposed to the ultimate manager. In becoming the manager of the enterprise, the bishop is denying the life ($\zeta\omega\acute{\eta}$) of the body of Christ, as their focus is pulled away from the centrality of the Eucharist and the embodiment of Christ in the community.

Does the interaction between modern (European) philosophy and theology open a new way to perceive ecclesiological governance, at least in the Anglican denomination if not in others? The inheritance of an empiric political governance style has driven the episcopally led church down the route towards sovereign rule, with the episcopacy becoming entrapped by the very authority that sovereignty engenders. This, in turn, disallows the advent of creation and the birth of new life from the chaos of the world. Reliance on the monotheistic centrality without the understanding of what is central to that singularity, that is the understanding borne out of relationship within the Trinity, leads to a managerial present. However, it is perhaps in the interpretation of Romans by Agamben that we may find a way forward for episcopal and Anglican church governance. Agamben speaks about the "state of exception" (Agamben 2005a), which is that state where the law is suspended and, in doing so, the law itself is justified. In turn, this can be suggested to be

similar to the relationship between the Law (the Torah) and the Gospel. Thus, the Gospel imperative becomes the "state of exception" for the Torah, suspending it and yet fulfilling it at the same time (Agamben 2005b, pp. 104–8). In doing so, the potential present in God's word and being is brought back into play so that we do not have to be dependent on or bound by what has been laid down in the law or tradition.

Undoubtedly, the Anglican church and other denominations have been caught in the tension and paradox set out by Paul in Romans. In this context, conforming to the world in obedience to authority (Rom. 13.1-7) rather than being transformed (Rom. 12.2). Thus, our worldly engagement should not be conformance per se, but an engagement with the world from a "different perspective", as suggested by the Gospel imperative of love (Gignac 2013, p. 188). Community without relationship, as Derrida, wisely, is leery about, with its connotations in military fortification, leads to the building of sacrosanct areas of influence. This is, perhaps, where the Agambendian arguments move us towards a weakening of the current understanding of the Anglican church's identity, based on an institution and its legal governance towards a more relational gathering that is based on a governance of love found in the grace of Baptism, guided and not managed by the bishop as a true overseer. Such a governance would be freed to be excessively creative in its expressions of solidarity with the weak, impoverished, and other in the world. In this manner, the centrality of the Eucharist that draws the people of God together becomes, once more, of relevance to the governance of the church, in general, as it responds to the needs of the multitude, rather than to the needs of the law. Practically, this perhaps means that the bishop needs to become more theologically active within the bounds of governance, overseeing and guiding the purposes of God rather than humanity's constructs of a better life. By laying aside the role of the manager and its associated perceived authoritative power, the bishop/clergy become free to express the will of God and its relevance in the community.

The long history of ecclesial governance has been centred around a framing of power that comes from God (unitary, rather than relational) that is conceived in terms of authority with its implementational corollary within the world in terms of action (Deslandes 2018, p. 131). This often leads to a "dictatorship" and autocratic style that has been "prevalent in the Church" (Seoka 1998, p. 101) which can still be seen in some dioceses. The authority focus leads to the attitude of hubris, reflecting a Napoleonic logic of a presumed ability to overcome all obstacles by the person in authority (Kroll et al. 2000, p. 118). Reform means change and it is well known that any change is problematic to an entrenched position unless it is widely embraced by the majority both in power and within the organisation. Traditional governance structures are based on the founding statutes and canons embedded in an understanding of monarchical episcopalism within their core, thus perpetuating the tradition. Reform of such a governance system would have to begin at the core level with a reconceptualization of not only the structure but also the role of power and authority. It is suggested that any such reform would need to start with a deep theological understanding of the role of governance and its purposes for the institution in terms of the church's objective of transforming the world, whilst setting a higher standard than just the conformance that the world requires.

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Article

Dealing with the Trustworthy Gospel in a Post-Christian Australia

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Abstract: What is truth? We have entered another period fraught with Gospel confusion—beyond postmodernism to what can be called "post-Christianity". This is not unusual—so we should not be overwhelmed. This happens periodically, as early as Gal 1:9: "If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned". It is all a question of the Gospel, or put another way, *evangelism* (the communication or announcing "the good news of God"). Evangelism is proclaiming and living a distinct message of Jesus Christ. Jesus is Himself the embodiment of the "good news". The Gospel has been challenged, eroded and corrupted over the centuries—yet rediscovered by those who practice exegesis of the Biblical record of the New Testament. This article moves on to look at how secular philosophy—rather than Christian philosophy—and other "forms of the truth" have influenced the current situation we find ourselves in.

Keywords: gospel; church; modernism; postmodernism; evangelism

1. Introduction

Times have changed! Our activities have changed and have gradually shifted focus over time. Much of what used to happen "face-to-face" is now happening via email, text, and Zoom meetings, to name but a few new ways of communication.

It is true to say that we live in an age of advertising and are indeed constantly persuaded to buy things. And buy we will, once we decide that what is on offer is something that we want. And that is the essence of advertising, presenting something such that we realise that we want it.

This sort of thing is an all too common part of modern life; we are just inundated by messages and promises that we just cannot accept at face value. It is, then, hardly a matter for surprise that although we are in the business of presenting good news, an "evangel", the response of so many is just the same, namely, disbelief, tinged by a suspicion that the Christian who presents it has some form of ulterior motive. "The world spirit of our age rolls on and on claiming to be autonomous and crushing all that we cherish in its path. We are locked in a battle of cosmic proportions. It is a life and death struggle over the minds and souls of men for all eternity, but it is equally a life and death struggle over life on this earth" (Schaeffer 1984, p. 23).

As society continues to evolve, new cultural trends emerge, impacting the way people live and think. One of these trends is the rise of post-Christian culture. Understanding what post-Christian culture is and its implications is essential for Christians who seek to navigate a rapidly changing world. In this article, we explore the key characteristics of post-Christian culture, its impact on society, and how Christians can respond with love and grace.

It is important to define what we mean by post-Christian culture. It refers to a cultural shift away from Christianity as the dominant worldview, resulting in a society where Christianity no longer plays a central role in shaping values and beliefs. This shift has been happening gradually over the past few decades, particularly in Western societies.

Why does post-Christian culture matter? Understanding this trend is crucial for Christians as they seek to engage with their communities and make a positive impact on society. By understanding the key characteristics of post-Christian culture and its impact on society, Christians can effectively navigate this cultural shift and share their faith with others.

When asking the question "What is truth?" we can have a variety of different answers. "Truth is the question which stirs every human conscience; for it is in finding the truth that a person arrives at a reason for living and sets out on a way of life worthy to be followed . . . The Church's task is to continue Christ's mission as witnesses to the truth. The world-wide challenge for the church is to tell his truth by preaching his Good News so that it can be heard anew, calling the world, in these days" (*Lineamenta* 1997, p. 37).

That is the challenge for Christians, presenting the Gospel in such a way that we realise it is something that we want and not in a way that generates scepticism and suspicion. Buhlmann made a profound observation: "At the close of the 1974 Synod of Bishops in Rome on evangelization in the modern world, Pope Paul VI handed a copy of the Acts of the Apostles to each of the participants as they left. His meaning was that this account of the church still retains its importance today and the same Holy Spirit still guides the church" (Buhlmann 2001, p. 3).

Mark 16:19–20 defines this in his writing: "And so the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven; there at the right hand of God he took his place, while they, going out, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it". The apostle Paul says in Rom 1:16, "For I see no reason to be ashamed of the gospel; it is God's power for the salvation of everyone who has faith . . .". Paul proceeds to expand on his understanding by saying, "It was not from any human being that I received it (the Gospel), and I was not taught it, but it came to me through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal 1:12). It was received from Jesus—about Jesus Christ! Paul's distinct slant is how Jesus should be preached among the disenfranchised Gentiles.

When we may know *immediately* what is wrong, we can move on to diagnose it, explore it, and remedy it. "If true decentralization takes concrete shape in the world church, its natural consequence would be the emergence of a broad pluriformity. We would then have in the church a divinely willed reflection of creation, where we are met by an almost unending multiplicity of types, shapes, and colours in one sublime unity" (Buhlmann 2001, p. 147).

Over the past few decades, there has been a notable shift in the religious landscape of the Western world. Many countries that were once predominantly Christian are now experiencing what is known as post-Christianity. Post-Christianity is a term used to describe a culture that has moved beyond the traditional beliefs and practices of Christianity.

The rise of post-Christianity can be attributed to several factors, including the growing influence of science and technology, the rise of individualism and changing attitudes towards sexuality and morality. As a result, many people are now identifying as "spiritual" but not "religious" and are exploring alternative spiritual practices. "Twenty centuries later, this is what we would call 'radical social consciousness', that is, an analysis in terms of the cosmology of the times that defines how the minuscule community of disciples participates already in Christ's victory by its refusal to honour the fallen powers' idolatrous claims" (Neville and Matthews 2003, p. 168).

While the rise of post-Christianity has led to a decline in traditional Christian beliefs and practices, it has also created new opportunities for dialogue and understanding between different religious and spiritual communities. In the following sections, we explore the key characteristics of post-Christian culture, its impact on society, and how Christians can navigate this changing landscape with grace and love.

Post-Christian attitudes and beliefs have emerged as a result of a cultural shift away from traditional Christian values. Secularisation has played a significant role in this transformation. People are turning away from organised religion and finding other sources

of meaning and purpose. "If we as church are truly following our risen Lord, making his historical concerns our own and committing our lives to the coming victory of the reign of God, then we are compelled to be involved in critical peacemaking and economic issues where the *shalom* and well-being of all peoples, and indeed of the whole earth, are at stake" (Johnson 1990, p. 78).

Post-Christian beliefs often include a rejection of traditional Christian teachings, such as the belief in a personal God or the value of the Scriptures. Scepticism towards religious institutions and leaders is also common. Instead, many people are embracing a more relativistic worldview, where individual experience and personal truth are valued above objective truth.

I have been interested to see how the Catholic Church in Australia has begun to contend with the influence of postmodernism on the Gospel. We first had modernism, tried understanding it, and dealt with it accordingly. We then had postmodernism and tried understanding and dealing with it also. It seems like we know what postmodernism is and that it succeeds modernism, but how do we deal with it in what seems to be a post-Christian era?

With this in mind, a number of sources were drawn upon—especially Australian ones—to investigate this topic. A number of different views were consulted in order to provide clarity on issues such as post-Christianity, secularisation, and any other contemporary issues—these terms and concepts have been written about across many different disciplines (sociology of religion, theology, religious studies, and philosophy). Much work has been performed by many important authors, including Veith, Habermas, Derrida, Zizek, Newheiser, and the Vatican, on secularisation and post-Christianity, and so these authors that have written in this regard were consulted and interacted with. These were critiqued in order to show their input and relevance to the matter being addressed in this article. Each of these authors has much value to add in the interaction on this topic—in their own way. As you will see below, some have a great command to restore stability to this process, while others have been able to contribute in their own profound ways. The observations of these authors were considered and collaborated with as a way to find a way forward in understanding the context we find ourselves in in Australia and a way for presenting the Gospel in this "season".

For this topic to be addressed appropriately, a definition of the Gospel is proposed as a way of dealing with this focus. An investigation was inevitable in yearning to define "good philosophy" and "bad philosophy" in order to find a plausible working understanding of correct attitudes toward conducting this study. A major section of this study was contributed to through interacting with distinguished authors that were mentioned in the above paragraph to find a way of relating and blending their thoughts to find a proposed solution to our theme. Finally, a few suggestions as a way forward are made after interaction with the thoughts and wisdom of others.

2. The Unique Message in an Ever-Changing World

The word *gospel* literally means "good news" and occurs 93 times in the Bible, exclusively in the New Testament. In Greek, it is the word *euaggelion*, from which we obtain our English words *evangelist*, *evangel*, and evangelical. The Gospel is, broadly speaking, the whole of Scripture; more narrowly, the Gospel is the good news concerning Christ and the way of salvation.

The key to understanding the Gospel is to know why it is good news. To do that, we must start with the bad news. The Old Testament Law was given to Israel during the time of Moses (Deut 5:1). The Law can be thought of as a measuring stick, and sin is anything that falls short of "perfect" according to that standard. The righteous requirement of the Law is so stringent that no human being could possibly follow it perfectly, in letter or in spirit. Despite our "goodness" or "badness" relative to each other, we are all in the same spiritual boat—we have sinned, and the punishment for sin is death, i.e., separation from God, the source of life (Rom 3:23). Simply put, for us to go to heaven, God's dwelling

place and the realm of life and light, sin must be somehow removed or paid for. The Law established the fact that cleansing from sin can only happen through the bloody sacrifice of an innocent life (Heb 9:22).

The Gospel involves Jesus' death on the cross as the sin offering to fulfill the Law's righteous requirement (Rom 8:3–4; Heb 10:5–10). Under the Law, animal sacrifices were offered year after year as a reminder of sin and a symbol of the coming sacrifice of Christ (Heb 10:3–4). When Christ offered Himself at Calvary, that symbol became a reality for all who would believe (Heb 10:11–18). The work of atonement is finished now, and that is good news.

The Gospel also involves Jesus' resurrection on the third day: "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Rom 4:25). The fact that Jesus conquered sin and death (sin's penalty) is good news indeed. The fact that He offers to share that victory with us is the greatest news of all (John 14:19).

The elements of the Gospel are clearly stated in 1 Cor 15:3–6, a key passage concerning the good news of God: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living". Notice, first, that Paul "received" the Gospel and then "passed it on"; this is a divine message, not a manmade invention. Second, the Gospel is "of first importance". Everywhere the apostles went, they preached the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Third, the message of the Gospel is accompanied by proofs: Christ died for our sins (proved by His burial), and He rose again on the third day (proved by the eyewitnesses). Fourth, all this was performed "according to the Scriptures"; the theme of the whole Bible is the salvation of mankind through Christ.

"This being the nature of Jesus' message and his achievement, the story can by definition not stop there. If Jesus' primary intent and accomplishment had been to create a specific ecclesiastical institution, or to command a specific set of ritual practices or to impart a precise body of insights about the nature of things, his job could have been done and no more history would have been needed. But if what Jesus came to do was to light a fire on earth, to imitate an authentically historical process of reconciliation and community-formation, then the only way for that to proceed would have to be under the conditions of historicity, including the effects of ignorance, confusion, finitude and fallibility" (Neville and Matthews 2003, pp. 168–69).

Looking at postmodernism and the Church in a post-Christian Australia, what are we to think? Most of the time when Christians feel unnecessarily confused (not to be associated with the word "challenged"), they are experiencing the "wind and waves" created by skilful minds bringing influences to bear on the Gospel, and the Gospel needs to stand up to all these things and rather "grow up into the Head—into Christ". How do we do this?

Post-Christian attitudes and beliefs have emerged as a result of a cultural shift away from traditional Christian values. Secularisation has played a significant role in this transformation. People are turning away from organised religion and finding other sources of meaning and purpose. Despite this, Johnson says,

"In Christian perception Jews and infidels were thought to be beyond the pale of god's saving mercy in Christ, mercy which was not abundantly available even to Christians who lived in fear of their own damnation. In our own day, however, such a view has faded both in popular imagination and in official teaching. The Second Vatican Council reaffirmed the scriptural affirmation that salvation is a possibility for every person. In ways known only to God's own self, the offer of salvation is made to all" (Johnson 1990, p. 130).

As post-Christian attitudes and beliefs become more mainstream, they are influencing many areas of society, including politics, education, and media. Secular humanism is becoming increasingly popular as a way of life that emphasises reason, ethics, and social justice without the need for religious or supernatural beliefs. Moyes emphasises this sadly wrong thought by writing that "The old liberalism is dead. Today, as never before in this century, there is a hunger in the hearts of people to hear what Jesus Christ can do for them"

(Moyes 1986, p. 28). He went on to say that "For too long the pulpit has been the voice of politics, sociology, psychology, and for the private views of some ministers. People want to hear a word of truth as it applies to us today, from the Lord" (Moyes 1986, p. 28).

3. Issues and Influences—Good Philosophy and Bad Philosophy

It is important to differentiate between "secular philosophy" and "Christian philosophy"—or else there will be confusion, and all philosophy can result in a generalisation that could be incorrect. Maybe it would be important to chart the issues for easy identification under the headings of theology (or theologians), philosophical influence (secular theories)k and epistemology (how do we know?). Most theologians or theologies are not neutral but *tainted* to one degree or another by philosophical dependence, life experiences, temperament, and historical context, with the text of Scripture and following main traditions being the source. The issue at stake is the *degree* to which these "*other elements*" are present and their level of influence. In the case, for example, of Bultmann, the dependence on existentialism and modernism is enough to destroy the essence of the Gospel, which in fact he ironically tried to preserve!

Within the context of "holding on to the faith", Paul does make mention of the following: "Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith" (1 Tim 1:19). *Some philosophical constructs* have blinded some from the true nature of the *Gospel of Jesus Christ*.

> "Without peace with God there will be no peace with one's fellows. Conversation of heart always remains a requirement for a better world. Otherwise the stage and the actors in the human drama will be endlessly changed but individuals will remain, as ever, hard, selfish, and grasping. 'There is no new humanity if there are not first new persons' (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 18). So there will always be the need to speak of faith and prayer, church and sacraments, death and eternal life, as has always been the case". (Buhlmann 2001, p. 80).

Perhaps the biggest challenge in our presentation of the good news is exactly that, that times have changed! This means that we must relate the unchanging offer of God in an everchanging situation. An appeal that could be effective in Biblical times, or even a century ago, is unlikely to still be effective today.

Of course, and very emphatically, the message of the Gospel has not changed, but because the world has changed, different aspects of it need to be emphasised if it is to relate to the people of today. This need not be a problem to Christians as such, aware of the progressive nature of revelation, and especially of the move from the Old to the New Testaments. At different times in the history of the Church, different aspects of truth were emphasised.

This means that the modern evangelist needs to be very aware of the situation of the group that they feel God is sending them to. That is not an incidental point, for evangelism is God's work, and people are only his agents. Unless he sends, and he works, evangelism is futile, and doomed to failure.

> "If there is much that is alive in theology today, it only shows that after a period of static scholastic philosophy and theology we have again found access to the best periods of theological history. Not only theology was always in flux, but revelation too was experienced in historical, dynamic, self-unfolding progress. From the Old Testament to the New Testament, from the preaching of Jesus, from the Epistles to Acts, it was a question of not only handing on the message but actualizing it at all times. There was a desire to proclaim Jesus Christ reigning now". (Buhlmann 2001, p. 153).

We naturally resonate with that observation because it is Biblical, but regrettably, we have to realise that the acceptance of the authority of God is not part of the common human worldview of today. With such an attitude, an explosion of scientific enquiry naturally also followed, and its application resulted in the rapid growth of technology, and the world that we know emerged. "But in another sense the changes which have come flow out of the

intellectual and religious history of our culture and the Western world" (Schaeffer 1984, p. 32).

But this meant that Christian teaching, which had been presented with the authority of the Church, now was also subjected to reason. Christian ideas could only be accepted if they had reasonable evidence, and for this, the authority of the Bible was no longer felt to be adequate, for even this was questioned, and Biblical criticism emerged, it was no longer acceptable to present the Gospel with the authority of God, for ultimately that too had to be proved! Christian proclamation, while maintaining the authority of God, could only be listened to if it presented evidence for its assertions. Apologetics became vital. Quite significantly, the Gospel could no longer be presented as the way to eternal life, for where was the evidence that there was such a thing? And if there was, what was this sin that could prevent it? It was, after all, a breaking of the authority of God, and it was not Him but humanity and its power of reason which was now supreme. Good was now what was reasonable, not obedience to the unprovable demands of a God who might not exist. Christians could be mocked as stupid to believe idle myths, as unenlightened. Ironically, of course, as is often pointed out (e.g., Allen 1989, p. 23), the scientific method was stimulated by Christianity.

It was naturally difficult to present the needs of faith where rationality ruled, but even in premodernism, emphasising the sovereignty of God was far from problem-free; if this is stressed excessively, evangelism logically becomes superfluous, as the destinies of people are foreordained. Packer's little classic (Packer 1961) is a good example of this issue, but, as in other areas, he is forced into accepting a paradox: evangelism is undertaken, even if its results are fixed, only because God commands it. He refers to this as an "antinomy", because it seems inexplicable that people are responsible, which presumes freedom, and yet God is sovereign (Packer 1961, p. 23). But accepting this state of affairs is incompatible with a modernist worldview. It must be commented here that the acceptance of different, even incompatible, beliefs at the same time is no longer a problem for many people. Moyes emphatically states under the heading "God has no Grandchildren", "Every Christian is expected to know what being a child of God is and to live a full Christian life. That involves an education program from the time they make their decision to commit their life to Christ—on" (Moyes 1986, p. 40).

This is so because there has been a further shift in worldview. The inadequacies and consequences of the modern view have become all too evident in political turmoil, in environmental problems, and in many other ways (cf. Erickson 1998b, p. 121, etc.). Reason has been shown to be inadequate, not surprisingly, as Christians have appreciated the devastating effect that sin has on the whole human being. In particular, attempts to find a rationale for morals in reason failed (Allen 1989, p. 4). Even the Bible can point out that human wisdom is bankrupt (1 Cor 1:20), and Paul can urge the renewal of the mind (Rom 12:2). Veith (2020, p. 68) points out here that Christianity has always accepted the limitations of reason. As Grenz (see Erickson 1998b, p. 91) reminds us, reason has been shared in the fall.

The shift has been to what can well be labelled "post–modernism". In many ways, this can be seen as a logical development of trends already present in modernism (Erickson 1998b, p. 59), especially in that the individualism implicit in this is accentuated further. While a modern view accepts the reality of individual free choice, this is now stressed. An opposite view is that it is a reaction to the dominance of reason in modernism. Probably both are true, an attitude quite postmodern!

What is now denied emphatically is the validity of reason and so the idea of a coherent universe. The "correspondence view of reality", that a person's thought really reflects what is (Erickson 1998b, p. 106), is queried in postmodern thought. There are no universal criteria (Erickson 1998b, p. 106). The postmodern person is engulfed in a "fog of uncertainty", naturally resulting in anxiety and apathy (Allen et al. 1997, p. 32). The experience and values of any one person are then only valid for that person, which includes morals (Veith 2020, p. 37). All ideas are valid, what matters is whether they are helpful to the person

who accepts the ideas. It is felt that there is no absolute truth as was believed in previous worldviews; the truth is only valid in a specific community (Erickson 1998a, p. 88). Packer's problem just falls away; there is no sovereignty, and free will is absolute. All religions are then acceptable, not because they are true but because people find them helpful. Religious pluralism follows naturally (Ammerman 1998, p. 12). Erickson (1998a, p. 33) cites Wells' comment here that the New Testament world was also pluralistic but also that the first Christians knew that their belief was true. Allen (1989, p. 1) points out that if religion is just something helpful, then none is preferable; however, he argues emphatically that Christianity is not just an opinion but is true. It might be commented here that this pluralism does engender respect for the other, which is most compatible with Christian love. It might also be observed that a reaction to excessive rationalism can well be seen as one root of Charismatic theology, and that part of the attraction of the latter is its compatibility with postmodernism. Johnson makes a very profound observation:

> "It seems that the church in our time is crossing the Rubicon from a land of privatized piety accompanied by deeds of charity to individuals, at times outstandingly splendid deeds, to a frontier imbued with a spirituality of justice. In the new envisionment of discipleship, individual persons are certainly not neglected but cared for within the larger structured complexities of an interdependent, suffering world". (Johnson 1990, p. 79).

It must of course not be assumed that the shift to postmodernism does not engender its own reaction. Smart (1993, p. 89) points to the revivals of fundamentalism in the three monotheistic religions in this regard. They of course stress authority, so what is seen is an attempted return to a premodern attitude. Allen (1989, p. 7) notes that it has been felt that the only alternative to modernism, which implied discarding doctrine, was to revert to a premodern attitude. From an evangelistic perspective, the shifts in worldview can cause hassles if they are not appreciated. One of the problems that missionaries had was that they often went with what was effectively a modern worldview, while the people they were ministering to had a premodern one. The missionaries thus tended to produce evidence and arguments, but these were just not appropriate; success was more likely from a demonstration of power and, so, authority. Likewise, today, an evangelist reasoning with the same modern worldview just will have no impact on a postmodernist. Significantly, Grenz, cited by Erickson (1998b, p. 89), points out that most evangelicals remain Enlightenment thinkers. Certainly, the methods of evangelism have to change. It is no longer effective to present the rational arguments that could be effective in the modern world. "The central ideas of the Enlightenment stand in complete antithesis to Christian truth. More than this, they are an attack on God himself and his character" (Schaeffer 1984, pp. 33–34).

The problem of evangelism is exacerbated as, especially today, worldviews are in a state of flux. This immediately presents quite a problem, for even if the world is changing, it has not all changed. The rural population naturally tends to be premodern, and the urbanised tend to be at least shifting into a modernist viewpoint, but the more educated of all races, such as in the media or government, are more likely to be at least influenced by postmodern thinking. How can the Gospel be presented in a way relevant to the increasing number of postmodern people and hopefully in a way adequate to all three?

4. Defining Post-Christian—As Much as We Can

It is certainly ineffective to present the Gospel in a traditional way to postmodern and non-Christian people. Even if the Gospel is more acceptable, it cannot be presented as the solution to sin. What is the use of proclaiming forgiveness of sin to a person for whom the only sin is living in a way that is "inauthentic"? (The term is taken from existentialism, which was a precursor to the more developed postmodernism.) In postmodernism, moral absolutes are naturally denied. Veith (2020, p. 17) describes the growing sexual freedom as a result of a loss of moral criteria. Sin is meaningless when "the absence of the ethical [as]

the guiding value has been identified as a consistent and problematic feature of modern society by a number of critics" (Smart 1993, p. 80).

> "Evangelisation is the activity of spreading the Gospel to the whole world, just as the disciples were commanded by our Risen Lord (cf. Mk 16:15). It is essentially telling the truth of Jesus Christ as the way of salvation for humanity. The Gospel is proclaimed in its simplest everyday form by the witness of life of individual Christians. In other words, when the life of a believer accords with the Gospel, when it rings true and is genuine, those who have never met Christ are made to question themselves about the ultimate meaning of life, of their final destiny and why Christ makes such a difference in the lives of his followers". (*Lineamenta* 1997, p. 39).

What is the use of announcing the Gospel as the way to heaven? This was ineffective in a modern milieu, for there was no evidence that such a place existed. And if that approach was questionable even in the modern world, it is much more so today. The appeal is equally worthless when presented to those for whom the future is unreal and who very much live only for the present.

Most importantly, in a postmodern situation, a person is immediately biased against what is the essential demand of the Gospel, which is acceptance of the authority of God, for the existence of any external authority is rejected. The claims of Christianity may still be rejected but now because they claim to be true (Veith 2020, p. 18); tolerance is the supreme postmodern virtue. Erickson (1998b, p. 30) comments here that beliefs have been reduced to a minimum. Certainly, in such a situation, it is just no use to appeal to the authority of the Bible. This bias against authority is then added to the bias due to sin that traditional evangelism is well aware of. It is this attitude to the Bible that causes most problems for Christians; it is no longer seen as true, and language is in any case inadequate to communicate to another mind (McQuilkin and Mullen 1977, p. 71). Indeed, in postmodernism, there is a loss of reliance on words (Lyon 1999, p. 10). This latter is very obvious when looking at recent advertising techniques, a comparison of course very pertinent to evangelism.

The traditional demand for decision must then also be queried; it depends on rational evaluation. In any case, it has even been condemned as often mere "emotional rape"; the postmodern stress, in any case, falls not on an event but on a journey, not on instantaneous change but on the process. "Whenever people's lives are touched by the gospel and the grace of Jesus Christ, they are transformed. This effect is not limited only to persons. The more people accept Christianity and live in it in their lives, the more society and culture are transformed" (*Lineamenta* 1997, p. 29).

Nevertheless, in contrast to previous worldviews, evangelism becomes much more viable in a postmodern milieu. In fact, as is often said (e.g., Jones 2001, p. 114), the postmodern person is actually much more open than his or her predecessor to the Gospel, as it is not automatically seen as a myth. Allen (1989, p. 2) points out that in some respects, recent philosophy and science now point towards belief in God: "In a postmodern world Christianity is intellectually relevant" (Allen 1989, p. 5). Postmodernism is open to the possibility of the transcendent (Allen et al. 1997, p. 114). Rationality is no longer a preoccupation (Ammerman 1998, p. 14), hence the attraction of drugs (Lyon 1999, p. 9). And moreover, Christianity may well be presented as giving benefits to the believer in the here and now, which is exactly what the postmodern person is interested in. Indeed, that approach is also valuable to the other worldviews; indeed, a stress on present benefits is most attractive to the viewpoint that has emerged from modernism and results in free-market capitalism. The mind can only be won through the evidence of results in life.

4.1. The Struggle of Evangelism in A Secular Context and the Reality of What It Means to Be Post-Christian

A postsecular society is often one with a renewed interest in the spiritual life. Dalferth very profoundly argues for the contrary view: postsecular societies are neither religious

nor secular; they do not prescribe or privilege a religion but neither do they actively and intentionally refrain from doing so. He would argue that they are neither for nor against religion(s) but rather take no stand on this matter because it is irrelevant for their self-understanding and without import for the way in which they define themselves. For them, religion has ceased to be something to which a society or a state has to relate in embracing, rejecting, prescribing, negating, or allowing it. People may or may not be religious, but states and societies are not, and hence, there is no need for them to be secular anymore (Dalferth 2010, pp. 317–45). Although this seems to be a view that leads to apathy, it is nonetheless quite true. By virtue of its context and the points that Dalferth raises, it seems to be an issue that would not lead to concern when it comes to evangelisation and "good news"—as difficult as this may be for ones of faith to accept.

Veith (2020) in his timely book demonstrates how the Christian worldview stands firm in a world dedicated to constructing its own knowledge, morality, and truth. He points out the problems with how today's culture views humanity, God, and even reality itself. He offers hope-filled, practical ways believers can live out their faith in a secularist society as a way to recover reality, rebuild culture, and revive faith. According to Veith, "post-Christian" is not the evolution of the postmodern but the blending of both modernism and postmodernism into a new anti-Christian posture.

"Post-Christian" is a "combination" of all forms of present-day alternative worldviews with the Christian one. In the post-Christian worldview, one can find the coexistence of both modernist traits and postmodern trends. We are dealing with how post-Christianity manifests itself in deconstructing reality, repudiating the body, debunking society, and marginalizing religion. In this somewhat complex context, Christianity attempts to take on the opportunities our age brings for the Christian community to be "salt and light".

4.1.1. Historical Antecedents and Current Contexts

Particularly helpful is the sustained attention Veith gives Johann Georg Hamann (1730–1788), a counter-Enlightenment German philosopher and contemporary of Immanuel Kant (e.g., 77–93, 160–162, 211–213). From a confessional Lutheran standpoint, Hamann was such a seminal Christian thinker that he not only dealt with challenges coming from the modernism of his age but also anticipated (and refuted in advance) developments of postmodernity.

Some have observed that in terms of its post-Christianity, the West is patchy. In some Northern European countries, as Veith highlights, the post-Christianising process takes the form of the aggressive secularisation of society. The basic moral public discourse that took Christian values for granted is undergoing a drastic revision by competing, and at times antagonistic, moral frameworks. An important point that Veith makes is that there is no single post-Christian condition, just several versions and combinations.

The fundamental societal institutions (e.g., family, school, church) that took their meaning and place from a basic Christian worldview shaped by Protestantism are going through a rewriting of their status, which undermines their traditional outlook. Christians need to learn (or relearn) how to be creative and faithful minorities. The transition may be painful and difficult, but nostalgic attitudes toward a status quo somewhat marked by Christianity will not serve the cause of the Gospel.

4.1.2. Post-Christianity Killing Christendom

In the Southern European context, most post-Christian moves are welcomed due to the form of institutional Christianity that prevailed here. It tended to be a straitjacket for religious minorities of any kind and an obstacle for the flourishing of a plural society.

Indeed, not all that is identified as a "Christian" heritage in a nation or culture was actually a virtuous realisation of Christianity. What is normally assumed as belonging to a Christian heritage was actually a sub-Christian version of it—something seemingly close but fundamentally distant. In many cases, it was a deformed "Christianity" based on a long Constantinian trajectory, marked by the heresy of confusing and conflating state and

church, religion and politics, canon law and common law, Christian identity and national identity. Moving beyond this so-called Christian settlement is a positive contribution to defining true Christianity and what Christian witness means in a pluralistic world.

4.1.3. (Continually) Reforming in a Post-Christian World

The cost of living in a post-Christian century is that things will no longer be as easy or friendly as they used to be. The assumption is that in a post-Christian age, following Christ will be tougher than it has been in the past. The church will need to learn to live on the fringes as a politically incorrect outsider rather than being a stakeholder of the sacred alliance between the altar (pulpit) and the throne (power).

Veith's *Post-Christian* is an invitation to engage the world with courage and humility. This post-Christian phase is yet another opportunity to practice the semper reformanda call of the church, away from idolatrous compromises and toward an ever-growing Biblical fidelity. "Christianity" will not save us, nor will post-Christianity undermine the Gospel. While being grateful for the Christian legacy and critical of its shortcomings, our task is not merely conservation but construction.

Habermas's recent writings on theology and social theory and their relevance to a new sociology of religion in the "post-secular society" have been consulted in order to address his views on the topic. Beginning with Kant's *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, Habermas revisits his earlier thesis of the "linguistification of the sacred", arguing for a "rescuing translation" of the traditional contents of religious language through the pursuit of media between an overconfident project of modernising secularisation, on the one hand, and a fundamentalism of religious orthodoxies on the other. Several questions, however, must be raised about this current project. How far can Habermas engage adequately with religious ideas of the absolute while still retaining certain broadly functionalist theoretical premises? Is the notion of an ongoing secularisation process in the "post-secular society" a contradiction in terms? What appropriate "limits and boundaries" are to be accepted between the domains of knowledge and faith, and how strictly can they be drawn? How coherent is the notion of "methodological atheism", and how consistently can Habermas pursue the project of a "religious genealogy of reason"?

Habermas's adaptation of the Weberian thesis of rationalization and the Durkheimian theory of cognitive evolution plays no essential role in the kinds of conclusions Habermas ought to be able to draw about the validity of religious belief under contemporary social conditions. A theory of the relativization and multiplication of worldviews, Adams argues, does not ground a theory of the decline of religion, and, in any case, a theory of the institutional decline of religion does not ground a theory of the diminution of the validity of faith. From the fact "that there are rival world-views and that no single one commands universal assent", it does not follow that "religious worldviews *as such* are devalued. They may well be, but it is not obvious why it follows from a public awareness that there are multiple narratives." A "strong developmental narrative of the waxing of reason and the waning of religion" is not necessary to show that ethical argumentation in the public sphere cannot proceed on the basis of one dominant worldview but must find some other process. This still leaves room for Habermas's assignment. There may be good reasons for rejecting this view though. But whether one applauds or critiques it, it does not require a strong thesis about the decline of religion (Adams 2006, pp. 176–77).

As a Christian theologian, Adams proposes that closer attentiveness on Habermas's part to the philosophical structure of the doctrine of the Trinity—notably in its reappearance in the philosophy of Hegel—might have aided him in conceptualizing ways in which human existence and its development through history might be said to realise the presence of God in the world. This, like many of the responses to Habermas's work from the side of theologians, is a thesis that expresses a prior commitment to theism. One must already have accepted a significant part of Habermas's premises in order to follow him in his thesis, including his defence of some "post-liberal" theologians such as John Milbank who shrug off any responsibility to engage with social–scientific arguments about preconditions

for rationality in religious belief and who claim simply a right to tell a "narrative" about their own situations of faith. It is a pity that the author was not able to address by far the most substantial of Habermas's contributions to an engagement with theology to date in *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion*, published in 2005, which tries to imagine ways in which theological propositions might be compatible with postmetaphysical thinking.

In a crucial passage from one of his books, Zizek states that "the solution to looming ecological disaster and the threat of world war is to become fully aware of the explosive set of interconnections that makes the entire situation dangerous. Once we do this . . . we embrace the courage that comes with hopelessness" (Zizek 2018, p. 298). Zizek explains the desolate conjuncture of corporate globalisation, environmental devastation, and preparations for world war. There follows a scathing analysis of the Left's timid tinkering based on its underlying acceptance of the world capitalist system, which stands in stark contrast to the Right's bold, reactionary vision of identitarian neofascism based on its complete rejection of the international legal order. Zizek closes with what seems like a statement of bleak pessimism—that "the light at the end of the tunnel is probably an approaching train"—that is linked to the call to the Left to, at last, abandon the logics of protest and postponement and to act "without guarantees". Zizek's call to "abandon hope" and embrace the "courage of hopelessness"—in confronting the linked problems of social inequality, looming war, and ecological crisis—is a provocation to articulate a new kind of utopia rather than an endorsement of despair.

The hope that Zizek discusses relates to the fact that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, everything remains the same. The same multinational corporate capitalism, the same global state system, the same neoliberal economic policies, the same worldwide social inequalities. The complex of problems that Zizek investigates remains, therefore, the same. On Zizek's analysis, progressive hopes are currently directed towards fixing the existing situation rather than accepting that the things that we hope will not happen are, in fact, about to happen—unless individuals, at last, summon the political resolution to act decisively. The problem is that "we *know* the (ecological, etc.) catastrophe is possible, probable even, and yet we do not *believe* it will really happen" (Zizek 2018, p. 296), so we retain the hope that it can all be resolved without fundamental social change. For Zizek, this characteristic attitude of "perverse disavowal" raises the fundamental problem to do with hope and belief, namely, that they are not rationally grounded. Zizek's addressee is, of course, a progressive readership whose hopes are, he thinks, irrationally misdirected towards improvement. But the dark hopes of the alt-Right, directed towards apocalyptic visions of political violence and the restoration of social hierarchies, are no more rational. Nor are the hopes of the world's current neoconservative leadership, directed as they are to trading lives for money, in the context of exchanging pandemic for recession.

Hope and belief, in other words, belong to the field of ideology—provided that we understand *that* term as a neutral, descriptive category, designating the lived experience of a form of social existence combined with a relation to the natural world (including the human body). Just as there is no such thing as an opposition between ideological false consciousness and scientific true consciousness, only false or verified scientific hypotheses, there is no such thing as "false hope" or "delusional belief". Hope is always positive, just as belief always speculates. There are, however, hopes for things that are worthless. That is what is generally meant by saying that a hope is deceptive or illusory. And there are beliefs whose speculations are based not on ideas but on myths. These beliefs are mythological, that is, they consist in enigmatic symbol complexes yet to be actually deciphered.

By contrast, in Zizek's explorations of political theology, he provides a very clear answer to the question of whether it is possible to have a religious reformation rather than simply the replacement of one supernatural belief by another one that is structurally identical. In *The Puppet and the Dwarf*, Zizek proposes that conventional Christianity is based on the supernatural belief in an omnipotent and benevolent God that involves an economy of sacrifice (human sinfulness, Christ's redemption) (Zizek 2003, pp. 106–9). This is linked to the fantasy of paradise, whose "perverse enactment" in fundamentalist Christianity

involves the punishment of excluded groups. But Zizek also indicates a "death of God" interpretation of Christian theology in which supernatural belief is replaced by faith in the community through the process of the "sacrifice of sacrifice," the relinquishment of hope based on a guarantee of salvation, and investment in hope grounded in the solidarity of the all too human (Zizek 2003, p. 91). The political translation of these theological propositions is provided by Zizek's argument that Marxism was structured like a religion, with belief in history as the analogue of belief in God. According to Zizek, then, the alternative to belief in history and hope for utopia is confidence in the political community based on acceptance of contingency rather than reliance on necessity, which leads to an embrace of provisional experimentation rather than longing for a metaphysical guarantee (Zizek 2003, pp. 130–31).

Newheiser's *Hope in a Secular Age* makes the case for an ethical discipline characterised by self-critical hope as a source for unpredictable transformation in secular politics. Against the view that hope, and especially religious hope, is false and unsustainable, Newheiser argues that a hope that acknowledges its uncertainty bears within it a promise for future transformation and sustains the urgent work of addressing present political injustices—a profound suggestion. To the long list of scholars on deconstruction and negative theology, we must now add the name of David Newheiser, whose rich, judicious, and insightful *Hope in a Secular Age* offers the first sustained comparative reading of Derrida and Pseudo-Dionysius as two thinkers of hope. It may well seem implausible at first look to read the ancient negative theologian together with the modern philosopher, but Newheiser argues that both perform an immanent critique of a certain metaphysical or ontotheological tradition of the thinking being, essence, and the divine and seek to expose or reopen that tradition to an ethical thinking of the absolute other beyond all anthropomorphic projections. For Newheiser, Dionysius and Derrida may well end up hoping for very different things from this encounter with the other—which is to say, the kingdom of God and the democracy to come, respectively—but both are, nonetheless, practitioners of what he calls a "hope that acknowledges its uncertainty" (Newheiser 2019, p. 9). In this difficult hope—which persists in the absence of any firm ontotheological ground or claim whatsoever—we encounter the "hope in a secular age" of which the book's title speaks: a fragile, modest, nondogmatic, and antiutopian but residually ethical candle in the darkness of an (apparently hopeless) era.

For Newheiser, this defence for hope is positively open to self-critique and self-transformation. It is possible to find a similarly self-critical, indeed ethical, negativity in Pseudo-Dionysius's apophatic theology, because the apophaticism refuses every attempt to name or know God. Newheiser insists on the provisionality (Newheiser 2019, p. 57) of such manmade conceptual structures in the fake work. Newheiser takes a careful approach to a view that has "particular hopes while holding them open to revision" (Newheiser 2019, p. 106).

5. A Wholistic Approach

Perhaps, as in many other cases, these developments may well be beneficial to the Gospel, prompting a needful correction of emphasis. The offer of forgiveness of sins and a place in heaven, which has characterised much traditional evangelical preaching, is actually one-sided. It has, and very rightly, been caricatured as the promise of "pie in the sky when you die". Christianity, particularly under the influence of Greek dualism, has then been accused of neglecting this present life, a trend that occurred very early in asceticism. This has resulted in the neglect of social issues and caused a reaction in such ideas as in the "social gospel" or liberation theology, which, however much both probably overreacted, threw out the baby with the bathwater.

Rather, although forgiveness of sins is an absolute requirement for heaven, it enables not only life after death but also the fullness of life in the present. The death of Christ which enabled forgiveness was followed by the resurrection through which a Christian can receive eternal life. And this life is not only for the future but also for the present. Three

times in the fourth Gospel, it is stated that a believer has, not just will have, eternal life (John 3:36, 5:24, 6:47).

Indeed, it can well be suggested that it is close to heretical to preach justification without the other side as if it were all that Christianity had to offer. Rather, the scriptural offer of justification always comes with a view to its continuing into sanctification, but in any case, the offer of justification implies a change in life. It is the resultant life that can be presented as so beneficial and therefore attractive as an evangelistic plea. The focus is not so much on decision but on discipleship. The priority for the Church will then not be exclusively on direct outreach but, in conformity with Eph 4:12, on building up the body of Christ (the Church) in the present.

The truth that needs to be stressed is that Christian belief has both present and future benefits. Whereas in the gloom of the "Dark Ages", where life was so arduous it made sense to stress the latter, even if again this was an overemphasis, in the modern era of affluence, the former must be emphasised. It would be wise to observe Buhlmann: "The average Christian takes it for granted, of course, that the church of the future will go on being the church of today and yesterday, with the same social structures, 'indestructible by divine right', as is commonly assumed. But nevertheless in the year 2200 the church must and will look very different in its outward appearance from what we are accustomed to today".

5.1. Christianity Is Relational

The Gospel has often been presented as obtaining something, namely, eternal life. This has often been an attractive appeal in a modern worldview which has exacerbated materialism. Even if eternal life is intangible, it is an acquisition, to be received also in material terms by losing something, sins. Indeed, sin has often been seen in quasi-material terms, as a "thing" which had to be eradicated, like Christian's burden in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

The postmodern person is hungry for what is at the heart of the Christian message, that the nature of God not only is inherently relational in the Trinity but also manifests in relationship, in love (1 John 4:8, 10). That the Christian lifestyle is of love is then also very meaningful, because postmodernism cannot tolerate commands; Jesus "hit the nail on the head" in his summary of the law (Matt 22:37). And more than this, the Gospel includes the promise of the Spirit, whose fruit includes love (Gal 5:22); God enables what he commands!

It is commonly said that the reason that the early Church grew so rapidly was the love that was so evident in it. Here is, then, a challenge to the modern Church, particularly in the light of that promise, to manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). Or are we included in Stephen's accusation that you always resist the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51)?

The Gospel offer goes to the heart of the modern desire for harmony. But deep relationships without need to be matched and produced by those within. Again, this is a fruit of the Spirit, who gives peace (Gal 5:22). Such peace is not attainable by any other means, it is that which the world cannot give (John 14:27). This presents a real challenge to the churches, for there can only be one reaction from a postmodern person, desperate for peace, who comes into one of our conflict-ridden gatherings. Where is the reality of the Gospel? Tragically, it is available but so often not accessed. The postmodern person will not respect the Church for its own sake, because of its tradition, but only if it is seen to be effective and helpful; its authority comes from its vision for the community and evidence of its love (Allen et al. 1997, pp. 25, 37). Anyone who seeks to present the Gospel must exhibit honesty, humility, and openness if he or she expects to be heard because postmodern communication is not just the presentation of facts but of "*feeling*" (Allen et al. 1997, pp. 70, 92). The first step is always to build a level of trust. The emphasis can no longer be cognitive, but on the transformation of the whole person; evangelism is first performed experientially, and only afterward comes teaching (Jones 2001, p. 111). This is not to throw out the cognitive completely but to observe that the postmodern person is attracted by the balance between this and the emotive.

5.2. Meddling in the Wrong Pot

Many people think that it is only people on the *left* of the theological spectrum who succumb to philosophical dependence and corruption. In the case of Colossians, it is convincing that there were two groups, one on the right (Jewish legalism) and one on the left (incipient Gnosticism). The same is rather true of us today. Fundamentalists would find it difficult to accept that *they* of all people, with all their *zeal* to be true to the Scriptures, could have succumbed to something as worldly and secular as rationalistic philosophy. This is evident in their approach to the Spirit especially, their epistemology, and their sense of "experience". This is recognised by Buhlmann in his writing, "... to live the faith in a secularised and unjust world. The sole credible response is orthopraxis, the self-evident actions of persons who encountered Christ and now go through the world as his disciples, bearing witness to his lifestyle: performing good works everywhere and freeing persons from every ill (Acts 10:38)" (Buhlmann 2001, p. 183).

While there is concern about our "meddling" with postmodern philosophy as we see demonstrated in the Emergent Church, it is equally concerning about the rationalism evident in fundamentalism. Once again, there is a point that needs to be emphasised, namely, that there is a *difference between secular philosophy and Christian philosophy*. This level of intellectual Christianity with its "bibliolatry" and harsh attitude towards the wider body of Christ is equally dangerous. It is interesting that the conservative "right" finds it much more difficult to acknowledge its error than the errant left! The Pharisees in the time of Jesus just could not see the error of their ways, because they were so "self-justified" as in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. There was the exception of a few, like Nicodemus in John 3 who stole away to see Jesus at night: "There was one of the Pharisees called Nicodemus, *a leader of the Jews*, who came to Jesus by night and said, 'Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher; *for no one could perform the signs that you do unless God were with him*'".

The same "rigid right" view can be seen in the pivotal Acts 15 Jerusalem Council. Some converts, previously from this "religious right", tried to prevent the Gentile converts from being accepted as members of the Church until they were "circumcised"! It was there that the Gospel was put to the test within the early Christian community. While we are checking on the doors of the house, let us ensure that we check the front and the back doors! "Certain signs today indicate that the secular is often a wasteland, a spiritual vacuum. Even where Christians are present, the world seems to be waiting and longing for a more evident sharing in the life that God offers in his Spirit. This desire finds expression in a search for spirituality" (*Lineamenta* 1997, p. 74).

5.3. Abundant Life in Community

It is in this context of community and relationship that Jesus's affirmation of abundant life makes sense, especially to a postmodern person, for whom experience and pleasure constitute the good life (Lyon 2000, p. 82) but for whom the loss of purpose and lack of optimism produce deep misery (Long 1997, p. 74).

It is interesting that Erickson (1998b, p. 63f) includes Francis Schaeffer in his discussion of postmodernism. He indeed anticipated many of the trends that would emerge, and, significantly, proposed a valid approach to a person in the emerging new world. He was cited by Erickson as having said, "press a person to the despair that is the consequence of his or her worldview, and only when that person sinks into inevitable despair, hold out the answer in Christ" (Erickson 1998b, pp. 69, 78).

It is this that can be so wonderful to a postmodern person, for such a one, in his or her individuality, is painfully lonely. A person has no identity outside social roles (Veith 2020, p. 84). Long (1997, p. 61) suggests that the catchphrase of the postmodern generation is "I belong therefore I am", contrasting with Anselm's belief in order to understand, and Descartes' "I think therefore I am" of the two previous worldviews.

It is really no accident that divorce has mushroomed in a postmodern world. But in the wonder of the relationship with God through the Spirit comes the possibility of a deep

relationship with others, which is, unsurprisingly, the only real foundation for successful marriage.

Middleton and Walsh, according to Erickson (1998b, p. 116), suggest that the postmodern person has a profound sense of homelessness in the world; it is our own construction, damaged by us and damaging others. The world has lost the Enlightenment dream of ongoing progress to a goal, leaving just change (Erickson 1998b, p. 48). This results in pessimism, and in such a situation, the hope of a real future becomes very attractive; this is not the escape to a nirvana but to a utopia far better than modernism hoped for, the provision of a real home. Moloney (1997) makes a profound observation and suggestion by quoting from *Encyclical Letter "Ecclesiam Suam" with a Discussion Aid Outline*.

The Christian church, which lays claim to be the community of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, is called to a patient reflection upon the Christian tradition in order to gain new insights into its responsibilities and challenges in an ever-changing world. An authoritative spokesman of the Catholic Christian tradition, Pope Paul VI, once wrote down his understanding of the process of making the Christian church conform more closely to its original design and yet present a relevant face to the world:

"We should always wish to lead her [the church] back to her perfect form corresponding, on the one hand to her original design and, on the other, fully consistent with the necessary development which, like a seed grown into a tree, has given to the church her legitimate and concrete form of history" (*Ecclesiam Suam* 83).

And with it comes a real identity. While the postmodern longing is to belong, the desired harmony is not that of submergence into the crowd but goes with a deep need for significance. Here, Lyon (2000, p. 77) defines postmodernism by consumerism but immediately observes that this is not just blatant materialism but is performed "to make a unique personal statement" and is about "constructing an expressive lifestyle" (Lyon 2000, p. 82). This is an inevitable reaction to a worldview that unmakes the self (Wyschogrod 1997, p. 341). The stress on the ego, so fundamental to modernism, has gone (Erickson 1998b, p. 109). It is here that the declaration of the significance of the person as created in the image of God (Gen 1:27), and then as having the potential of being an adopted child of God (Rom 8:15), can be very attractive.

5.4. Peace at Home

It can be so wonderful to meet a Saviour who has gone to prepare a real home (John 14:2). In the absence of anything reliable, it can be a joy to meet the one who is described as a solid foundation (1 Cor 3:11, 1 Pet 2:6). Life is then not something that belongs to a person by nature, as in the Greek view, but is only possible by relating to the only one who lives eternally by nature.

The essence of the Church perhaps needs to be presented not so much as *ekklesia*, as separation, valid though this is, but as *kuriakon*, belonging to the Lord, a term which in any case gives us the word "church" (Peters 1992, p. 260). We are saved by relating to Christ, enabled through his sacrificial love. Maybe it is more than just an accident that the first postmodern generation is often called "generation X" (Long 1997, p. 12). And Generation "X" is not optimistic (Erickson 1998b, p. 87). It is appropriate that in such circumstances that "X" is not just the common symbol for the unknown, seeing that "X" is also the sign of Christ, and not just the first letter of his name in Greek but also a symbol of his atoning sufferings, which is a response of love. Interestingly enough, X is not understood, and so we have moved to Generation Y, then Generation Z, and are now up to Generation a (small alpha)!

While the postmodern rejection of rational communication inevitably causes discomfort to Christians, who have rejoiced in the description of Jesus as the "Word" of God, this description of Jesus as the *logos* does include other aspects. One of these is the idea of rationality, problematic in postmodernism, but the idea most applicable and important in the early Church to declare that Jesus was the expression, or revelation, of God, particularly His image (Heb 1:3). In contrast to the Old Testament, the fundamental revelation of God

was not in mere words but in a person. This is very postmodern! If a person is presented with Jesus, rather than a "dead" book or even with its message (despite Erickson 1998a, p. 174), there is more likely to be a response. The message of God was incarnate, the entry to interactive relationships with people; there was no sermonic monologue (Allen et al. 1997, p. 48)! Here, Erickson does point out that Jesus presented his truth in a parable; this is such a postmodern method and contrasts vividly with the more dogmatic approach of Paul, which was so attractive in previous worldviews. Even in modernism, it is probably true that most people come to Christ by personal invitation and not through mass rallies (Peters 1992, p. 300).

Compassion is a key element in responding to post-Christian culture. We need to understand the reasons behind people's rejection of Christianity and approach them with empathy.

Another important aspect is humility. We must recognise that we do not have all the answers and that we can learn from others. This requires us to be open to different perspectives and willing to engage in respectful dialogue.

Finally, we need to respond with grace. This means extending love and forgiveness to those who may have hurt us or rejected our faith. We must also be willing to extend hospitality and create space for people to explore their beliefs without fear of judgment or condemnation.

5.5. Promoting Humility and Empathy

In responding to a post-Christian culture with love and grace, it is crucial for Christians to cultivate humility and empathy. Humility enables us to acknowledge our own weaknesses and limitations, while empathy helps us understand and relate to those who hold different beliefs.

To cultivate humility, we must recognise that we are not the ultimate arbiters of truth but rather that we are all on a journey of discovery. This requires a willingness to listen and learn from others, even when we disagree with them.

Empathy, on the other hand, involves putting ourselves in another person's shoes and seeking to understand their perspective. This means recognising the unique experiences and challenges that shape their worldview and being willing to show compassion and care, even when we do not see eye to eye.

6. Conclusions

So the issue at stake is our relationship with Scripture on the one hand and philosophy on the other. *Scripture, taken as a whole, presents us with a distinctive worldview.* God is at the centre of that worldview, and God tells us within His Word how He communicates with us and what the content of that communication is. If, for example, the Emergent Church finds that the Biblical doctrine of hell is unpalatable to the emerging postmodern, Post-Christian community, that does not change the reality of the doctrine of hell! All philosophical worldviews find the doctrine of hell unpalatable! Hell is not a poor advert for the message of the cross as muted by postmodernists but rather one *motivating* message to accept the doctrine of the cross.

We do not have any right to alter God's message or the Church's teachings—including the worldview of the Scriptures! The Scriptures have an established, all-incorporating worldview, established for all ages—past, present, and future. Our task is to accurately communicate God's message in an understandable and palatable way, given that worldview, in every age. The message of the cross will always be a tough message. Our role is to be careful exegetes of the text and then systematisers of the message of the text, and finally, we need to be students of the world community in which we live. Our task is then given with love, reason, and power. There is a significant reason why Paul says in Rom 1:16, "It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes . . .".

In Acts 17, Paul demonstrates how the Gospel can be communicated within any context. He demonstrates how there are certain "non-negotiables" like the incarnation

and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Yet there is an ability to engage with and persuade philosophical religious constructs. Paul also reveals how to measure truth within these constructs, for example, "in Him we move and have our being". All truth is God's truth, but we cannot construct truth in a systematic way except from the perspective of revelation and the church. Our distinctive task is to be witnesses to Jesus Christ—who is the Gospel.

What has been said above means that the postmodern appeal is not so much to those outside the Church but to those inside! The need for the Church in a postmodern/post-Christian milieu is not so much of what they should do but what they should be. If the Church is to touch this generation, it must primarily exhibit abundant, "authentic" life. The text so often used in personal evangelism, Revelation 3:20, perhaps should be interpreted as Jesus knocking not at the door of our heart but of the Church. For if we live as the Gospel demands, and use the power that the Spirit provides to do this, there will in fact be no need to go out to appeal to a generation that, in its postmodernism, will not listen if all we do is speak. The appeal is to follow Christ who was and is the living word.

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Article

Early Biblical Fundamentalism's Xenophobic Rejection of the Subject in European Philosophy: How Rejecting the Knowing Subject Formed Fundamentalism's Way of Thinking

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Abstract: This article is part of a wider project that addresses gaps in the scholarly knowledge of the philosophical and theological foundations of the Biblical Fundamentalism that originated in North America. Through exploring the relevant literature, including primary sources from within Fundamentalism, the article examines the anti-European sentiment in early Fundamentalism and how this sentiment led to a rejection of philosophical values associated with Europe, especially with Germany. The article will show that anti-European, especially anti-German, sentiment bolstered Fundamentalism's rejection of subjectivity in thinking, and even its rejection of human subjects themselves. In the place of subjectivity associated with European philosophy, Fundamentalism embraced an extreme objectivity that claimed the heritage of Reid and Bacon but eliminated subjectivity from the Fundamentalist horizon. This article thus shows how Fundamentalism radically opposes God and human beings, and faith and philosophy, with the resulting way of thinking that can be characterised as "naïve realism", an approach to thinking that excludes the active thinking subject and does not allow for critical judgement or personal understanding.

Keywords: Fundamentalism; biblical; philosophy; continental; common sense philosophy; subjectivity; objectivity

1. Introduction

Despite Biblical Fundamentalism's considerable membership and influence, the academy seems to have often neglected scholarly theological or philosophical analysis of the movement. While some have lamented the lack of scholarly attention given to Fundamentalism, there have been notable exceptions, such as Wood and Watt's collection (Wood and Watt 2014) and, most importantly, the University of Chicago's *Fundamentalism Project* (edited by Marty and Appleby, 1987–1995). However, even that significant project was notable for the absence of "humanists and theologians" from the project (Waugh 1997, pp. 162–63). Indeed, as Huff notes, despite Fundamentalism being one of the most important religious movements of the twentieth century, "interreligious dialogue tends to operate as if it did not exist". He observes, for example, that Fundamentalism has not seen the level of respectful dialogue given to the non-Christian religions of Asia (Huff 2000, pp. 94–95).

An additional oversight that the project, of which this article is a part, aims to rectify is that when Fundamentalism has been subjected to serious academic investigation, its philosophical roots have very often been overlooked (Harris 1998, p. 95). To give an example, Harris notes that Barr's (1980) influential study of Fundamentalism made no specific reference the Scottish Common Sense realist philosophy that characterised Princeton in the nineteenth century, and which later came to dominate Fundamentalist thinking. Since George Marsden wrote his seminal work, the historical role of common sense philosophy in forming Fundamentalism has become well-known (Marsden 2022). However, as Harris also notes, the content of and ideas behind the common sense philosophy that underpins Fundamentalism has not been studied as deeply as one would have hoped. She observes

that this is "partly because the effects of the philosophy [on Fundamentalism] have been general rather than precise" (Harris 1998, pp. 94–95).

It has been common to see the movement subjected to scorn and derision rather than penetrating analysis and intelligent critique. Some Catholic responses to Fundamentalism have typified this approach, seeming to favour condescension over understanding. To give an important example, the Pontifical Biblical Commission (1993) responded in a balanced and measured way to different methods of Biblical interpretation such as liberation theology and feminist theology. In contrast, when the Commission covered Fundamentalism, it stood aloof from the movement with manifest revulsion, and it made no effort to explain the intellectual foundations of Fundamentalism. Instead, it dismissed Fundamentalism as having no systematic approach to Biblical interpretation. It claimed (erroneously) that Fundamentalists interpret the Bible literalistically, with no effort given to understand the historical background of Scripture. It also asserted erroneously that Fundamentalists reject any critical research (Shea 1993, p. 279). The Pontifical Biblical Commission (1993) ended its attack by claiming that Fundamentalism is a pious but dangerous illusion and that it "actually invites people to a kind of intellectual suicide".

To rectify the oversight of an academic study of Fundamentalism, this author is pursuing a study of the philosophical values behind early Fundamentalism. A deep investigation into Fundamentalism finds it committed to a common sense philosophy, especially the philosophy associated with Thomas Reid, and that it embraced a "Baconian" scientific-philosophical method. Driving these values, however, is a militant, even xenophobic, rejection of certain philosophical values associated with the Continent, especially Germany.

The anti-German sentiment that was influential in early Fundamentalism ties in with Marsden's functional definition of a Fundamentalist as "an evangelical who is angry about something". The definition was taken up and embraced by Jerry Falwell (Marsden 1991, p. 1). Dobson, Hindson, and Falwell further support this functional definition, noting that Fundamentalism is characterised by its militant resistance to theological liberalism, modernism, and cultural change. They see it as a movement in "furious" battle against liberalism in order to win back their culture (Dobson et al. 1986, pp. 1–5). Indeed, Crawford notes that, from its early times, Fundamentalism was characterised by its contentious and combative militance (Wood and Watt 2014, p. 39). Marsden augments this functional definition by referring to Fundamentalism as a movement originally from within Evangelicalism that "is militant in opposition to liberal theology in the churches or to changes in cultural values or mores..." Fundamentalism thus emerged when certain Evangelicals found themselves ready to fight liberal theology and cultural influences that were believed to threaten key Evangelical doctrines. Moreover, one thing that distinguishes American Fundamentalism from conservative Evangelicalism in other countries is that Evangelicalism had been the *de facto* normative faith of the United States (Marsden 1991, pp. 1–2). The onslaught of liberalism was viewed not only as a theological challenge to Evangelicalism but also as an assault on American values. Fundamentalism emerged from an attack on faith and its place in North American society (Marty and Appleby 1995, p. 404). American Evangelicals believed themselves to be the victims of catastrophic betrayal and alienation from society's mainstream. Within a few decades, these Evangelicals went from being the mainstream establishment of American society to being social outcasts.

In that light, Fundamentalism has been long associated with a militant rejection of perceived foreign and hostile values that challenge conservative Evangelical faith. Among these are the philosophical values that were seen as foreign, coming from the Continent, specifically Germany, and this article will cover those values as rejected by Fundamentalism. This article will specifically explore the Fundamentalist rejection of the subject associated with European philosophical values, especially those associated with Germany, explain the common sense and hyper-objective values that emerged in opposition to European philosophy, and use these to show how Fundamentalism can be identified as a philosophy described as "common sense realism" or "naïve realism". That is, the early history of Fundamentalism reveals an anti-German xenophobia. This anti-German sentiment

correlates with the early Fundamentalist rejection of key philosophical values, especially those associated with the affirmation of the knowing subject. Thus, this article proceeds from anti-German sentiment and early Fundamentalism's rejection of "German fancies" to explore how the rejection of philosophical values associated with Germany led to the formation of Fundamentalism's own philosophical values. The article will draw on the seminal work of George Marsden. While his work is mostly historical, his accounts will be used to illuminate and clarify the emergence of philosophical values in early Fundamentalism.

To put this study into other words, Fundamentalism has often been associated with anti-intellectualism. In his criticism of more extreme Fundamentalism, Packer notes that the movement has tended towards an anti-intellectual standpoint (Packer [1958] 1992, pp. 32–33, 36). This most often resulted from the limited scholarly resources available to Fundamentalists and their desire to defend their beliefs, no matter what science, philosophy, or scholarship may be saying. Because modern scholarship seemed at variance with Fundamentalist belief, Fundamentalists took the option of shunning reason and philosophical argument, assuming that being involved in such reason would lead to the corruption of faith. This bleak assessment seems accurate. However, it deals with the surface manifestations of Fundamentalism. It is also important to appreciate that part of the foundation of the Fundamentalist rejection of learning has been not just a general hostility towards liberal learning but also a theological xenophobia that rejected Continental learning, especially German scholarship. That is, early Fundamentalism did not involve a wholesale rejection of learning, but it rejected certain Enlightenment values that were associated with the Continent, especially Germany. As we shall see below, this was reflected especially in Fundamentalism's rejection of Enlightenment values regarding the knowing subject in philosophy.

2. Anti-German Xenophobia

At the time of World War I, during Fundamentalism's formative years, American preachers treated the German Kaiser as if he was "His Satanic Majesty—the incarnation of evil". While praying in the US House of Representatives, Evangelist Billy Sunday spoke of Germany and declared, "Thou knowest, O Lord, that no nation so infamous, vile, greedy, sensuous, bloodthirsty ever disgraced the pages of history" (Ferrell 1985, p. 205). Sunday also proclaimed that, "If you turn Hell upside down . . . you will find 'Made in Germany' stamped on the bottom" (Adams 1933, p. 79).

Such preaching reflects the fact that Fundamentalism has often been characterised by who or what it is against, rather than what it is for. In the years leading to Fundamentalism's formation, we see a strong stream of theological xenophobia. As early as the 1870s, American Evangelicals had embraced the vision of the United States as a Christian nation that stood in opposition to the perceived evils of Europe, which included transcendentalism, socialism, spiritualism, and phrenology (Marsden 2022, p. 19). The level of this xenophobia and its irony can be seen in the fact that Fundamentalism's great nemesis, Charles Darwin (1958, pp. 56–71), was an English gentleman and a Cambridge divinity graduate. Despite the enormous harm done to Fundamentalism by Darwin, Fundamentalists never aimed the same level of hostility towards the Anglosphere as they directed towards Germany.

Indeed, a study of Fundamentalism's history suggests that the perceived unbelief and complexity of Darwinism was a perceived minority position in Anglosphere scholarship, whereas liberalism, subjectivity, complexity, anti-supernaturalism, and speculative philosophies were regarded as the result of "closed-minded" thinking that typified German scholarship. Rueben Torrey, for example, proclaimed that the correct meaning of the Bible was the straightforward one that could be understood by the "plain man" using one's common sense. Undesirable readings of the Bible were seen as the result of esoteric, mystical, and complicated scholarship, which was associated with German professors rather than Americans (Hofstadter [1963] 1964, p. 133; Marsden 2022, pp. 22, 72).

3. "German Fancies"

Fundamentalists followed the view typified by Charles Hodge and Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield of the Princeton Theological Seminary. They conceived the Bible as a "storehouse of facts" that could be readily apprehended by common sense. Negatively, Fundamentalists followed them in rejecting German "theoretical" understandings and "deeper meanings" that relied on complexity and subjectivity (Marty and Appleby 1991, p. 15). Early Fundamentalists, as well as conservative Evangelicals, put their faith in common sense thinking, which they hoped would resist the onslaught of German philosophy. By embracing Locke, Butler, and especially Reid's Common Sense philosophy, they hoped to prevail against "the vagaries of Prussian or German Rationalists" (Harris 1998, p. 130). If we turn to the influential collection, *The Fundamentals* (1917), Dyson Hague's "History of the Higher Criticism" has a section dedicated specifically to what he called "German Fancies" (*The Fundamentals, Volume I*, Torrey and Dixon 1917, p. 12). He highlighted the Fundamentalists' belief that the worst of the modern Biblical critics were German. Hague also accused Germans of being scholars who replaced the plain meaning of Scripture with subjective conjectures, hypotheses, and speculations. Hague wrote that "for hypothesis-weaving and speculation, the German theological professor is unsurpassed".

In contrast, Hague tied himself to an avowedly Anglo-Saxon tradition that rejected speculative and hypothetical thinking. In rejecting hypothetical thinking, he appealed to Isaac Newton, who stated "'*Non fingo hypotheses*': I do not frame hypotheses." Hague continued that "it is notorious that some of the most learned German thinkers are men who lack in a singular degree the faculty of common sense and knowledge of human nature" (*The Fundamentals, Vol. I*, Torrey and Dixon 1917, p. 12).

It is interesting that Fundamentalism persisted in the belief that evolutionary thought was rooted in such a "German" way of thinking, despite Darwin's obvious English background. A good example in *The Fundamentals* is Henry Beach's paper on the "Decadence of Darwinism". Beach argued that evolutionary theory is problematic, hypothetical, based on speculation, and not at all a proven fact. Beach claimed that "it would be mischievous to teach it in our schools". It was only the rash sorts of people, especially the Germans, who would advocate such hypothetical theories (*The Fundamentals, Vol. IV*, Torrey and Dixon 1917, p. 71).

4. Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Philosophical Tradition

The Fundamentalists' opposition to Continental intellectual values helps to clarify the way that they approached the Christian faith with solidly nineteenth-century American ideas about truth and morality (Marsden 2022, pp. 279–80). As seen in Barr's work, Fundamentalism has been tied specifically to nineteenth-century rationalism. While Barr did not explicate the Scottish common sense philosophical realist tradition that was a foundation for Fundamentalist thinking, he did make the point that Fundamentalism is strongest in countries dominated by an Anglo-Saxon culture. It rejects the Continental philosophical contributions to the philosophy of knowing that emphasised the active, thinking subject. In its place, Fundamentalism embraced a rationalist way of knowing that was hyper-objective, in which truth is "out there" to be had, and that one should simply apprehend assertions that are out there to be seen with common sense (Barr 1980, p. 72; Harris 1998, p. 94).

This point highlights the first important contrast between the European philosophy rejected by Fundamentalists and the Anglo-American philosophy they adopted. They rejected the Continental position that the apprehension of truth may depend on the knowing person's subjectivity and faculties. In contrast, Fundamentalist thinkers like B. B. Warfield and Machen applied a "common sense" philosophy in which the plain apprehension of rational facts, without subjective thinking, would yield knowledge of objective truths such as the self-evident proof of the Bible's reliability and authority.

Such common sense philosophy appealed to Fundamentalists because it had already been embraced by people of faith, and the wider population, of the United States. Such

a philosophy appealed to nineteenth-century Americans because it grounded a certain scientific approach to reality that the universe was governed by rational laws guaranteed by an omniscient, omnibenevolent Creator. This common sense approach to philosophy also assumed that the first principles of morality would be known easily or intuitively, without the intervention of ideas (Marsden 2022, p. 15). It was against that background that the Declaration of Independence was able to affirm that certain truths were "self-evident", and that certain unalienable rights were endowed by the Creator.

5. Reid and Baconism

Rather than taking on a European philosophy that emphasised the knowing subject, Fundamentalists embraced a common sense philosophy that was most notably inherited from the Scots, the most prominent of whom was Thomas Reid (Reid 1852; Nichols [2000] 2014). This philosophical approach had come to America most prominently through the Scottish presidents of Princeton College, John Witherspoon and James McCosh. Witherspoon had been brought to Princeton specifically to oppose the idealist philosophy associated with Berkley (Harris 1998, pp. 126–27).

In that common sense tradition, Fundamentalists embraced Reid's rejection of the philosophies of Rene Descartes, David Hume, and others. Reid declared that "I despise Philosophy and renounce its guidance—let my soul dwell with Common sense" (Reid 1852, p. 101). Reid believed that these philosophers made the mind some sort of mediator between real objects and mental ideas, which had some sort of separate reality. Reid held that reality could be known, without process or cogitation, instead knowing by immediate, direct "judgements of nature". He proposed that God had created the human mind to grasp reality directly (Reid 1852, p. 110). Thus, in opposition to idealist ways of knowing, Reid proposed that people do not perceive ideas of objects but that they perceive objects themselves (Harris 1998, pp. 97–98). Reid proposed it as self-evident that humanity had a "common sense" about it which could not be questioned or called into suspicion. As Reid explains,

> If there are certain principles, as I think there are, which the constitution of our nature leads us to believe, and which we are under a necessity to take for granted in the common concerns of life, without being able to give a reason for them; these are what we call the principles of common sense; and what is manifestly contrary to them, is what we call absurd. (Reid 1852, p. 108)

Peterková asks if Reid meant common sense as the "judgment of ordinary people, or judgment which we have in common with other people?" She argues that Reid meant that common sense referred to self-evident propositions that could be doubted by no reasonable person (Peterková 2015). Moreover, Reid also referred common sense to judgement, as the judgement common to all rational human beings. Indeed, Reid argued that common sense acts on propositions that "are no sooner understood than they are believed". Reid further argued that belief acts on propositions and that there are some propositions that are not supported by other propositions, and that these are "self-evident propositions" (Reid 1852, p. 434). It should be noted that "proposition" is mentioned in *The Fundamentals*, but not in the same way as used by later Fundamentalists. However, we see in a certain adaptation of Reid's Common Sense philosophy as the judgement of propositions the later Fundamentalist emphasis on revelation as propositional, as is all common sense. Packer serves as a good example when he discusses faith in terms of its intellectual and cognitive aspects. He regards faith as an intellectual certainty, a cognitive, certain apprehension of what is absolutely true, as revealed by God. For Packer, faith is simply an intellectual assent to truths that God has given as propositional revelation (Packer [1958] 1992, pp. 115–18).

Having said that, Harris observes that the influence of common sense philosophy on Fundamentalism has been "general rather than precise" (Harris 1998, p. 95). This raises the question of whether Fundamentalists understood Reid correctly or whether theirs was an oversimplified account of Reid. That question is beyond the scope of this paper and should be committed to future research. What can be said with confidence is that in the name of

Reid, Fundamentalists rejected the knowing subject, which was associated with European philosophy, and they adopted a common sense approach to philosophy. I note that, in terms of the positive content of Reid, the question is complicated further because Reid and Bacon were apparently known by Fundamentalists through the mediation of different scholars rather than direct reading, Thus, what was understood by "common sense philosophy" or the Baconian method, was not obtained directly from Reid and Bacon but by mediation. At the same time that early Fundamentalists took on a common sense philosophy that they associated with Reid, they embraced what was regarded as the "Baconian" ideal. The Fundamentalists' version of the Baconian method was to consider science as (i) the observation of the facts available to common sense, (ii) the classification of such facts, and (iii) the noting of generalisations that could be expressed as scientific laws. What was vital to the Fundamentalists was that the "Baconian" interpreter of Scripture was not to impose subjective hypotheses or theories but to reach the facts by classification and generalisation of what was observed. This understanding of the Baconian method aligned with Reid, who believed that true philosophising came from observing facts, using induction to "collect the laws of nature", and then applying those laws to explain natural phenomena (Reid 1852, pp. 271–72; Harris 1998, p. 100). Fundamentalism thus emanated from a Baconian tradition of seeing what was there to be seen, not seeing what was not there, and then classifying what one saw. Thus, Evangelicals (and later the Fundamentalists) adhered to the idea of science as being observations of facts, not "speculations or hypotheses", and they then applied that same method to the reading of Scripture (Marsden 2022, pp. 6, 15–16, 70). We see a very good example of this approach in a statement made by Arthur T. Pierson (Marsden 2022, p. 65).

> I like Biblical theology that does not start with the superficial Aristotelian method of reason, that does not begin with an hypothesis, and then warp the facts and the philosophy to fit the crook of our dogma, but a Baconian system, which first gathers the teachings of the word of God, and then seeks to deduce some general law upon which the facts can be arranged.

Marsden also makes a valuable reference to Curtis Lee Laws, the man who coined the term "Fundamentalist", who held that the objective truth of Scripture was analogous to the truth of the laws of physics—Biblical truth was known by common sense, and the infallibility of the Bible was ultimately the infallibility of common sense. Thus, one's knowledge of the truth of Scripture came by intuitive confirmation, not scientific demonstration (Marsden 2022, pp. 135–36).

In other words, by rejecting Continental philosophical ideals, and by combining this Baconian view of science with the method of the Scottish common sense philosophers, Fundamentalists aligned themselves to the view that in knowing reality, what was important was induction formed upon observation. The theological result of this philosophic outlook was reflected in the view of ultra-conservatives at Princeton that one could have direct knowledge of God through the means of observing God's revelation in the Bible. They also argued that if God was loving, providential, and wanting to inform his creatures of his will, perfect, infallible, and incapable of error, then it seemed clear that in the Bible there could be no error and that its message was there to be seen by those who approached it with the right open-minded spirit. The result of this approach was to turn the Bible into a storehouse of facts, which meant in turn that theology was reduced to studying, classifying, and expounding those clearly stated facts.

This sort of common sense philosophy, married to the Baconian ideal, had clear implications for the Fundamentalist inability to appropriate Darwin's natural selection, which relied on insight into unseen relations between species. There is also the critical question of whether Fundamentalism embraced a genuinely Baconian method. However, whether Fundamentalists understood Bacon fully or accurately, it remains that in Bacon's name they rejected metaphysics and philosophical theories that placed emphasis on the role of the human subject and the active subjective intellect in knowing objects, including sacred Scripture (Lightner [1986] 1995, p. 8; Packer [1958] 1992, pp. 131, 171–72). By

rejecting human subjectivity and putting truth in the object, rather than the subject's mind, Fundamentalists not only eliminated critical realism's judgement of truth or falsity, but they also excluded the power of human understanding and insight.

6. Baconian Common Sense

In advancing a Baconian/common sense approach to knowing, we can see how Fundamentalists believed, as Spurgeon wrote, that "Cottage dames" are often wiser to the things of God than savants and scientists (*The Fundamentals, Vol. III*, Torrey and Dixon 1917, p. 111). Indeed, this holds true whether one is talking about science, philosophy, or complex theology. For example, *The Fundamentals* contains a damning assessment of the Catholic doctrine on the Eucharist. The doctrine was wrong, wrote J. M. Foster, because it "depends upon the acceptance of a metaphysical definition", which is expressed in the terms of complex metaphysics (*The Fundamentals, Vol. III*, Torrey and Dixon 1917, p. 307). Indeed, those metaphysics draw a distinction between the visible qualities of an object and the invisible reality behind it. In the name of common sense and Baconian thinking, Fundamentalism rejected the speculative metaphysics of the invisible and affirmed only that which can be perceived by our senses.

In its early days, Fundamentalism thus firmly rejected philosophy that was seen as speculative, complex, or "theoretical". Such a philosophy, as J. J. Reeve claimed, is responsible for a faulty understanding of our world as well as a hostile attitude towards the Bible and religion (*The Fundamentals, Vol. I*, Torrey and Dixon 1917, p. 348).

It is in the light of rejecting complex philosophical interpretations that Pierson made the classic Fundamentalist declaration that Biblical interpretation should not employ complex, subjective, or speculative philosophy but instead should use a "Baconian" method of gathering the evident facts of the Word of God and moving from that point to draw conclusions (Marsden 2022, p. 65).

While Pierson's statement accurately represented Fundamentalist thinking, we may ask if it fairly represented Baconian method. After all, Bacon himself had contrasted his observation-based scientific method with the Aristotelian authority-based method that began from first principles and then proceeded to deduce objective necessity from those principles (Lonergan 2004, pp. 166–68). Bacon thought such an approach paid insufficient attention to the world that we could observe with our senses (Bacon 1973, 1:n5/p. 26). Indeed, the modern method of science, which had been heralded by Bacon, pursues "theories invented, corrected and corroborated over an indefinite period through appeal to experience" (Meynell 1991, p. 234). It seems therefore, that even though Fundamentalists adopted the name of Bacon for their anti-subjective method, Fundamentalism's reliance on text-based evidence and knowledge deduced from authority is not aligned with Bacon's inductive method that embraced observation and experience.

7. Rejection of Key Enlightenment Values

The foregoing shows that Fundamentalism has had an ambivalent relationship with philosophy. On the one hand, early Fundamentalists condemned philosophy, but on the other hand, they extolled right thinking, and they embraced common sense philosophy and Baconian thinking. By considering both sides of this relationship, we see that Fundamentalism is not utterly anti-intellectual. Most certainly, Fundamentalists are neither ignorant, nor are they the "gaping primates" indicated by Mencken's mockery (Mencken 1926, p. 65). Instead, by their anti-Continental philosophical method, Fundamentalists have embraced a deliberate stand against key philosophical values of the Enlightenment (Marsden 2022, pp. 6–7).

We can thus consider, on the one hand, Fundamentalism's rejection of certain philosophies and Fundamentalism's praise of good philosophical thinking.

First, Crosby rejected "philosophy" because of human depravity. Citing St Paul's warning against human traditions, philosophy, and vain deceit (Colossians 2:8), Crosby argued that, through human nature, "the evil principle is ever at work". Because human

nature is constant in its depravity, he posited that "[w]hether it appear in the form of hierarchical assumption, or in the character of rational inquiry and scientific research, the evil principle hides, mutilates, or contradicts the Holy Scripture". Even when Christians attempt to use philosophy to bolster Christian doctrine, Crosby held that "Christian philosophy" led inevitably to Gnosticism, Origenism, and myriad other heresies. Human depravity meant that philosophy, however well-intentioned, could only understate the evil of sin, inflate the powers of humanity, and compromise the need for salvation in Christ (*The Fundamentals, Vol. III*, Torrey and Dixon 1917, pp. 168–69).

If we consider carefully the myriad rejections of "philosophy" by Fundamentalists, we find that these were particular types of philosophy, namely the speculative, complex, and the hypothetical, which Fundamentalists associated with the Continent. At the same time, there has been an acknowledgement by Fundamentalists of philosophy that is beneficial to Christianity, even though the Fundamentalists did not call it "philosophy". Thus, Dyson Hague praised the work of Justin Martyr, Chrysostom, and Augustine. While rejecting the label "philosophy", Hague claimed that these thinkers engaged in "embroidery of the oriental imagination, and a plethora of metaphor" (*The Fundamentals, Vol. III*, Torrey and Dixon 1917, pp. 86–87).

Early Fundamentalists thus simultaneously embraced philosophy and rejected it. This point is crucial. Fundamentalists rejected philosophies, but not all of them. Their enthusiasm for Reid's Common Sense (as they understood it) and the "Baconian" method showed an affinity for certain philosophies. But, as Ammerman notes (Marty and Appleby 1991, p. 9), Fundamentalists rejected the philosophies of the Enlightenment. These Continental philosophies went beyond mere sense perception to affirming and analysing the role of the human subjective thinker. Chief among these philosophers was the German philosopher Immanuel Kant who argued that "objective truth is always filtered through subjective experience and perception". Kant's "Copernican revolution" in philosophy emphasised not only the known object but the knowing human subject. That is, in Kant, phenomenal mental impressions are distinct from noumenal things in themselves. The human mind constructs truth, according to Kant, because our minds have to process what is encountered through the senses. Because of the role of the human mind in "constructing truth", the processes of the human knowing subject are vital to understanding knowing and how truth is perceived through such subjective knowing (Harris 1998, p. 99).

It should be clarified, though, that Fundamentalists were not utterly opposed to the Enlightenment. After all, they embraced a version of that Baconian method, which was associated with the Enlightenment. As Bendroth notes, Fundamentalism "grew out of a Protestant tradition already deeply rooted in Enlightenment ideals, particularly the assumption that religious truth is accessible to anyone equipped with normal human "common sense" (Wood and Watt 2014, p. 61). However, Fundamentalists did reject other pivotal philosophical values of the Enlightenment. The most important of these would seem to be the role of the active subject in knowing reality.

Thus, while being open to some pre-Enlightenment philosophies, Fundamentalists rejected key parts of Enlightenment philosophy. They opted for less subjective approaches to knowing, such as Reid's Common Sense philosophy, which was seen as both democratic and anti-elitist, and presumed knowledge of objects directly, without the mediation or interference of ideas (Marsden 2022, p. 15).

In short, then, Fundamentalism's adoption of common sense and Baconian knowing was essentially a rejection of the subjectivity of the knowing human person emphasised in Continental philosophy. It represents an extreme objectivity in which the knowing person is not as important as the known object.

8. Rejection of Subjectivity

It behoves us now to articulate more about Fundamentalism's rejection of subjectivity. At the same time that Fundamentalists claimed a Baconian heritage for their way of thinking, they also rejected metaphysics and philosophical theories that emphasised the

role of the knower in knowing objects, including sacred Scripture. This was a key part of Fundamentalism's rejection of liberalism, because it was believed that liberalism operated under the mantle of such "subjectivism". This point reflects Marsden's observation that the Princeton notion of truth conceived truth as that which was out there to be seen in the external world. Truth was not any function of a subject's mental activity (Marsden 2022, p. 143). Importantly, this common sense philosophy held that the person can only discover objective truth, which is constant for all times, places, and persons. As Reid put the point, "the truth of a proposition" is utterly independent of whether we believe or not (Reid 1852, p. 649; Harris 1998, p. 117).

The Fundamentalist rejection of "subjectivism" was thus not just a reflex reaction to liberalism. Instead, it has been a stand upon theological belief in human depravity. Because human nature is depraved, Fundamentalists, then and now, simply do not trust human reason. Morris typifies later Fundamentalist belief by assuring his readers that "ungodly" human reason is subjective, unreliable, and prone to poor judgement. For Morris, one has only two possibilities. One can take on a naïve, unquestioning faith, or one can employ human reason, which, according to Morris, leads only to "a miscellaneous aggregation of existential insights and relativistic irrelevancies" (Morris 1971, p. 8).

Packer outlines a similar position. He argues that depraved human nature makes human reason intrinsically inimical to Christian faith. Instead of relying on subjective philosophy, Packer argues that "the logic of faith" requires that the objective propositions of the Bible should always correct secular opinion. He posits reason only as a villainous abuse of the mind that seeks to rewrite the Bible into line with secular views. He believes that human reason's fallen character renders it a rationalistic effort that perverts Christian faith by bringing it into line with subjectivist assumptions (Packer [1958] 1992, p. 130).

Moreover, subjective thinking is so anathema to Fundamentalism that Packer proposes that "Christian reason" will not raise critical questions of the Bible's historical truth or otherwise. Such questions would be an act of unbelief. For Packer, it is quite faithless to assume that we can treat Scripture with the same critical rigor with which we approach other documents and writings. Marsden notes that this reason is why Fundamentalists took on their "naïve realist" view of Scripture and demonised those who disagreed with them. That is, Fundamentalists believed that their subjectivism had infected them with an anti-Godly bias (Marsden 2022, pp. 68–69).

So, as Marsden (2022, p. 22) notes, most traditional Evangelicals were so tied to the ideals of objective science and objective religion that they had no choice but to take either one or the other, rather than the Enlightenment reconciliation in which subjectivism was more entrenched. Thus, when Fundamentalism emerged from conservative Evangelicalism, it embraced a radical philosophy of objectivity and utterly rejected human subjectivity.

It is worth noting that Fundamentalism has not been alone in such a push against subjectivity. From the Catholic side, Bernard Lonergan wrote of a Catholicism that was so fixated on the objectivity of truth as to leave out human subjects and their needs (Lonergan 2016, pp. 61–62). His work in accounting for the subject is important with regard to Fundamentalism. Lonergan asks if truth is "so objective as to get along without minds", or whether objectivity is the fruit of authentic subjectivity. Ultimately, he answers that "... we see objectivity is conceived as the fruit of authentic subjectivity, and to be genuinely in love with God is the very height of authentic subjectivity" (Lonergan 2004, p. 204). In case Lonergan's point is misunderstood, it does not mean that there are no realities independent of the mind. That is, Lonergan does not mean that there is no objective truth. Instead, it means that the way that objective truth is understood and known relies upon the knowing activities of an active subject. That is, when knowers act with authentic subjectivity, they come to understand and affirm that which is objectively real.

Against that vision, some Catholics, as well as Fundamentalists, have not treated the subject in a naïve or neutral way, but the subject has been rejected in an active, somewhat misanthropic way. This is because of belief in the depraved, damnable nature of human nature (Calvin 1989, II, iii.). Thus, we are able to propose a key factor in defining Fun-

damentalism. It is a movement that rejects human subjectivity for the sake of rejecting depraved human nature and for affirming the reliability of objects like the Bible.

This rejection of Enlightenment subjectivity has led to the oversight of insight that Lonergan warned against and leads easily into a false sense of certainty, in which people can be certain of concepts but lack subjective judgement of their veracity (Lonergan 2016, pp. 64–65).

This point helps to explain why Fundamentalist thinking today still leads to a certain stagnation of truth. Philosopher Thomas V Daly SJ was adamant that "truth is that which stands up to persistent questions" (Ogilvie 2019, p. 163). Yet questions do not exist independently of a human subject. They are the fruit of subjectivity. As has been seen above, the Fundamentalist mistrust of human subjectivity often leads to the neglect of the knowing subject's questions. This can leave truth static and truncated. That is, where there is a rejection of the knowing subject, there is no room for growth in the understanding of the doctrines of faith. Another perspective on this point is that by rejecting subjectivity, by focussing on "objective" propositions and concepts, and by suppressing subjective questions, Fundamentalism has fallen into a sort of ahistorical immobilism. This is not unique to Fundamentalism. As has already been noted, by treating knowledge as if it is almost independent of the human mind, Catholic theology of the past has similarly suffered a lack of development and growth. As conceptualism disregards insight, it cannot account for the development of concepts. As Lonergan explains, by themselves, concepts are immobile, but what does change is human understanding, and when understanding changes, then defining changes or develops. But such growth in understanding requires an affirmation of the human subject (Lonergan 2016, pp. 64–65).

Lastly, by rejecting the knowing subject, Fundamentalism features an inability to appreciate the self-critical conditions for knowing. Faced with the question, "What is truth?" the Fundamentalist can only look to an object like the Bible and say, "it is true". But how can we know that someone has, in their own mind, achieved truth, greater understanding, or a correct judgement of value? Answering those questions requires an awareness and affirmation of the knowing subject. The rejection of subjectivity thus explains why it is difficult to have reasonable arguments with Fundamentalists. With no appreciation of the critical conditions for knowledge and understanding, Fundamentalists are left only with the assertions of what are believed to be objective truths.

9. The Outcome: Fundamentalism's Common Sense Realism

In its formative years, Fundamentalism was marked by an anti-European, anti-German xenophobia that included a rejection of European philosophical values. Most notably, Fundamentalists identified this rejection as the rejection of "German fancies" that included speculation, hypothesis, and complex thinking (*The Fundamentals, Volume I*, Torrey and Dixon 1917, p. 12). Interesting, and a subject for further research, is that some of this hypothetical thinking that was claimed to oppose "hypothesis against fact" was associated with British scholars like Berkeley and Locke (Reid 1852, pp. 131–32; Harris 1998, p. 108). Despite this, the greater hostility of Fundamentalists was reserved for the Continent, especially Germany. At a deeper level, though, it is evident that the rejection of European philosophy was primarily concerned with a rejection of subjectivity. This was due, in large part, to Fundamentalist theology that saw human nature as depraved and inimical to God. Fundamentalists thus thought that the knowing human subject was unreliable and incapable of knowing truth.

In the place of European subjectivity in knowing, Fundamentalists put their faith in the common sense knowing of objective truths. They called this a "Baconian" method, even though, as noted above, Bacon himself may not have approved of such an identification.

By understanding Fundamentalism's origins in a rejection of European philosophy, one can explain Fundamentalism as based on a philosophy of common sense realism.

Richard McBrien describes Fundamentalism as a form of "naïve realism" (McBrien 1994, p. 1194. However, we prefer the less value-laden term "common sense realism".

Through such an approach, the typical Fundamentalist will point to a Bible text and say that all that is needed is a good look at the text and then expect that the person of faith will instantly apprehend what it means. This apprehension is what Lonergan would call the "already out there now real", something apprehended in a single action of looking at objective reality, without the subjective activities of understanding, judgement, and decision of value (Lonergan 1992, pp. 254–57).

Benjamin Warfield illustrated common sense realism very well. He argued that the Bible is an "oracular" book, in which whatever the Bible says, God says. Warfield effectively rejected the active knowing of a subject who at one time experiences data, at another time asks questions of intelligibility, and at another asks questions of truth or reality. Instead of encouraging an active subject who strives to know, Warfield described a passive mind that apprehends an objective "fact" by way of reading the Bible and yielding to the duty of the Christian to "unquestioningly receive its statements of fact, bow before its enunciations of duty, tremble before its threatenings, and rest upon its promises" (Warfield 1948, pp. 106–7). This ties in closely with Reid's Common Sense approach, in which the propositions of common sense are understood and believed simultaneously, without any intervening effort to subject the mind to critical reflection (Peterková 2015). That is, common sense philosophy is a sort of immediate knowledge or belief, without the structure of experience, understanding, and judgement to which Lonergan draws our attention (Lonergan 1988, pp. 203–21).

Fundamentalism's rejection of subjectivity thus ignored the distinction, emphasised by Aquinas and Lonergan, between questions of truth—"is it?" and intelligibility—"what is it?" Fundamentalist objectivity has been fixated on "is it?" questions of fact, but common sense realism neglects "what is it?" questions of intelligibility. That point is made clear in Bryan's statement, in which he claimed to have abandoned theological or philosophical understanding by saying that, "if we will try to live up to that which we can understand, we will be kept so busy doing good that we will not have time to worry about the things that we do not understand" (Marsden 2022, p. 169).

To put this into other words, Fundamentalism's anti-subjective common sense realism has not distinguished between judgement and understanding. By neglecting the distinctiveness of understanding, Fundamentalists have neglected intelligibility. But by also neglecting distinct judgement, they have missed out on vital self-criticism. As Meyer notes, good judgement is neither universal nor commonplace. The heart of the hermeneutic problem is in the need to identify and bring to realisation those factors in oneself that facilitate insight and good judgement (Meyer 1989, p. 81). By ignoring the subjective element of judgement, which is personal and subjective, we understand, then, why modern Fundamentalists often reject critical judgement in favour of assertion based on authority.

The Fundamentalist rejection of the subjectivity emphasised in European philosophy, and the belief that human reason is depraved, illustrated the acknowledgement made by later Fundamentalist leaders Dobson and Hindson, that there is often "little capacity for self-criticism" within Fundamentalism (Dobson et al. 1986, p. 149).

This means that, if one may paraphrase Lonergan, common sense realism means that truth for the Fundamentalist is so objective as to persist without human minds. On the one hand, Fundamentalists believe that true believers do not need critical scholarship. Packer tells us that with the assistance of God's spirit, everyone, whether educated or not, will come to the knowledge that God wants them to acquire (Packer 1993, p. 123). Again, this is because the emphasis in Fundamentalism is not on the actively knowing human subject but upon the known object that one is meant to apprehend simply and without active thinking.

To conclude, McBrien seems correct in labelling Fundamentalism as a form of "naive realism" (McBrien 1994, p. 1194). Fundamentalist thinking is incursive, rather than discursive. It does not distinguish, or even analyse, understanding and judgement. Tied to its rejection of the abilities of the human person, Fundamentalist common sense realism involves a "*reality projection*", which includes essence projection. I would caution again, though, that "naïve realism" is a term that is easily misunderstood, though, because those

unfamiliar with technical philosophy believe that the word "naïve" implies stupidity. So, even though the term is accurate, its pejorative connotations mean that "common sense realism" should be the preferred term. It explains that through this sort of approach to knowing, all one does in the knowing process is to take a look at something. It is opposed to "critical realism", or discursive knowledge, as described by Lonergan (1988, pp. 214–15). That is, while common sense realism considers knowing to be a single act, like looking, critical realism holds that human knowing is a compound of different activities, namely, perceiving or experiencing something; asking questions about, or inquiring into, the object; coming to an understanding of that thing; asking the critical question, "is my understanding correct?"; and passing judgement on the correctness or falsehood of one's understanding.

Fundamentalism, in rejecting subjectivity and the knower's ability to experience, understand, and judge, regards knowing as a single act of confrontation with God's word. A Biblical Fundamentalist will point to the Bible text and say that all that is needed is a good look at the text and the person of faith will apprehend what it means (McBrien 1994, p. 1194). In other words, Fundamentalist realism proposes that we can know objects directly by observing facts and without the interference of ideas, speculations, or hypotheses (Marsden 2022, pp. 15–16, 21).

10. Conclusions

The subjectivity recognised by European philosophy, especially through the work of Kant, was rejected by early Fundamentalist thinkers. This rejection has continued into the present, with Fundamentalists holding to a radical objectivity of knowledge. That is, the role of the knowing subject has been rejected in favour of the objectively known. For Fundamentalists, objective truth has been known through a simple encounter of common sense with facts or propositions. Those philosophical values were taken from the Common Sense philosophy of Thomas Reid and given the label of "Baconian" thinking, even though, as pointed out above, it is possible to question such an identification with Bacon's method. Having said that, it is important to note that, for Reid, belief always finds its objects in propositions. Moreover, common sense philosophy relies on self-evident propositions that can be known by every person with common sense (Peterková 2015). This common sense philosophy thus rejected the role of the active subject in human knowing, rejected the distinction of understanding and judgement, and also laid the ground for Fundamentalism's later emphasis on revelation as propositional.

By rejecting the subject, early Fundamentalism opened itself to the radical objectivist position in which God's objective truth is contrasted (and held to be in conflict) with the subjective human mind. That is, Fundamentalism has valued the radical objectivity of the known while it has rejected the subjectivity of the knower.

This rejection was, in significant part, due to the anti-German sentiment highlighted in this article. It also aligned well with the theological misanthropy and emphasis on propositional revelation found in later Fundamentalism. As Packer claims, when humans are left to work out what the actions of God mean, they inevitably get it wrong (Packer [1958] 1992, pp. 91–93). Such a neo-Calvinist despair of depraved human nature's ability to work out what God may have meant in the Scriptures thus highlights the common sense approach and Fundamentalists' insistence that revelation is propositional and, thus, that when one reads Scripture, one must read the Bible not just to access God's revealing works, but one must find God's revealing propositions.

This writer would argue that, by rejecting subjectivity, Fundamentalists can yield to the oversight of insight against which Lonergan warned us (Lonergan 2016, pp. 64–65). That is, by finding it easy to be certain of concepts, and by emphasising propositional revelation and doctrinal certainty, Fundamentalists can neglect the intervening act that comes from active understanding. Fundamentalism can thus result in a form of conceptualism, in which there is a strong affirmation of concepts and a sceptical disregard for active, insightful understanding insights.

It would be an oversimplification to state that the rejection of European philosophy was the only factor in the formation of Fundamentalist thinking. However, it was a key element in early Fundamentalist thought, and it was pivotal in the emergence of Fundamentalism's common sense realism, which we have explained in this article. Among other insights that one can gain from further research, one trusts that this article helps to explain why early Fundamentalism found much more success in the Anglo-American world than in cultures more aligned with Europe.

For further research, it would also be interesting to compare the North American experience with that of Europe. One would especially have in mind the Swiss theologian Louis Gaussen, some of whose work seems to align very much with the Fundamentalism that emerged in North America. He argued that the words of Scripture themselves were inspired, not only the general message, and so they did not contain error (Gaussen 1842, pp. 209–10). He rejected science where it did not support Christian faith, and he rejected "vain hypotheses". Yet Gaussen shows a key difference between the European thinking and the North American thinking that led to the formation of Fundamentalism. While American scholars like Warfield believed that the inspiration of Scripture could be proven by induction and that inerrancy extended into factual accuracy, Gaussen gave more credibility to the evidence provided by experience. That is, he believed that faith would provide the necessary assurance for believers who had difficulties with Biblical texts (Harris 1998, pp. 124–26). Gaussen thus had more confidence in the faith and knowing abilities of the human subject. On the subject of efficacious grace, he drew a parallel with the inspiration of Scripture, where in some ways humans are active, and in other ways they are entirely active. In some ways, God does everything, but at the same time, humans do all (Gaussen 1842, p. 37). We see that such European "proto-fundamentalism" differs from what emerged in North America. The Americans did not share the European confidence in human abilities, and, in fact, human abilities were condemned by the Americans. At the same time, the Americans held to an extrinsic theology of grace, which opposes grace with nature. The extent to which this extrinsic theology of grace came from Calvin, whether it was faithful to Calvin, and its consequences are beyond the range of this paper but will be important questions for further research.

In addition, we aim to further research the influence of common sense philosophy on the Fundamentalist philosophy of science. Harris makes the point that common sense philosophy was used to fight "Romantic theories of development", which were related to Hegel (Harris 1998, p. 130). In future work being undertaken by this author, it will be interesting to see how this anti-development approach of Fundamentalism, which had some of its origins in opposing Romantic philosophy, came to be weaponised in the fight against Darwinism.

More productive research could focus on what Reid and the common sense philosophers actually wrote, as opposed to the general ideas that Fundamentalists took from them. It seems that Fundamentalists appropriated from Reid a hostility towards idealist philosophies, but they did not sufficiently appreciate what he was for, so more study needs to be done. The same goes for Bacon. Fundamentalists invoked him against hypotheses and speculation, yet in their opposition to modern science, they seemed just as guilty as the medieval scholastics who were accused by Bacon of having their wits confined to certain written texts and insufficiently open to observation of the world (Bacon 1973, 1n5/p. 26; Ogilvie 2001, pp. 30–31).

Finally, it is hoped that this article will prompt further research on the analogous approaches to the knowing subject in Fundamentalism and Catholicism. While the article has focussed on the early Fundamentalist philosophical values that rejected the knowing subject, Catholicism has not been immune from similar ideas about knowing. Indeed, Bernard Lonergan argued that Catholic scholars of the past had treated truth as being "so objective as to get along without minds", and he wrote of a Catholicism that so insisted on the objectivity of truth as to leave out human subjects and their needs (Lonergan 2004, p. 204; Lonergan 2016, pp. 61–62). Despite the disdain shown by some Catholics

for Fundamentalism, it appears that the intellectual histories of each may have more in common that the other suspects. One trusts that this may be the source of further research and indeed dialogue between Fundamentalists and Catholics.

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