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Wordtrade Reviews: Tragic Visions of Body & Soul

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VISIONS AND FACES OF THE TRAGIC: THE MIMESIS OF TRAGEDY AND THE FOLLY OF SALVATION IN EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE by Paul M. Blowers [Oxford University Press, 9780198854104]

Despite the pervasive early Christian repudiation of pagan theatrical art, especially prior to Constantine, this monograph demonstrates the increasing attention of late-ancient Christian authors to the genre of tragedy as a basis to explore the complexities of human finitude, suffering, and mortality in relation to the wisdom, justice, and providence of God. The book argues that various Christian writers, particularly in the post-Constantinian era, were keenly devoted to the mimesis, or imaginative re-presentation, of the tragic dimension of creaturely existence more than with simply mimicking the poetics of the classical tragedians. It analyzes a whole array of hermeneutical, literary, and rhetorical manifestations of "tragical mimesis" in early Christian writing, which, capitalizing on the elements of tragedy already perceptible in biblical revelation, aspired to deepen and edify Christian engagement with multiform evil and with the extreme vicissitudes of historical existence. Christian tragical mimetics included not only interpreting (and often amplifying) the Bible's own tragedies for contemporary audiences, but also developing models of the Christian self as a tragic self, revamping the Christian moral conscience as a tragical conscience, and cultivating a distinctively Christian tragical pathos. The study culminates in an extended consideration of the theological intelligence and accountability of "tragical vision" and tragical mimesis in early Christianity, and the unique role of the theological virtue of hope in its repertoire of tragical emotions.

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Tragical Vision in Early Christian Literature

In introducing this book, I am quite intentionally projecting the image of excavation. Early Christians did not normally compose tragedies; nor did they engage in dramatic theory; nor in general did they studiously attend to the history of Greek and Roman tragedy, although some erudite patristic writers, like Clement of Alexandria and Gregory Nazianzen, enjoyed extensive knowledge of that poetic tradition. At the popular level, we know that Christian leaders from early on discouraged the faithful

from attending theatre of all sorts and for all sorts of reasons. These and other factors lie behind the judgment of some more recent philosophers and literary critics, most notably George Steiner, that Christianity, with its message of redemption from suffering and of transcending the world, is endemically anti-tragic, and that it has decisively contributed to the attrition of the genre in modern Western culture.

This judgment cannot be final. In the first place, it is premature on historical grounds, for there were, in fact, some early Christian works of tragedy, however scarce, just as in the Hellenistic-Jewish tradition there was at least one such work, the intriguing Exagôgê, a tragedy on the Israelite Exodus in five acts by an Alexandrian Jew named Ezekiel (second century BCE). The first known but long-lost writings to qualify as Christian tragedy belong to Apollinaris the Elder of Syria in the fourth century, father of the better known and controversial bishop Apollinaris of Laodicea. According to the Church historian Socrates, he sought to defy the Emperor Julian's ban (362 CE) on Christians studying classical literature. He went on the offensive and first composed a treatise of grammar for Christian consumption. He further "transferred into heroic verse all the Books of Moses along with all Old Testament books qualifying as history, putting the texts into dactylic meter while also reworking them in the form of dramatic tragedy"—all in a campaign to insure that no genre of Greek literature would be left unclaimed by Christianity. Socrates concluded that this literary project was ultimately in vain, providentially so. But the Christian historian Sozomen, reporting the same, adds the detail that Apollinaris the Elder

> …used his tremendous learning and ingenuity to compose a heroic epic on the antiquities of the Hebrews up until the reign of Saul, in place of Homer's poem. He divided the entire work into twenty-four parts, denominating each part by a letter of the Greek alphabet, according to the number and order of the letters. He also produced comedies imitating those of Menander, tragedies like those of Euripides, and lyric like Pindar's.

Sozomen, far more optimistically than Socrates, further purports here that these compositions could genuinely have competed for status had it not been for the longstanding favoritism accorded the original pagan classics. In addition, the medieval Byzantine scholar-bishop Eustathius of Thessalonica (twelfth century) attributes a verse tragedy to the earlier monastic theologian John Damascene in the eighth century:

> He did not just leave pages of regular poetry, but also wrote plays. We know this at first-hand, having come across his play, written on the virtues of the blessed and chaste Susanna noted in the margins as being the work of John Mansur [Damascene]…The play is entirely Euripidean in style. Susanna genealogises herself and bewails that she fell into such great evil and violence within the garden. Then having compared the place to the garden in which the first mother (p.3) [Eve] was deceived by the devil, she sweetly says that "the serpent, the architect of all evil, has sent me forth to wander like a second Eve."

But Apollinaris's and John's works being lost, the first extant writing to qualify as an authentically Christian tragedy is the Christus patiens, a cento of Euripidean verse on the passion of Christ from the middle Byzantine period, probably no earlier than the twelfth century albeit erroneously ascribed to Gregory Nazianzen in the fourth.

My premise for this book, meanwhile, is that, absent well-defined mythopoeic patterns and profuse textual specimens of Christian tragedy, the makings of tragical interpretation of human existence are sometimes overt but also frequently latent, implicit, or oblique in patristic literature, just as they are in

the New Testament; and they are spread broadly across a variety of genres, writers, and contexts. I want to argue that "the tragic"—which has long eluded hard and fast definitions—loomed larger in early Christian imagination than has heretofore been recognized and was not dependent for this purely on reminiscences of Greco-Roman tragedy. Christian interpretations of the tragic dimension of human life, moreover, transcended any urge to create a whole genre of Christian tragedy such as might displace pagan tragedy. What we have, I hope to show, is a dialectical response from Christian thinkers that developed over a very long period. On the one hand, some of them expressed hermeneutical confidence that sacred revelation already held its own keys to humanity's tragic condition, and that the Bible at times played up that tragic state of things precisely in order to amplify the power of the gospel to bring salvific clarity, resolution, and hope to the world. Greco-Roman tragedy, by their account, languished in its own attachments to polytheistic delusion and hopelessness, and made a mockery of whatever notions of divine providence and justice were available from pagan philosophy. On the other hand, Christian writers were keenly aware of the longstanding cultural potency of tragedy as an artistic form, and of the debate as to whether the tragedians' representation of the tragic could have its own philosophical force. It was out of the question completely to ignore this legacy in expounding tragic features in the redemptive drama sustaining Christian faith. Even if Apollinaris the Elder's production of Christian tragedy and comedy may have been exceptional, and largely aimed at defying the pretensions of the Emperor Julian, it signals an interest in emulating pagan sources as well as Scripture itself in order to generate new Christian literary "classics" that could hold their own against older pagan ones.

Understanding this emulative process entails more than simply collating patristic literary citations of (and allusions to) the pagan tragedies or tracking down specific reactions of Christian writers to tragical drama. Some valuable scholarly work has already been done along those lines, but more to the initial purposes of my investigation is how the intellectual reception and criticism of tragical art in Greco-Roman culture affected—both negatively and positively—the appropriation, vetting, and reworking of tragical poetics in ancient Christian literature. The considerable debate over the cultural value and utility of tragedy within pagan philosophy, beginning with the divergent perspectives of Plato and Aristotle, provided a range of criticism to which Christian writers were all too willing to add their own philosophical analysis while also exploiting whatever valid insight they could glean from classical tragedy. In what follows, it will nevertheless become clear that I am writing as a historical theologian, not as a classicist or a cultural historian of the late-ancient Mediterranean world. My principal object is the visions and faces of the tragic in early Christian sources as viewed through a theological rather than a cultural-historical or literary-critical lens, though my historical-theological interpretation will still entail attention to the aesthetic and the dramatic dimensions of the art of theology.

"Tragedy" (τραγῳδία; tragoedia) is notoriously vexing in its historical, artistic, and colloquial usages,9 so I must clarify terminology and frames of reference for this study. Scholars and historians of classical tragedy of course have their own definitions and usages. Three in particular are significant in the background of my analysis. First is the perceived universal reality of the tragic, an inexorable ontological condition bound up with human finitude, mutability, instability, passibility, and mortality—the tip of an interpretive iceberg as old as tragedy itself and perduring for centuries. Second is tragedy proper, the artistic dramatization of the tragic which originally derives from the ancient Greek cult of Dionysus, and which has in its sights to move, uproot, or illuminate its spectators, individually or communally, by putting human identity and destiny into fundamental moral or religious question. Third is tragical vision,

which first tries to recover the perspective of a tragedy's author and lead characters before adding new perspectives in the ongoing interpretive reception of classical works of tragedy.

Despite the absence of a developed genre of tragedy in early Christianity, elements of the above distinctions are still heuristically helpful in studying relevant Christian writings. We shall see that the early Christian authors under discussion were not dogmatic in fixing a comprehensive definition of the tragic. Many of them nonetheless presupposed an overridingly tragic ontological condition of the human race binding its primordial past to its present and future, although the meanings and implications of that condition were sure to differ greatly not only between pagan and Christian writers but among Christian writers. For many of the latter, "the tragic" evoked conditions and eventualities that radically tested believers' sense of security, whether the security of their material existence itself or the security bequeathed by inherited theological canons respecting divine providence and goodness.

As for tragedy itself as an artistic or poetic form, we must recognize that already in Roman literary culture before the rise of Christianity, a tragedy could be scripted for recitation and interpretation without necessarily ever being staged and performed theatrically. Christian writers were obviously free, in their turn, to push the literary and rhetorical envelope of what a tragical "script" and "audience" might look like. They gained inspiration from within the Bible, where they discerned, not tragedies in the strictest artistic sense, but narratives peculiarly shaped to powerful dramatic effect, provocative narratives that seemed quite intentionally to problematize the "plot" of the economy of salvation and to resist premature encapsulations of that plot. Christian writers thoroughly exploited what I shall be calling tragical mimesis, the poetic enterprise of dramatizing humanity's tragic state of being by recalling its shameful legacies, and by playing up the constrained and degraded human condition while projecting still its possibilities and opportunities—all with a view to prompting an upheaval, a growth in insight, or a transformed pathos on their reader/audience's part. In this connection, throughout my study, I want to be clear that early Christian tragical mimesis was foremost a representing of the tragic itself, not a slavish imitation of the classical tragedians who depicted the tragic on their own terms. Also, for clarity and consistency, I am and will be using the adjective "tragical," even if archaic, specifically in reference to mimesis and interpretation of the tragic, thus reserving "tragic" for the objectified phenomena (events, plot, persons) being dramatized or envisioned. The language is slippery, I confess, as some will still want to say that tragedy of its very nature cheats the line between mimesis and reality. Today we habitually call cataclysmic human events "tragedies" or "tragic" to define rather than just represent them.

Tragical vision in early Christian sources also needs to be scrutinized and nuanced, as it will constitute an important theme in the coming chapters. Since, for the Christian writers whom we will be discussing, the relevant subject matter was the tragic itself and not just the poetic representation of the tragic (whether the poet be a classical tragedian, the inspired author of a tragic narrative in Scripture, or a Christian writer or preacher), I will be suggesting that early Christian tragical vision was essentially contemplative, integrating interpretation, intuition, and imagination alike. It involved both logos—the exposition of divine wisdom and justice, created nature, evil, and human destiny in considering what is genuinely tragic in the world—and a Christian mythos conducing believers to behold, in the world's "subjection to futility" (Rom. 8:20), the severity and gratuity of divine mercy and the depth of divine identification with the "groaning" creation (Rom. 8:22). The impact of tragical mimesis, along Christian lines, would ultimately be judged by whether an audience could "see" this tragical vision contemplatively, and so also process that vision intellectually, emotionally, performatively, and most importantly

salvifically. Tragical vision perceived the sublime “folly” of salvation elicited in some of the Bible’s more problematic and less straightforwardly edifying narratives, and in Christians’ ongoing experience of a world not yet fully rescued from evil and death by Jesus Christ.

In later chapters, then, I will exhibit how Christian authors of late antiquity cultivated this tragic mythos and vision, in various and flexible literary forms: sermons and orations, biblical commentaries, poetry and hymnody, hagiography, autobiography, and theological treatises. Inculcating and training Christian tragical vision, I will propose, was a matter of stretching the moral imagination and giving believers the heightened spiritual senses to see—and therewith to continue to enact—the cosmic drama of salvation in which they, as Christ’s ecclesial embodiment in the world, were now the principal dramatis personae. It was not enough, however, simply to hold up tragic heroes from the Bible, or from martyrological and hagiographical tradition, and encourage believers to imitate their venerable examples. It was imperative, at the level of Christian moral psychology and spiritual anthropology, to shape an objective model of the “tragic self” to which all Christians might aspire, a self whose faculties were heightened both by and for the experience of suffering, a self prudentially aware of the divine providence operative beneath the seeming caprice of evil and the randomness of suffering in the world. It was necessary, I will further argue, to reform the Christian moral conscience by providing it a tragical frame of reference, and to foster emotions morally beneficial to Christians in their encounter with the depths of human sin and with the miseries relentlessly persisting in the world that Jesus Christ came to transfigure. Central to this emotional repertoire would be the “re-scripting” of the old tragic pity as Christian mercy and empathy; but it would also include godly sorrow and melancholia, deep compunction, and an appropriately chastened hope, all as enriching tragical vision.

Before turning in earnest to the manifestations of tragical mimesis in patristic literature, however, we must move well back into the pre-Christian era to examine, even if relatively briefly, the roots, development, and functions of tragical poetics within the Greek and more immediate Roman past. For to the extent that they fostered a tragical vision of the world at all, early Christian authors were inevitably caught up in a much larger history of the literary and dramatic forms of tragedy, which has for centuries proven its resilience and its capacity for variation and reinvention. Christianity was the latecomer to a cultural conversation that had been going on for six centuries.

Paths into Christian Tragical Mimesis

In the chapters ahead, I look to demonstrate how ancient Christian authors constructively but critically coopted the power of drama and especially of tragical mimesis for the edification of their Christian audiences. For them, Christian preaching, worship, and literary culture warranted new dramatic “scripts” that would induce the faithful to imagine the world through a (p.32) uniquely Christian tragical lens, with appropriate deference to acquired Christian teaching on providence, justice, evil, human free will, and the theological virtue of hope. These new scripts would stage the salutary formation of the Christian moral self, abundantly employing positive and negative exempla. Because, for these writers and preachers, the Bible remained the privileged script, bearing in its own complexity the primary historical and trans-historical “reality” for all Christian mimesis (rhetorical, ritual, ascetical, etc.), my next two chapters focus on illustrative cases wherein patristic exegetes discerned tragic characters and themes within Scripture, in narratives that seemed to beg for tragical interpretation. What I will call the dramatic (or better “theodramatic”) reading of biblical narratives in certain interpreters supported these explorations of tragical perspectives within Scripture itself.

Chapter 4 takes an introspective turn, moving more directly into tragical mimesis as developed by select Christian writers who envisioned themselves and their life circumstances in a tragic light. I will examine three classic cases of Christian authors who consciously articulated profiles of the tragic Christian self: Gregory Nazianzen, John Chrysostom, and Augustine. I will show how these highly literate and rhetorically sophisticated writers used their own life experience and highly theologically nuanced self-awareness to negotiate between tragical and providential perspectives on human existence. I will argue that their autobiographical approaches simultaneously constituted a quasi-poetical and often paradoxical form of theodicy, since each was keen on vindicating the providence, justice, and mercy of God but also on duly representing the severe vagaries and vicissitudes of life in the flesh. Each one, moreover, sought to instruct other Christians in what it means, existentially, to live in hope amid the subjugation of creation to "vanity" (Rom. 8:20–1).

In contrast with Chapter 4, Chapter 5 will take an extrospective turn, examining how early Christian authors engaged in tragical mimesis in identifying and depicting tragic "faces and bodies" in the social and cultural foreground of the Church, especially for purposes of prompting compassionate and eleemosynary responses from their audiences, but also, more basically, for cultivating what I shall call a Christian "tragical conscience." The forming of such a conscience was a discipline of seeing the social "other" differently, contemplatively, in sustained mindfulness that all human creatures—Christian and non-Christian alike—are implicated in the same cosmic tragedy, the same vanity of creation, while being potential beneficiaries of the same grace and the same hope. We will investigate how this new seeing was tested on specific social groups within the spheres and horizons of Christian experience.

In Chapter 6 I will endeavor to show that this tragical conscience, as projected by early Christian theologians and moralists, was both "cleansed" and enriched through the instilling of a distinct Christian tragical pathos, a repertoire of well-refined emotions that included but went beyond the classical (p.33) tragical emotions of pity and fear. I draw here upon Martha Nussbaum's analysis of the "moral intelligence" of emotions in Hellenistic philosophy, and on Robert Kaster's identification of the "narrative scripts" of various powerful emotions in Greco-Roman moral culture. Both are extremely helpful for explaining how early Christian authors targeted specific emotions, in their cognitive and not just affective dimensions, as instrumental in edifying and extending a Christian's moral vision. We shall explore how these authors not only "re-scripted" the classic tragical emotions of fear and pity but also enlisted other emotions (especially grief in its various forms) to this same end.

Chapter 7 will present some summary reflections on the distinctly theological scope of early Christian tragical vision and mimesis. I will return here to certain themes already touched on in earlier chapters, but my purpose will not be to force some final verdict on the compatibility of Christianity and tragedy but rather to set out, in greater detail, the theological significance of tragical vision and mimesis and their accountability to normative Christian teachings on divine wisdom, providence, and justice, the character of evil, human freedom, and related doctrinal principles. Along the way, I will bring my findings into a preliminary sort of conversation with contemporary theologians who have significantly advanced or debated the role of tragical vision as an avenue of interpreting sacred revelation and fortifying Christian faith. <>

Essay: Hope and the Christian Tragical Pathos

Hope and the Christian Tragical Pathos picks up on a problem running throughout the earlier chapters, that of the fundamental compatibility of Christianity and tragedy, and the claims of some critics (especially George Steiner) that they are utterly incompatible because of the Christian gospel's ebullient hope of transcending tragic suffering. Various early Christian theologians, however, being fully aware of pagan philosophy's largely negative assessment of the moral utility of hope, touted hope as an altogether virtuous emotion if refined by sobriety and realism about the compromised state of human existence. Hope thus qualified not only as a "theological virtue" alongside faith and love but as a tragical emotion in its own right, serving to guard against spiritual or eschatological triumphalism on the one hand, and deep despair over existential tragedy on the other.

As I bring this book to a close, it should be quite clear that I have offered nothing approaching a final verdict on the legitimacy of tragical mimesis and tragical vision in the service of Christian faith, though my sentiments in their favor have doubtless been betrayed. Certainly there is no historic consensus here on which to draw, and my assumption is that debate over it will continue to erupt. Just as there are those contemporary theologians, like David Bentley Hart1 and John Milbank, who have been sharply critical of the usefulness of tragedy for Christian theology, there were early Christian authors, especially prior to Constantine but after him as well, who, for very different reasons (namely, the perception of residual moral decadence), never fathomed a theological negotiation, let alone appropriation, of the language, themes, or images of classical tragedy. Where these ancient and modern critics might have agreed is in ascertaining that tragedy is at last about a hopelessness utterly foreign to the Christian gospel.

On the other hand, most of those Christian thinkers, ancient and modern, who have encouraged or exercised tragical vision for theological (including ethical, pastoral, catechetical, and liturgical and devotional) purposes are generally agreed that tragedy's dead-ends must ultimately be penultimate. Christian eschatology, both as "realized" in the world through Jesus Christ and as "futuristic" in its expectation of a fully transformed creation, will not allow faith to be indefinitely or permanently stranded in an epistemological and ontological cul-de-sac. Imaginatively and contemplatively visiting that cul-de-sac, not alone but with other believers, and for the sake of others (believers and non-believers alike) is nonetheless indispensable to the Christian witness in the world. To borrow an apt statement of Ben Quash (himself citing Paul Janz), tragical vision serves as:

> …a propaedeutic to a properly theological orientation to transcendence. And the key thing here is that this tragedy-moved orientation to real transcendence returns us more fully to history. The love of God is not some timeless, ultimate coherence theory, not a supremely authoritative resolution, not "the grandest, all embracing holism." All of these are fundamentally ahistorical notions: leaps out of history to a fictive God's-eye view. But "the 'referent' we seek for theological discourse will be found fundamentally nowhere else than in the empirical history of God-with us."

For early Christian tragical visionaries, this "propaedeutic" included, not a testing of divine providence, wisdom, and justice—trust in which was a matter of essential religious conviction—but instead a strong tempering of Christian hope through confrontation with the manifold and ever-deadening effects of evil and moral chaos. I wish to propose that we are justified in speaking of hope as a Christian tragical emotion in its own right, an emotion cleansed, trained, even clarified through the experience of the

tragic, albeit empty apart from its fellow and co-inherent "theological virtues" of faith and love (1 Cor. 13:13). *Proinde nec amor sine spe est nec sine amore spes, nec utrumque sine fide.*

But before I consider whether hope might hold such a place in the early Christian tragical pathos, let me say a brief word about hope's rather dismal pedigree in Greco-Roman moral philosophy, for here we can see, through comparison, just how much the stakes were raised for early Christian authors seeking to elevate hope as at all morally useful or virtuous. Albrecht Dihle puts it bluntly: "For all Hellenistic philosophy, right knowledge of the structure of the world is the sole basis of right action, which should not rely on hopes, expectations, or presumptions." Or as Douglas Cairns states of ancient Greek evaluations of hope, "It can sustain or nourish you; it can be sweet and warm, or be your friend in adversity. But it can delude you when there is no realistic expectation of success; it can float off, miss the target, or lead you into inaction or excess; and the gulf between aim and outcome might feel like falling from a great height." Much like the fear of death, irrational hope for or in the future was a set-up for self-delusion and potentially disabling. "Cease to hope…and you will cease to fear," writes Seneca. Indeed for Stoics, the most astute analysts of human emotion in Greco-Roman antiquity, hope had a place, but not very much of one. It was a thoroughly expendable emotion, a waste of psychological time for the philosophical sage, but perhaps useful for the novice, in the form of a kind of aspiration to virtue amid suffering that fully displaces the fear of future death and allows one justifiably to anticipate a future joy simply in being able to reflect back on those sufferings as past. Epicurus similarly decried the futility of investing in fear of death or in future hope. And while Stoics considered future-oriented "caution" as one of the eupatheiai, Epicurus, who wrote wills, seems by this to have conceded that planning for the future, in expectation of contingencies after death, was rational. There was absolutely no room, however, for hope of a beatific afterlife, which is why some New Testament scholars believe that Paul especially had Epicureans in mind when he spoke of "those who have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13).

Plato seems to have been one of the few ancient philosophers who found some legitimacy in reasoned hope of future enjoyable states, and meanwhile hope's role in Greco-Roman religion was overall quite mixed. But patristic theologians began, of course, with the apostolic injunctions concerning the hope grounded in the work of Jesus Christ. And they never looked back. Paul may well have had the philosophers' pejorative assessment of hope in mind when he avowed that Christian hope does not put one to shame (Rom. 5:5). Clement of Alexandria, who also doubtless knew the earlier philosophical disparagements of hope, early on mounts a strong apologia of hope as the very life-blood of Christian faith, notably hope refined through suffering (cf. Rom. 5:3–5). Clement recruits Plato from the classical heritage in support of his view that, for the Christian gnostic, hope aspires to the unseen, and to final assimilation to God which is the goal of all divine paideia.

Especially striking, however, is Clement's appeal to the tragedians to demonstrate that hope is annealed precisely by storms and stresses. From an anonymous tragedy he quotes a character—a woman "acting manly")—who balks at a threat of torture, as well as Sophocles's Antigone defiantly standing up to Creon that his ban on burying her brother Polynices was neither of Zeus's doing nor in keeping with higher Justice.21 Clement quotes a fragment from Aeschylus that the glory begotten of hardship is from the gods.22 He furthermore expresses pleasant surprise that Euripides, normally a witness to the ancient Greeks' conviction that events happen by "irrational necessity", has a character in his Hypsipyle claiming that toils are inevitable but that mortals can (freely) stand up to necessity. Clement perceives that, at the end of the day, tragedy is about a testing both of freedom and of hope. Donald MacKinnon

more recently has much the same impression, though even stronger, when he remarks of the classical tragedians: "No determinist could write an effective tragedy, could achieve the sort of deep exploration of responsibility, justice, guilt, that we find for instance in Electra or in Hamlet. Both Sophocles and Shakespeare take for granted, even if they do not explicitly admit the fact, the reality of a 'freedom of open possibilities.'"

In point of fact, while classical tragedy is often purported to be obsessed with the most egregiously hopeless of circumstances (and Steiner's "absolute tragedy" has no place for hope other than as a "contamination"), hope still intrudes itself into the intricate plots of many a tragic drama—even if it is only dashed hope or a more promising eventuality that never materializes. Euripides's Heracles, for example, masterfully teases its audience with a surging hope, only to bring it round again to despair. Heracles (Hercules), a son of Zeus, performs duties in the Underworld and then returns in hopes of rescuing his equally hopeful wife and children from the illegitimate Theban King Lycus, who has condemned them to die. Amphitryon, husband of Heracles's mother, reminds the hero's wife, Megara, that "The bravest man is he who always puts his trust in hope. To surrender to helplessness is the mark of a coward." In a horrifying reversal, however, Zeus's wife Hera has a spell of madness cast on Heracles, who in turn unknowingly murders his wife and children. When Heracles regains his wits and Amphitryon reveals to him what he has done, his *anagnôrisis* is bitter and he falls into lamentation and thoughts of suicide. The Athenian king Theseus, whom Heracles had freed from Hades, arrives on the scene and seeks to console him, insisting that their bond of friendship overcomes any fear of being tainted by one who murdered his own family. Theseus's consolations and his promise to give Heracles a home and restore his good repute at last resurrect hope for the stricken hero. To the merciful relief of the audience, hope has not been finally annihilated, even by the gods!

This scenario is hardly paradigmatic for Greek and Roman tragedy, but it does betray how the dialectic of hope and despair had tremendous capacity to move an audience. By contrast, this dialectic is far closer to being paradigmatic in early Christian tragical mimetics. It is exploited to the fullest in many cases, insofar as the saving gospel is understood to be about the Creator, in a show of unfathomable love, relentlessly seizing hope from the jaws of despair as he also produces a new creation out of the attrition of the present one. There are atypical exceptions, of course, as with Saul and Judas Iscariot, whose self-destruction and fall into despair, for many early Christian interpreters, seemed to have no redeemability, no hope delayed. But some of those same interpreters, together with the Septuagint translators before them, strained to read Cain's end redemptively, to hold out hope for his reconciliation with God. Origen even refused to shut the door finally and absolutely on Judas Iscariot. In some instances the hope was very much encrypted, as in Job's struggle to know the meaning of his travails but also to press beyond the hackneyed ideas of hope-amid-suffering offered him by his three comforters. In other instances the hope was eschatologically deferred, as with the Holy Innocents and John the Baptist, all of them protomartyrs destined to a glorious reward. In still other instances, typological or allegorical exposition became expedient to wrestle hope from despair, as when Augustine strained to interpret the wretched Jephthah as a Christ-figure.

The pattern holds as well for the three "tragic selves" whom we profiled in Chapter 4. Gregory Nazianzen pulled out all sorts of rhetorical and dramatic stops in his autobiographical writing in order to engross audiences in his unfolding personal tragedy as a beleaguered ascetic, priest, and bishop. Putting the panoply of his emotions on full display, he looked to drag audiences with him to the emotional

precipice, amplifying the chaos of his career as illustrative of the instability of human existence as a whole. But it was all a controlled maneuver to divulge the deeper providence operative in his own life and in the life of the world—the "playful" Logos insinuating himself into the unpredictable fray. Hope, then, was meaningless apart from severe testing, but all hoping, Gregory clarified, was ultimately relative to Christians' "primal hope", the true knowledge and confession of the Holy Trinity. This definitive hope, along with the other theological virtues of faith and love, was simultaneously the fruit of constant striving toward God and God's pure and gracious gift.

John Chrysostom, though more concise than Gregory in his reflection on the self-designated tragedy which closed his episcopal career, and which implicated his intimate friend Olympias, attacked the threat of despair full-force. Despair might be a moral training ground, but it was also the nemesis of the healthy soul, for which John prescribed a robustly "philosophical" hope as the remedy. The Christian was called to embrace triumph over tragedy, not explore its psychological and emotional darkness—a point on which he greatly differed both from Nazianzen and from Augustine. Meanwhile, Augustine's plumbing of the tragic abyss of human existence was uniquely his own, but its pattern was still a variation of seizing hope from the jaws of despair. By his account, the soul distended or scattered through time, with its freedom undermined by original sin, had nowhere to turn save to the gracious God, the only possible hope for the self's reintegration from out of its fragmentation.

Christian hope of course takes on a whole new dimension when it is vicarious hope, hope for and on behalf of others, especially when the "other" is truly alien experientially, socially, or religiously and, worse yet, snared in a tragedy outside the Christian's immediate purview or presumably outside her zone of moral responsibility. Raising the "tragical conscience" of Christians in late antiquity was a work of expanding the reach of hope and mercy alike. When episcopal preachers like the Cappadocian Fathers, John Chrysostom, and Augustine gripped their Christian audiences with the tragic realities facing the poor and the diseased in their foreground, the hope that they projected was less for a future of socio-economic equality than for a revamped relationship between haves and have-nots, a whole new kind of reciprocity that only the Church could ultimately sponsor and nurture. Hope, as Chrysostom stressed, had to be held out even for the most morally suspect in society, epitomized by parasites and sycophants who exploited the social systems of patronage and, much like actors, sold themselves into the slavery of licentious theatrical display. Perhaps most remarkably, however, given the profound estrangement between Christians and the "unbelieving Jews" alleged to be caught in a tragedy of their own making, hope still had to be held out for the ultimate reconciliation of all children of Israel through Christ's mysterious eschatological workings.

Instilling a tragical conscience in Christians, I have argued, was not a matter of training them to stand in moral judgment of what people deserved in life, the justice or injustice of the tragedies that befell them. Rather, it entailed the stretching of a Christian's moral vision and the disciplined contemplation of solidarity with all other human beings in the common vanity to which the Creator subjected all creation in hope (Rom. 8:19–25). The tragical conscience also depended on the cultivation of a Christian tragical pathos, a whole repertoire of emotions instrumental for "cleansing" that conscience and thereby rousing Christians to virtuous responses to the tragedies that surrounded them, struck them, or implicated them. These, we observed, included the classic tragical emotions of fear and pity (transmuted by mercy), but also a gamut of emotions of grief and compunction. Hope should be added to this constellation of tragical emotions, I believe, not because it introduced some heady "optimism" amid tragedy (such as

would be a perversion of Christian hope, but because, for most of its early Christian exponents, it served to cleanse or reframe fear, and, much like properly modulated sorrow, it helped to clarify the Christian's ultimate desire, or love. Augustine's hope is the classic example here. Emotionally, it was a sort of sublime desperation. It modulated his fear of the final and fatal fragmentation of his sinful self, and refocused that fear on reverence for the pure gift of divine grace: *Et tota spes mea non nisi magna valde misericordia tua.* And it drove his sober but confident expectation that his transcending desire would be fulfilled on "that day when, purified and molten by the fire of your love, I flow together to merge into you."

Having this cathartic and stabilizing role in the Christian tragical pathos, such a hope, of course, had to be more resilient than a fleeting emotion. Other early Christian tragical visionaries besides Augustine, on whom Aquinas depended substantially, would surely have agreed with Thomas's estimation that there is hope and there is hope. There is that hope which is an emotion operative in the judgment of future goods and the difficulty and possibility of attaining them; and there is that hope which, in its secure and mature God-directedness, becomes a disposition of the soul and qualifies as a genuinely theological virtue. No matter how morally useful the former might prove to be, only the latter, by its unique interrelation with faith and love, could stabilize the Christian's vision of an existence in which tragedy and new creation are mysteriously bound up with each other. Such hope, integrated and "scripted" along with the other tragical emotions, confirmed the complexity of the Christian tragical pathos, the hard psychological work involved in maintaining the cruciform Christian witness in a world fraught with multitudinous tragedies. Indeed, this hope, doggedly resistant both to triumphalistic presumptiveness and to abject despair, manifested the Christian's perseverant embrace of her or his role in God's redemptive drama, in salvation's tempestuous but wondrous folly. <>

SELFLESS LOVE AND HUMAN FLOURISHING IN PAUL TILLICH AND IRIS MURDOCH by Julia T. Meszaros [Oxford University Press, 9780198765868]

In an age of self-affirmation and self-assertion, 'selfless love' often appears as a threat to the lover's personal well-being. Such a perception jars with the Biblical promise that we gain our life through losing it. It therefore calls for a theological response. In conversation with the Protestant theologian Paul Tillich and the atheistic moral philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch, this book enquires into the anthropological grounds on which selfless love can be said to build up the lover's self. It proposes that—while the implausibility of selfless love was furthered by the modern deconstruction of the self—both Tillich and Murdoch utilize this very deconstruction towards explicating and restoring the link between selfless love and human flourishing. It is shown that they use the modern diagnosis of the human being's lack of a stable and independent self as manifest in Sartrean existentialism in support of an understanding of the self as relational and fallen. This leads them to view a loving orientation away from self and a surrender to the other as critical to full, flourishing selfhood. The book closely engages Søren Kierkegaard's earlier attempt to keep selfless love and human flourishing in dialectical tension, and examines the breakdown of this tension in the later figures of Anders Nygren, Simone Weil, and Jean-Paul Sartre. It concludes with suggestions for further bolstering Tillich's and Murdoch's case for linking selfless love and human flourishing.

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Framing the Debate of Contested Selfless Love

Chapter 1 outlines the modern opposition between selfless love and human flourishing. It argues that this has either construed selfless love as promoting powerlessness and oppression, or rejected the modern concern with the needs and desires of the human individual as antithetical to Christianity. The historical roots of this opposition are briefly sketched, with particular attention to the role played by Jean-Paul Sartre's and other modern deconstructions of the self. After a brief discussion of the pitfalls of this opposition, Paul Tillich and Iris Murdoch are introduced in an attempt to reconsider the relation between selfless love and human flourishing by paying attention to love's anthropological foundations. It is shown why their thought lends itself to such an enquiry. The chapter ends with an outline of the book as a whole.

In Iris Murdoch's novel *The Unicorn*, the previously self-absorbed Effingham Cooper comes to learn 'that with the death of the self the world becomes quite automatically the object of a perfect love'. A similar connection between love and a loss of self is forged in the New Testament, whose ethos strongly influenced both Murdoch and Paul Tillich—the other major figure in this study. In the gospel texts, Jesus calls each human person to 'deny himself and take up his cross and follow [him]'. Announcing that 'whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it', Jesus calls for a loving turn away from self and towards one's neighbour and even enemy. For, 'everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted'. This logic is developed further in the Pauline letters, which are replete with the language of dying to self.

The above passages advocate a willingness to deny, rather than to indulge, our self-assertive and self-interested human impulses, and to lovingly turn towards the other. While they do not, of course, provide us with an exhaustive picture of the New Testament's moral exhortations, they have made a particularly indelible impression on the Christian imagination throughout the ages, and characterize the

spirituality of countless saints and mystics ever since. Yet these passages also point to that aspect of the Christian ethos which tends to meet with the greatest incomprehension and resistance today. The call to deny oneself in many ways appears to contradict and undermine some of modernity's most cherished insights into the constitution, needs, and capacities of the human individual and her well-being.[7] Thus, the above passages, though previously perhaps considered the distinct treasure of Christianity, have, more recently, acquired the status of a liability.

It is against this background that the present study seeks to reconsider the meaning and viability of a love unselfish in its motivation and centred not on the subject but on 'the other'. This is done with a view to discerning the grounds on which selfless love can be considered conducive to—even necessary for—individual human well-being in the face of modern insights into the instability of the human self and into the psychologically problematic implications of simply suppressing human impulses and desires. The present study, then, is guided by the question of how such a—perhaps quintessentially Christian—kind of love might serve to support a person's ability to live out her potential as a free, responsible, loving individual, and why it does not necessarily violate her spiritual and bodily integrity, stand in the way of just and loving relationships, undermine individual creativity, or prevent her from making use of her talents.[8] On what philosophical, theological, and anthropological grounds, I here ask, can human goods such as love and friendship, creativity and meaningful self-engagement be considered to rest on selfless love more than on direct self-assertion, purely erotic love, or other paradigms offered in its stead? My assumption in posing this question is that it is only if selfless love can be shown to build up, rather than to undermine, the human self that it holds a legitimate place in the Christian life.

The kind of love that is suggested by the New Testament passages cited above and that forms the core subject of this book has been referred to by a variety of names, including 'self-giving', 'self-sacrificial', and 'self-denying'. All of these contain different nuances but centre on a common core. Although Murdoch uses the term 'selfless love' only occasionally and Tillich—to my knowledge—not at all, I have chosen this phrase not only for its prevalence in common parlance but, especially, for its unique resonance both with the late-modern tendency to posit human selflessness in the literal sense (that is, to view the notion of a stable and independent self as a fictive construction), and with the more traditional, figurative idea of an other-centred, self-giving love. This twofold resonance is relevant insofar as the rise and fall of selfless love—in the latter sense of a love turned away from self and towards the other—is directly linked to changing conceptualizations of the self. Indeed, selfless love can no longer be adequately explicated and defended apart from an engagement with the late modern deconstructions of the self.

As I will argue, different features of such late modern perspectives both undermine and support the coherence of selfless love. We will find that, while their insight into the dynamically evolving nature of the self and its lack of self-sufficiency may help us account for the need for an other-centred love, their rejection of any kind of self-stability and self-unity has potentially contributed to selfless love's gradual demise. Focusing on Jean-Paul Sartre's conception of the self, with which both Tillich and Murdoch engage, I will, for instance, explore the manner in which, in Sartrean existentialism, the deconstruction of the substantial self went hand in hand with the allegation of absolute individual freedom to be what one wants to be—a freedom which appeared to be compromised by concessions to the other. At the same time as thus attributing greater powers to the human being, Sartre's claims regarding the absence of a stable and unified self also implied that the human being was now seen to be more vulnerable to external influences, to the point that she must guard and protect herself from the other. Both these

views let selfless love appear as little less than a threat to human selfhood and well-being, and invite an increased focus on self-affirmation and self-care.

On the other hand, Sartre's diagnosis of human 'self-lessness' can also be a helpful aid towards showing how the Christian call to selfless love is not only rooted in a concern for the other but also in our anthropological makeup, namely our lack of an isolated or self-contained self. As I will argue, twentieth-century deconstructions of the self such as Sartre's are, in this respect, distinctly suited to demonstrating how and why it might be precisely 'selfless' love—in the sense of the outward-turned love of an incomplete, other-dependent person—which builds up the self in a way that does justice to the modern concern for the needs and well-being of the concrete human individual.

I embark on this discussion not so much via a phenomenological analysis of selfless love, or of concrete moral scenarios, as by way of philosophical and theological analyses of the nature of love and the self. This reflects the view—a view I share with my main interlocutors, Paul Tillich and Iris Murdoch—that, insofar as selfless love can be considered fruitful for human life, it must, above all be understood as an interior attitude or posture, whose outward manifestations are highly dependent on context. Apart from some more personal insight into the concrete and particular situation and needs of the beloved and the capacities of the lover (insight which an academic treatise would struggle to obtain and convey), it is impossible to define specific external acts as selfless. My concern here thus lies merely with clarifying the anthropological foundations and wider meaning of a loving orientation away from self. This dovetails also with the fact that our contemporary struggle to accept the validity of selfless love is not primarily a matter of lived experience. Most of us have experienced concrete acts that we would willingly, and intuitively, describe as acts of selfless love. Instead, it is first and foremost one of conceptual clarity, or of understanding the foundations, nature, and significance of selfless love.

As already indicated, I believe that selfless love is only viable and persuasive if it builds up not only the other, but also the lover himself. This emphasis on what may—to use a botanical metaphor—be referred to as the lover's 'flourishing' constitutes another reason for exploring selfless love in relation to the nature of the human being and her self. For, just as a tree flourishes and achieves its full potential—in the form, say, of blooming and carrying fruit—only where the conditions required by its nature are fulfilled (that is, when it has adequate space, water, sun, soil), we can legitimately speak of human flourishing only on the basis of an understanding of the human being's makeup or nature. My approach here clearly diverges from understandings of human flourishing or 'self-fulfilment' which suggest that the content of such flourishing is not fixed but that 'each must, in the last instance, determine [this] for him- or herself'.[9] While it is certainly the case that the specific shape of individual fulfilment varies from one individual to another, I assume that certain goods, such as loving relations with others, a sense of personal 'groundedness', identity, and belonging, as well as moral goodness or virtue, are integral to the fulfilment of all human persons.

Selfless Love and Human Flourishing in Conflict: A Brief Historical Sketch

The Christian call to selfless love has always stood in tension with an equally Christian regard for the needs and limitations of the concrete individual. From William of St Thierry and Thomas Aquinas to Søren Kierkegaard and Benedict XVI, Christians throughout the ages have offered proposals on how Christianity might integrate its eschatological tendency, calling the believer to abandon his or her worldly hopes and desires, with its more incarnationalist impulse of affirming the goods and capacities of

the natural world. With the modern emancipation of the concrete human individual and of her freedom, instincts, powers, and desires, these fragile syntheses were increasingly strained, to the point that the possibility and/or value of selfless love came to be seen as dubious, even nonsensical. Today, those suspicious of the Christian tradition, as well as many Christians, intuitively often feel that a good and fulfilled life rides less on selfless love than on self-affirmation and even self-assertion.

This late modern perspective cannot, of course, be traced back to a distinct historical turning point or intellectual event. Like many modern beliefs and perceptions, it was facilitated gradually, and by a range of historic developments altering the human being's self-understanding. Descartes's *cogito ergo sum* is surely one of these, entailing, as it does, a sense of the self and its (self-)knowledge as self-contained, as able to 'find' itself independently of the other. This 'sealing of a self against the world', which eventually leads also to a 'sealing of oneself against infiltration by another', is reinforced by 'the Kantian insistence that we know only representations of objects and not these objects in themselves', that is, that the human subject does not receive the world as it is but must generate his own image of it. In a different way, Hegel's idealism, too, fosters a sense of self-containedness or self-separateness by positing that spirit returns completely to itself.

In the nineteenth century the emphasis on the single and independent individual is expanded further. The Romantics' sense that true and authentic selfhood is obtained where the individual fully inhabits, and acts in accordance with, his inner states of consciousness, feelings, and desires enhances a sense of self-concern and self-enactment. Selfhood is here tied to a form of self-assertion. Newly emerging psychological and sociological perspectives, on the other hand, promote an increased awareness of the individual's susceptibility to exploitation, and her consequent vulnerability and need for liberation from the oppressive other. Thus, Karl Marx famously denounces religion as blinding people with false ideals that numb their desire to fight for their rights—a critique that lets selfless love appear as a key ingredient in Christianity's obstruction of real and effective self-empowerment, or of the human being's ability to stand up for her rights, and to create living conditions that safeguard human dignity, material well-being, and other needs and desires. In his critique of Christianity as fostering a 'slave morality' that perpetuates weakness and failure, Friedrich Nietzsche attacks the Christian notion of love yet more explicitly. A similar attack is involved in Sigmund Freud's unearthing of the subconscious. Here, the origin of various neuroses is attributed to (oftentimes Christian) moral ideals whose lofty and unattainable nature supposedly necessitates the debilitating suppression of key needs and desires.

Prevalent among these thinkers is the perception that the human being's 'primary motive' in any action is inevitably and properly 'self-seeking', such that 'the agape ideal' can only 'encourage masochism and frustration'. If love remains a useful category at all, then it must be understood not in terms of selflessness but in terms of self-interest, self-affirmation, and self-assertion. Implied in this view is a perceived opposition between Christian and natural love—an opposition typically framed in terms of *agape* and *eros*. As we shall see in Chapter 3, this opposition is by no means propagated only by Christianity's critics but also by some of its defenders, as the polemics of Anders Nygren show. According to Nygren, the Christian ideal of selfless love excludes all forms of natural human love and has no regard for the human being's this-worldly needs and concerns. Thus confirming secular suspicions about Christian love, Nygren's thought represents the other side of the modern coin juxtaposing selfless love and human flourishing.

The nineteenth century's spirit of self-confidence and self-liberation may have lost some of its impetus, and Nygren's *Agape and Eros* now largely functions as a negative contrast against which theologians develop their own ideas on love. The connection between selfless love and human flourishing has, nonetheless, not been adequately re-established. This lacuna comes largely at the cost of selfless love. To this day, theological defences of the importance of self-love and ecstatic desire are far more easy to come by than vocal pleas for anything resembling selfless love. Feminist thinkers, in particular, justify this with the observation that the 'sin' of women, unlike that of men, is not so much that of 'pride' and 'will-to-power' as that of an 'underdevelopment or negation of the self'. There is a worry, therefore, that, in encouraging selflessness Christianity has encouraged the sinfulness of women, and hence neglected, or even prevented, their conversion and salvation. Daphne Hampson, for instance, has argued that the 'autonomy' and realization of the female self are goods endangered by Christianity. Secular psychoanalytic thought, whose ideals of self-affirmation, self-realization, and self-forgiveness have pervaded our social imaginary, leans towards classifying selflessness as a disorder. In a similar vein, theories linking illnesses such as anorexia to the conceptuality of Western culture and, indeed, of Christianity, insinuate that ideals of love as selfless or self-sacrificial are psychologically, morally and physically harmful. It should not surprise, then, that Erich Fromm's verdict that 'Christianity has missed the real key to human fulfilment' because 'its ideal of life is incompatible with the free development of man' still resonates todayThe Obsolescence of Selfless Love: Pitfalls

It may not be immediately obvious why the impasse between selfless love and the good of the individual human person poses a problem—rather than merely confirming, say, the other-worldly nature of the Christian faith. Yet such an impasse is, first of all, problematic from the perspective of Christianity itself. For the Christian gospel is characterized not only by the call to selfless love but also by a marked concern for the liberation, affirmation, and empowerment—in short, for the well-being—of the individual human subject. Christianity, it is true, does not consider worldly flourishing an end in itself but subordinates it to faith in God. It asks of the believer a willingness to sacrifice her material well-being in this life in the service of the truth—a willingness displayed by the many Christian martyrs. Nonetheless, Jesus's mission and exhortation to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and heal the sick and wounded indicates that Christianity is neither indifferent towards nor straightforwardly affirmative of the human being's worldly woes and troubles. His miraculous healings of physical, mental, and spiritual illness, and his endeavour to build up and liberate all crippled forms of human life consistently underline that it is in this life that God's Kingdom properly begins to take effect. The Jesus of the Gospels indeed calls us to use our talents, to stand strong in the face of oppressive forces and to foster joy and freedom, love and peace. As David Ford argues in the context of an analysis of St Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the New Testament promises faith in Christ—dead and risen—to effect 'a transformation of notions of communication, of event, of human community, of ordinary living and of God'—a kind of transformation that is integral, precisely, to human flourishing. Although it may be undermined by the presence of sin in the world, human flourishing can thus never be undermined by Christianity's own ethos, including its understanding of selfless love. Christianity's endorsement of a selfless kind of love and its simultaneous concern for the individual's well-being thus encourage, indeed demand, a continual re-examination of how it is possible that the fullness of human life is tied to our taking up our cross and denying our selves—that is, of how it is that we find our life through losing it in love.

The urgency of such an endeavour is reinforced by the extent to which the (intuitively persuasive) modern insistence on the importance of attending to oneself and one's needs makes it ever harder even for committed Christians to comprehend and appropriate the call to selfless love. Christians' perplexity at this call may help explain why, although there is an obvious hunger for love in contemporary societies and although the Christian message centres on love, Christianity struggles to make itself heard—and is, instead, regularly perceived as the enemy of love. The credibility of the Christian faith both inside and outside the Church thus seems, among other things, to hinge on a (more) thoroughgoing understanding of the meaning of selfless love. Such an endeavour must take seriously the above-mentioned gospel passages that gave rise to the notion of selfless love, while also demonstrating that selfless love as promoted by Christianity does not, as 'many secular [and, increasingly, Christian] critics' think, simply 'repress … the self's vital impulses' and 'creative power'. Only then is selfless love no escapist love 'negating life' and 'devaluing … man'. Moreover, if selfless love *is* in fact key to human flourishing, then its bad reputation is in need of being corrected.

However, the relationship between selfless love and human flourishing is of interest not merely to the Christian theologian and believer. It is widely recognized that Christian ideals continue to have a normative hold on the post-Christian imagination. The less these ideals—which include the notion of selfless love—are understood, the more easily they assume an oftentimes problematic life of their own. Abuses may thus take place in the name of Christian love. These can be countered only in relation to the Christian tradition's advocacy of a selfless kind of love. Outright dismissals of selfless love have, moreover, been found to come at a high price even in a non-Christian context. Iris Murdoch, for instance, suggests that where love is reduced to simple and direct self-affirmation, morality itself is put at risk, a claim that will become more clear as this book proceeds. Our understanding of love must take account of the extent to which we are prone to pride and error in ways destructive of both ourselves and others. Only thus can it avoid complicity with a curtailed and amoral understanding of the human good that loses sight of the need for reorientation to the universal Good in which we are united with the other. Thus, it is in order to undercut both destructive interpretations and naive dismissals of selfless love that the meaning of selfless love must be continually re-examined and related to new insights into the self.

The need for a renewed exploration of selfless love is further suggested by the limitations and inner contradictions characteristic of attempts to conceptualize love in terms of radical self-assertion. As we will see, Jean-Paul Sartre's frustrated oscillation between absolute freedom and total determinism, for instance, is tied up with his unwillingness to allow for anything approximating selfless love. As in the case of Nietzsche and Freud, Sartre's dismissal of selfless love leaves him struggling to take seriously the human being's more spiritual needs, such as the human desire for remorse, forgiveness, renewal, and self-transcendence. Indeed, Sartre's—like Nietzsche's and Freud's—dismissal of selfless love corresponds with the inclination to deconstruct the human impulse and desire to care for or be changed by another, as well as a person's experience of communion with others. The denunciation of such desires and experiences as mere instances of unhealthy self-victimization or as cover-ups for self-interest appears as little more than a reversal of what these authors criticize: where they accuse their opponents of arbitrarily degrading certain desires of the flesh by calling for their suppression, these authors instead degrade certain desires of the spirit by denying them their experienced meanings and by relegating them to the realm of selfishness. Indeed, Sartre's unabashedly selective respect for human experience and

perception—which contributes to Murdoch's eventual disillusionment with Sartre—stands in tension with his own, existentialist principles.

We can conclude, then, that the dismissal of selfless love as nonsensical or dangerous has problematic implications that prompt such an enquiry as the present one. Recognizing these implications does not justify a superficial endorsement of selfless love. Instead, it calls for an in-depth exploration of the extent to which selfless love might impose significant limits on the human drive for self-creation, power, and self-assertion, but might also affirm and strengthen the human individual while doing so. A viable understanding of selfless love—if it can be found—engages the individual subject as agent, and does not simply dismiss human needs and desires *tout court*.

In other words, it is only if we can dissociate selfless love from psychological, emotional, and physical powerlessness and oppression that we can legitimately avoid a replacement of selfless love with self-assertion or, as feminist theologians have tended to propose, with mutual relationality or friendship—important goods undoubtedly, but themselves arguably dependent on a posture of selfless love. A viable notion of selfless love must not evoke what Barbara Hilkert Andolsen has called the 'spectre' of a woman without needs, desires, or personality, or propose a passively receptive other-regard that undermines the lover's potential as a free agent. Instead, it must order the relation between self and other in a way that does justice to the individuality of both. It must clarify the place of self-interest, self-concern, and self-love in selfless love, and give a meaningful place to human desire.

The Present Study: Context and Authors

This book is not, of course, the first to consider 'selfless love' in relation to the modern concern for the good of the individual. However, existing studies have not paid any detailed attention to the impact which changing understandings of the self have had on modern assessments of selfless love. More recent studies, especially, have also focused less on the nature and foundations of selfless (or, more commonly, agapeic, Christian) love than on the place of self-love in selfless love. While I share the desire, implied in such efforts, to show the positive life-affirming character of Christian love, I do not seek merely to 'make room' in selfless (or Christian) love for self-love or the natural desire for personal well-being. Instead, I hope to make sense of the seeming paradox that it is precisely *through* turning away from ourselves and towards the other that we are said to find—and perhaps even love—ourselves.

I do so in reference to the thought of the Protestant theologian Paul Tillich and the moral philosopher Iris Murdoch. It may seem odd to consult two authors on selfless love whose personal lives were marked by adultery and other sexual transgressions. To some extent, I am here relying on a distinction between their life and thought that some may find unacceptable—yet **(p.12)** without which it would seem impossible for (at least most) human beings to say anything on the topic of selfless love at all. This distinction aside, however, several points deserve mention. Both Tillich and Murdoch did, in different ways, and to different degrees, recognize and agonize over their proclivity to extramarital affairs and the hurt this caused their respective spouses. This is more obviously the case with Tillich, who inherited a condemnation of adultery from his Christian faith, and whose wife was intensely jealous and angry about his affairs. Tillich's son, for instance, remarks that 'he was plagued by guilt. And he talked about guilt'; 'Paul was serious in trying to overcome his own tendency to objectify'. According to the Paucks, Tillich implicitly recognizes his guilt when he states that grace 'strikes us' when 'we feel we have violated another life, a life which we have loved', 'when our disgust for our own being … or weakness … have

become intolerable to us', and 'when the old compulsions reign within us as they have for decades'. Though she arguably never viewed fidelity as objectively good, Murdoch, too, was remorseful about any hurt she caused others. After an affair with Thomas Balogh, the lover of her good friend Philippa Foot, Murdoch for instance admitted that 'I am no better than the swinish heroine of my current novel [Morgan in *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*], who is so concerned with analysing her own feelings she does not notice the sufferings of others'.

Tillich's and Murdoch's relative misgivings about their behaviour suggest that their erotic life is based less on conviction than on biographical and temperamental weaknesses—which themselves cannot be divorced from the reality of human sinfulness, as Murdoch in particular readily acknowledges. Rollo May, for instance, traces Tillich's wanderings among women back to dependence on his mother and to her sudden, early death. Other attempts at making sense of Tillich's personal life have included references to his authoritarian father, his trauma from the First World War, his anti-bourgeois or Weimar spirit, and the challenges of emigration. Murdoch's proclivity to affairs has, in part, been excused as a temperamental quirk. As her late husband put it, she simply 'fell in love all the time, but she also fell into friendship all the time—the two were so much the same with her She lived literally for love and for friendship. That's very rare in novelists, who are extremely egocentric.'

Their awareness of their respective faults and shortcomings arguably only lent further impetus to their respective interest in defending the need for a more selfless kind of love. This may have been the case especially with Murdoch, whose concern with 'how to love without ego, and how to be unsmugly good' has been traced back directly to the hurt her affair with Thomas Balogh caused Philippa and Michael Foot.

At the same time, it must be admitted that Tillich especially at times also attempts to justify his erotic behaviour in ways that do not undermine but nonetheless compromise his thought on love. I shall be addressing—and critiquing—these links between his life and thought towards the end of Chapter 5, in which I treat his account of selfless love. By comparison, Murdoch grants more unambiguously that, at least insofar as her affairs hurt others, they are betrayals of love and goodness, and thus at odds with the moral values she advocates. Indeed, although Murdoch's thought on love does not entail a condemnation of adulterous behaviour, it in no way seems to invite or justify such behaviour.

Tillich and Murdoch may appear an eccentric pair of authors also on account of what separates them. While Murdoch was familiar with Tillich's writings, Tillich does not seem to have known of Murdoch's work, most of which took shape after his death. His Christian faith fundamentally contrasts with her self-professed 'atheism'. Tillich is, moreover, schooled in the continental tradition and presents a *Systematic Theology* as his *magnum opus*. Murdoch, by contrast, has a background primarily in analytic philosophy and, as every line of her writing indicates, abhors the idea of a 'system'. Not only does she develop her ideas through novelistic as well as philosophical means, but she frequently paints bold and generalizing pictures involving idiosyncratic and heuristic depictions of the history of thought in a freely associative fashion.

Despite these differences, I submit that these two Gifford lecturers invite a joint study of their thought on love. From their respective Christian and atheist vantage points, both seek to restore a balance between selfless love and human flourishing. As I will show, both are aware of the impasse between selfless love and the human good as perceived in modernity, and of the problematic manifestations of

this impasse in a moralistic type of Christianity on the one hand and in a morally impoverished philosophy on the other. Both find that polemical views on love, such as present in Nygren and Sartre, derive from distinct views of human selfhood and transcendence. They consequently both give particular attention to these issues when seeking to forge a new link between an other-centred notion of love and a genuine valuation of the human being's individuality, freedom for self-creation, and desire for fulfilment. Both go about forging such a link by combining an existentialist and an ontological perspective on love, and by showing a particular regard for the resources provided by the fine arts (especially by literature and visual art) as well as by Christian and Buddhist mysticism. Most importantly, perhaps, they are both equally influenced by and reacting against the psychoanalytical, Marxist, and existentialist thought of the day, and aware that 'our relation to traditional sources, including the idea of the Good, is no longer simply a function of a publicly established order of meaning but is subject to personal resonance'.

Beyond these similarities, it must be noted that Tillich's correlative method was geared precisely towards bringing religious and 'secular' ideas into dialogue, and bridging the gap between them. In accordance with his own interest in non-Christian thought, Tillich's theology lends itself to, and calls for, dialogue with a secular writer. Murdoch is particularly suited to such a conversation, insofar as she, unlike some atheist thinkers, is herself keenly interested in religious thinking, to the point of acknowledging that her own thought continually veers in a theological direction. It is important in this regard to note that Murdoch's atheism signifies primarily a rejection of theism and its (supposed) affirmation of a highest being. It does not exclude the notion of a transcendent Good or a belief in the unconditional, and Murdoch indeed recognizes theology's contribution towards exploring precisely such concepts. Her respect for, and familiarity with, theological thinking—which arguably originates in her early encounters with the Christian moral philosopher Donald MacKinnon—is underlined by the contents of her library, and by her repeated references to Augustine, Søren Kierkegaard, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Don Cupitt, and Karl Barth, among others. Crucially, Murdoch saw in Tillich one of those theologians who had something important to offer to the atheist philosopher, who should therefore heed him. Her archived and notated copy of Tillich's *Systematic Theology* indicates that Murdoch not only engaged with Tillich's thought in some depth but that this engagement lies at the root of some of the parallels between their respective outlooks. It further underlines, therefore, the significance of the fact that her biggest work, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, not only gives several lengthy quotations from Tillich that appear to shape her thought in significant ways, but also ends with a reference to his notion of 'ultimate concern', and his awareness that moral philosophy, and life itself, becomes impossible apart from reference to the transcendent—a point we will find to be of prime importance for her defence of selfless love.

Murdoch's at times extremely dense underlining of Tillich's text, for instance, indicates her interest in Tillich's attempt to avoid the extremes of heteronomy and autonomy, as well as in his claim that 'an awareness of the infinite is included in man's awareness of finitude', and in his observation that both Augustine and Kant use their point about 'the unconditional element' present 'in every encounter with reality' to establish an unconditional being. In a similar spirit, Murdoch sympathizes with Tillich's interpretation of Anselm's ontological argument, and with his insistence that the unconditional cannot be understood as 'a highest being called God'. Tillich's discussion of these matters is heavily underlined in Murdoch's copy of the *Systematic Theology*, and reflected in her writings. The underlining and markings in sections on love indicate that these, too, were closely read by Murdoch. She, for instance, summarizes in

the margin Tillich's claim that love includes libido, philia, eros, and agape, and underlines that agape must be the 'criterion' for the other loves, that it 'affirms the other unconditionally', and that it does so 'because of the ultimate unity of being with being within the divine ground'. She equally underlines Tillich's claims that 'love does not destroy the freedom of the beloved' and that 'basically, however, one's love to God is of the nature of eros'. In the slightly less annotated Volume II she notes, among other things, that Tillich brings existentialism and depth psychology together. In some endnotes to Volume I of Tillich's work, Murdoch relates these ideas to Simone Weil and her emphasis on the 'need for education: art, stillness, looking'. As will become apparent, all of these points of Tillich's are mirrored in Murdoch's own thought and will form central aspects of my subsequent argument regarding selfless love and human flourishing.

The present conversation between two thinkers of different religious persuasions, moreover, serves to underline the above-mentioned fact that the perception of a clash between selfless love and human flourishing is neither unique, nor uniquely relevant, to Christianity, but promoted, recognized, and problematized by theologians and (at least some) secular philosophers alike. The interdisciplinary angle of the present study further intends to reflect the recognition that the Christian theologian must engage and respond to external challenges, as well as incorporate meritorious insights of non-Christian thinkers. The latters' proposals, in turn, are bound to be influenced by Christian approaches to moral and anthropological problems, and might, as Murdoch recognizes, draw on these as much as respond to them.

Paul Tillich and Iris Murdoch on Selfless Love

As an army chaplain in the First World War, Paul Tillich began his career in an environment in which self-denial and self-sacrifice were politically demanded. In sermons on the battlefield, the young Tillich intially gave these demands theological backing. Steeped in rigid, Nygrenian interpretations of Christian love through his turn-of-the-century Protestant upbringing, he exhorted soldiers to welcome the opportunity to imitate Christ's love to the last. It was those same years on the battlefield, however, which confronted Tillich with levels of human doubt and despair to which the existing, literally deathly, interpretations of Christian love had nothing to offer in reply. The post-war Tillich thus became convinced that, while Christian love is ultimately to be understood as selfless, its life-giving and life-affirming nature needed to be developed—indeed, that the selfless dimension of Christian love can pertain only on the basis of its dialectic relationship with self-affirmation.

Tillich's thought on the nature of love constitutes an attempt, therefore, to avoid the world-denying stance which Nietzsche, Fromm, and others accused Christianity of promoting. It seeks, instead, to develop an understanding of love that includes and enlivens that human 'life-power' which Tillich identifies as spirit and which he freely associates with Nietzsche's and Schopenhauer's 'will to power', with Freud's 'libido', and with Bergson's '*élan vital*'. It is correct, then, to state that 'Paul Tillich … already emphasised fifty years ago the need for theology to rediscover the erotic nature of the human being in all its depth and ambiguity, so as to regain also a piece of biblical realism "after this was for so long obscured by several layers of idealistic and moralistic self-deception about the nature of man"'. In spite of this important and valuable emphasis, and notwithstanding the breadth of scholarship on Tillich, Tillich's understanding of love and its role in the establishment of the self has not been analysed in depth. Recent perceptions that modernist (and postmodernist) deconstructions of the identity, unity,

and stability of the human self do not exhaustively illuminate and govern human experience further provoke and arguably warrant a return to a thinker such as Tillich, who engages with and adopts much of modern thought while also challenging it to the effect of both transcending and outliving the modernist movement.

If Tillich was raised with one-sided interpretations and uncritical espousals of selfless love, Murdoch comes from an empiricist and behaviourist philosophy that eschews references to any form of love. Viewing this as a morally dangerous situation which renders moral philosophy irrelevant to concrete persons, Murdoch is concerned with recovering love—and particularly selfless love—as a moral and philosophical category. She rejects the notion of God and accepts 'much of the criticism of traditional metaphysics', but finds that the decline of metaphysics has led contemporary philosophers to fail to make sense of the ordinary human being's experience of a unified self and to overlook the moral import of the individual's inner life, and of love in particular. Murdoch accuses her colleagues, such as Stuart Hampshire, A. J. Ayer, Gilbert Ryle, and Richard Hare, of overlooking the role played by a person's consciousness and by the orientation of her desires in regard to her ability to even perceive reality. While this provokes Murdoch's attraction to continental philosophy, and in particular to Sartrean existentialism, with its attention to the significance of human consciousness, she ultimately judges these continental approaches to be wanting also. In her departure from such—in principle welcome—alternatives to Descartes's understanding of the self, Murdoch seeks to develop a contemporary moral philosophy which accounts for the extent to which the very reality of the human self is dependent on its relationship to a transcendent reality encountered in the worldly other. As we shall see, this endeavour leads her, too, to argue for a selfless love, which integrates the erotic dimension of the human being, and which is constitutive of the self.

There have been various commentaries on Murdoch's attempt to develop a moral ontology centred on the notions of love and the self. Yet the question of how she considers love, true selfhood, and, with this, human flourishing to hang together has received relatively little attention. At least in part, this is perhaps due to the fact that Murdoch was concerned primarily with the sinful, *un*loving self, that she shuns an explicit discussion of human flourishing, and that she portrays love as geared precisely towards an '*un*-selfing'. However, Murdoch nonetheless draws much attention to the moral importance of love and the self and, as I will show, envisages a redeemed self that is precisely the outcome of selfless love. This already points to the extent to which her thought, too, transcends and even subverts modernist (and postmodernist) assumptions in a way highly relevant to the present discussion.

In the course of this book, I hope to demonstrate that Tillich's and Murdoch's accounts of love and the self provide theological and philosophical insights that are uniquely valuable for developing a sustainable and contemporary account of selfless love. Meanwhile, my analyses will also bring to the fore the weaknesses of their respective accounts. This, too, will aid us in charting the anthropological and metaphysical presuppositions upon which a defence of selfless love as conducive to human flourishing must rest, and which go beyond Tillich and Murdoch themselves.

From Tillich's immense oeuvre, I focus on what I judge to be the most relevant of his more strictly academic writings, and on his *Systematic Theology* in particular, while making only occasional references to his sermons. Similarly, I focus on Murdoch's philosophical writings, and quote from her novels only occasionally, to illustrate a certain point. This is primarily due to the fact that, given Murdoch's

unsystematic style and polemical engagement with a broad range of other authors, her philosophical thought alone provides ample material for discussion. Comparing Tillich's theology with her novels would, moreover, pose methodological challenges too great for the scope of this book. Such challenges are further enhanced by Murdoch's rejection of being viewed as a 'philosophical novelist' (a label she associates with the didactic (mis-)use of literature of which she accuses Sartre). Although her novels inevitably play a constitutive role in the development and exposition of her thought, Murdoch almost painstakingly avoids using her characters to lend support to her philosophical programme. This applies particularly to her characters' dialogues. Even where these do, as Altorf points out, contain exact or almost exact quotations from Murdoch's philosophical essays, they do not tend to evolve in a way that would prove Murdoch's philosophy right. Nora Hämäläinen has therefore rightly criticized Sabina Lovibond's attempt to back up her theory about Murdoch's alleged anti-feminism by enumerating the various submissive women in Murdoch's novels.

The Outline of this Study

I begin the present enquiry with a sketch of moments in the recent history of love and the self that I consider to be illustrative of the modern difficulty of sustaining the link between selfless love and human flourishing, and that possess (more or less) direct relevance to Tillich's and Murdoch's own approaches to this problem. Both the modern tendency to dismiss the world and our desire to find happiness within it, and the modern celebration of self-assertion, are found in, and arguably receive particular impetus from, Søren Kierkegaard. Chapter 2 thus renders Kierkegaard's account of the self and of love, and concludes with Tillich's and Murdoch's reception of this.

Chapter 3 moves on to Anders Nygren's, Simone Weil's, and Jean-Paul Sartre's perspectives on love and the self, as figures in whom Kierkegaard's already tenuous attempt at holding selfless love and human flourishing together breaks down. The discussion of their thought is, again, followed by Tillich's and Murdoch's critical responses. While Nygren and Weil constitute representatives of the divorce of selfless love from human flourishing that are of particular relevance for Tillich (Nygren) and Murdoch (Weil) respectively, Sartre here functions as a representative of the divorce of human flourishing from selfless love who influenced Tillich and Murdoch equally.

It may, of course, be objected that Hegel, Schelling, and the wider Platonic-Augustinian tradition, as well as Aristotle, Fichte, Heidegger, and Nietzsche, exerted a greater direct influence on the formation of Tillich's thought than did Kierkegaard, Nygren, and Sartre. However, Tillich's correlative theology entails a profoundly dialogical structure, for which both the existentialist (and especially Sartrean) tradition, as well as Nygren, are of critical importance. We can hardly overestimate the extent to which the existentialist mind-set pervaded the common consciousness of Tillich's time, even and especially outside of the academy. Similarly, Nygren was, at the time, a major and representative voice in Protestant theology. Against this background, the above figures appear as key springboards for the formulation of Tillich's theological response to the human being's existential plight.

Whereas Murdoch openly follows Weil in many of her ideas, her reception of Kierkegaard and Sartre is more ambiguous. Nonetheless, Murdoch encountered the thought of all three authors at a formative period in her life, and continued to wrestle with what she perceived as the simultaneously attractive and disturbing nature of Kierkegaard's and Sartre's ideas, as well as with their widespread popularity. Her early book on Sartre and the lasting presence of both Kierkegaard and Sartre in her later *magnum opus,*

Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals, are indicative of the fact that, for Murdoch, too, Kierkegaard and Sartre were important conversation partners in the development of her own ideas.

Having thus provided the context for my engagement with Tillich and Murdoch, I proceed to offer detailed exegeses of Tillich's understanding of the self (Chapter 4) and of love (Chapter 5), and then of Murdoch's understanding of the self (Chapter 6) and of love (Chapter 7). In these, I seek to show that, in different ways, both Tillich and Murdoch defend a notion of selfless love by creatively using Sartrean existentialism and other ideas towards developing a relational understanding of the self. Whereas Tillich understands this primarily in terms of participation, Murdoch avails herself of the category of desire. And where Tillich's ontology of interdependence leads him to give an account of the erotic drive for self-fulfilment as dependent on a constraining counterpart, Murdoch will be found to argue that we have a proclivity towards living in immoral and destructive illusions that can be undone only through a practice of unselfing love. For both, the notion of selfless love thus constitutes something of a corrective which breaks through false, or naive, depictions of who we are and how we flourish.

The concluding chapter of this study (Chapter 8) summarily recaptures not only the strengths and weaknesses of Tillich's and Murdoch's thought on love, but makes concrete suggestions as to how a viable defence of selfless love must go beyond their proposals.

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Recovering Selfless Love

Chapter 8 provides brief summaries of the way in which Tillich and Murdoch integrate Sartre's insights into the absence of a stable and autonomous self with a Christian emphasis on love's primary concern with the other. It argues that Tillich and Murdoch understand the self's instability as pointing to its relational and fallen nature. Their anthropologies imply that the full development of a person's self, and hence, human flourishing, depends on a selfless kind of love. A discussion of the merits of Tillich's and Murdoch's accounts vis-à-vis Kierkegaard and his successors is followed by a summary of their weaknesses. The second part of the chapter offers constructive suggestions on how to strengthen Tillich's and Murdoch's pleas for the importance of selfless love. These include an affirmation of love's reciprocity, of the oneness of the Good, and of a personal God.

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This book set out to answer the question whether selfless love can be understood as facilitating human flourishing. It was asked on what grounds selfless love can be said to build up, rather than undermine, the lover's self. I approached this problem not from an ethical or psychological perspective but from that of theological (and philosophical) anthropology. Following my main conversation partners, Paul Tillich and Iris Murdoch, I enquired into the make-up of the human self and its implications for human love and well-being. Such an anthropological approach was prompted by the observation, articulated in Chapters 1 to 3, that the increasing implausibility of 'selfless love' in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries corresponded, among other things, with considerable shifts and changes in our understanding of the human self. It was furthermore prompted by the suspicion that some of these same shifts, such as Sartre's assertion of the human being's ontological self-lessness, might in fact also be utilized towards a more positive understanding of the connection between selfless love and human flourishing. As I have argued, both Tillich and Murdoch in fact engage, and draw upon, Sartre in precisely such a way.

In what follows, I give a brief comparative overview of Tillich's and Murdoch's analyses of the human self and of the notion of love they build on this. Such a comparison will enable me to retrace how and why they do indeed link the well-being of the human self to a selfless kind of love. It will also facilitate a final evaluation of how their accounts of selfless love constitute an improvement on Kierkegaard's thought on love and the self, and of how they allow a move beyond post-Kierkegaardian impasses, such as that between self-love and neighbour-love, and individuality and relationality. After highlighting some weaknesses in the proposals of Tillich and Murdoch, I will make some suggestions as to where a robust defence of selfless love may have to deepen, or even depart from, their thought.

Understanding Selfless Love: Tillich's and Murdoch's Contributions

Paul Tillich: A Short Summary

Our discussion of Tillich's thought on love and the self in Chapters 4 and 5 confirmed that Tillich seeks to make room in Christian love for eros, or the human desire for self-fulfilment. As he portrays it, true Christian love indeed not only accommodates such a desire but also facilitates its fulfilment. We saw that in making such a claim, which leads him to stress the Good's immanence where Murdoch emphasizes its transcendence, Tillich was reacting against the austerity of Nygren's otherworldly interpretation of Christian love. Among other factors, Tillich's argument for understanding Christian love as concerned also with the individual's this-worldly desires and well-being was fuelled by his respect for those critics of Christianity who, like Sartre, argued for the legitimacy, and even necessity, of the individual's struggle for self-transcendence, power, and fulfilment. It was Sartre, too, who confirmed and deepened Tillich's Christian sense that the human being lacks the complete and stable self she likes to attribute to herself, and must therefore continually challenge her instinctive self-understanding. Tillich incorporates these insights into a Christian ontology of essence and existence. In doing so, however, he holds on to a basic degree of self-being, and challenges the idea that the o/Other might be an obstacle to the individual's legitimate attempts to become more fully himself. As Tillich sees it, the relatively unstable and other-dependent character of the human self calls not for a futile effort to control the other but for loving participation in the other, whereby the self is (re-)united with the ground of its being. By understanding the self as both more substantial and more participatory than Sartre, Tillich can argue that the *fullness* or *flourishing* of the individual self rides on a person's loving orientation towards, and participation in, the o/Other. Where this participation takes on the shape of 'communion', the individual self achieves its full, 'personal' potential.

We have seen that this theological anthropology, which centres on the interdependency of individuality and participation, is directly intertwined with Tillich's understanding of love. For it implies that eros, or the desire for the fulfilment of self, cannot be satisfied apart from or over against the o/Other, such as through direct self-love or self-assertion. Instead, eros's fulfilment hinges on its integration with another kind of love, which Tillich defines as agape, or the desire for the fulfilment of the other. It is important to stress, in this respect, that Tillich assigns a genuine validity to the erotic desire for self-fulfilment, and indeed considers it impossible for the human being to love agapeically without such a desire. The human being therefore genuinely ought to accept and affirm his or her individuality and its concomitant desire for personal fulfilment. The essentially relational nature of the human self means that the erotic quest for individual growth and fulfilment can succeed only where this quest is, as Tillich puts it, placed under the 'criterion' of love as the desire for the fulfilment of the other. Thus, even self-love, in the sense of the desire for one's own fulfilment, must ultimately manifest itself as an other-centred kind of

love in order to be effective. As we saw, Tillich understands such an other-centred, selfless love, first and foremost, as a love the human being must receive in the form of God's own love, which then enables her, too, to selflessly turn to the other in a way that includes her eros for personal fulfilment.

While endorsing Sartre's quest for freedom, individuality, and authenticity under the rubric of love as eros, Tillich thus ties the fulfilment of this quest to a selfless kind of love. Incorporating, and seeking the fulfilment of, the individual's need and desire for self-fulfilment, Tillich's thought challenges the adequacy of conceptualizing selfless love as a love that denies or goes against the needs and interests of the self. As he conceives of it, selfless love indeed facilitates the lover's flourishing precisely by seeking that of the other.

Iris Murdoch: A Short Summary

Where Tillich's focus lay in making room, in Christian love, for *human flourishing*, Murdoch's primary concern is to establish the moral importance of *selfless love*. This leaves her more critical than Tillich of Sartre's struggle for personal freedom and authenticity, and less interested in happiness than in goodness. Nevertheless, she, too, embraces Sartre's sense of the absence of a fixed and self-contained self and his simultaneous affirmation of the human being's intrinsic drive for self-transcendence towards greater freedom and individuality. We saw her capture both these things by conceptualizing the human self as a 'mechanism of attachments' governed by erotic desire. This allows Murdoch both to affirm and to turn on its head Sartre's insights into the continually developing and other-related nature of the human self, and into the human being's debilitating reluctance to face up to this. The changing objects to which Murdoch's self attaches itself affect the self's very reality. Eros's intrinsic fallibility ensures that these objects are frequently of an enslaving kind. At the same time, it is in keeping with the very nature of Murdoch's erotic self for it to, indeed, be attached to the o/Other: relations with the other do not threaten the self in principle but have a genuine power to build up the self. This is the case not least because Murdoch's eros-driven 'mechanism of attachments' retains a permanent core, or a certain degree of self-being, which makes such attachments possible in the first place.

Murdoch thus shifts the focus from Sartre's ultimately impossible challenge of establishing genuinely fruitful relations with the other from a theoretical to a practical level. Where Sartre's purely free and self-assertive self was, by definition, condemned to a war with the other, Murdoch's erotic self merely needs to relate itself to the right kind of o/Other. For Murdoch, of course, this is transcendent Good, which alone makes manifest what is true and real, including the true and real human self. We saw that, in keeping with Sartre's observation of the human being's tendency to self-delusion (and under the influence of Plato, in particular), Murdoch's emphasis here is on the significance of human vision for love: we erotically desire and attach ourselves to what enslaves us because our blinding ego prevents us from *recognizing* the Good, which, Murdoch argues, is incarnate in the individual particulars of the world. The liberation of the human self thus hinges on a reformation of our vision: we can begin to desire and love what is Good (which, by definition, includes what is good for ourselves) only once we set our eyes on such Good. As we saw, Murdoch pictures the called for purification of our erotic desire in terms of continually paying attention to the world to the point of dying to self ('to look and look until one exists no more').

Murdoch describes this effort as an 'exercise of love'. Paralleling Tillich's picture above, such an effort, firstly, corresponds with the lover's (conscious or unconscious) recognition of his *ontological* selflessness,

in the sense of the illusory nature of his ego-self and its pretensions to completeness and autonomy. It, secondly, consists in a *figuratively* selfless loving orientation towards the other, where alone Murdoch argues Good can be encountered. Again, then, we are left with a picture wherein full human selfhood is, on the one hand, intrinsically bound up with erotic desire, which thus has a definite and legitimate place in life; but where such selfhood can, on the other hand, only be obtained if this desire is guided by a practice of attention which Murdoch describes as a selfless kind of love.

Like Tillich, Murdoch arrives at the above view of love and the self by adopting Sartre's insight into the unstable nature of the human self and by simultaneously supplementing this with 'some more positive conception' of the self as 'substantial'. Yet more insistent on the ambivalent nature of human eros, Murdoch is more sceptical than Tillich about direct human self-affirmation. She indeed supports her defence of selfless love by reference not only to a relational anthropology but also to the destructive consequences of human selfishness and the consequent need for a process of 'unselfing'.

The Foundations of Selfless Love

It will have become obvious by now that Tillich's and Murdoch's approaches to the topic of love converge on several important points. Both follow Sartre in affirming (1) that the human being in existence does not possess an entirely stable and self-contained self and is crippled by assuming otherwise. Leaning **(**on Sartre (among others), both (2) endorse the human being's intrinsic capacity and urge to transcend false and constricting forms of selfhood. They depart from Sartre in (3) understanding self and other as ontologically interrelated realities, in (4) affirming the possibility of attaining full and flourishing selfhood, and in (5) tying such selfhood to a more unambiguously other-centred love, whereby the human being enters into relation with a transcendent reality which constitutes the source of his true being.

For both, though especially for Murdoch, the human being's separation from objective (and, in one sense or another, transcendent) truth and goodness obscures the need for such an other-centred love. It cloaks the human individual precisely in the illusion of already possessing an intrinsically complete self. In contrast to Sartre, both Tillich and Murdoch emphasize that full selfhood cannot be obtained by sheer force of will but that it depends on grace (Tillich), or on a longer-term practice of attention (Murdoch). While advocating a loving orientation away from self and towards the other, both authors take seriously the concern, already articulated by Kierkegaard, that other-love often degenerates into mere self-love. And both, implicitly at least, second Nygren's and Weil's insistence that true love is not motivated by self-seeking, and that the human being must allow himself to be pervaded by a transcendent reality that deconstructs his ego. In sum, then, Tillich and Murdoch consider selfless love to be required by the simultaneously relational and fallen nature of the human person. It is required by the fact that the full human self emerges only in the context of relations with the other, and the consequent need to break through the fallen human person's instinctive self-isolation from, or opposition to, the o/Other.

The Nature of Selfless Love

In commending selfless love as critical to the full emergence of the human self, Tillich and Murdoch have in mind not primarily an act or an emotion but, first and foremost, something more akin to an internal disposition towards the world—a spiritual posture or way of perceiving the world that undergirds a person's acts. Selfless love, as they conceive of it, is a matter of *being* before it is one of *doing*. This approach reflects, among other things, Murdoch's anti-behaviourist outlook and her awareness that

human selfishness frequently causes us to engage in seemingly selfless acts for selfish reasons that ultimately harm both the supposed beneficiary of the act and ourselves. Such an understanding of selfless love as (primarily at least) an interior disposition must not be taken to imply a dismissal of the importance of concrete acts of love. Rather, it gives expression to the conviction that selfless love can take on many forms, whose unifying characteristics consist in a certain understanding of oneself and in an unreserved orientation and openness to the other. This is important with regard to human well-being insofar as it underlines that seeming acts of selfless love will be destructive of the self or, at least, inhibit its full flourishing where they do not emanate from precisely such a disposition—that is, where they are in fact rooted in a paternalistic and proud altruism, for instance, or in the experience of societal pressure and moral norms.

Apart from the lover's interior disposition (as well as his overall character and wider context) then, it is difficult to assess the effect even his morally good acts have on his well-being. This is one of the reasons why I have not attempted to offer concrete examples of selfless love. While it may be possible to tie selfless love to a few basic or general principles—such as a willingness to confront and challenge evil, to defend the Good, and to see and respect the other—such love can be concretely illustrated only in the context of a detailed and intimate understanding of the individual lover. Selfless love is best concretized, therefore, by way of extended fictional and other narratives, which convey a person as a whole, including the purposes and motivations that underlie his or her external acts. It is primarily in the context of immersing oneself in such stories, as found for instance in Scripture, in lives of the saints, or in novels, that the relative authenticity and creative potential of a given act of selfless love becomes apparent.

Identifying selfless love first and foremost as an inner disposition also means that selfless love is no tool or technique of which we can simply avail ourselves in an effort to improve our moral character. As I have sought to show, Tillich and Murdoch picture us as having a hand in living out the call to selfless love. We can, for instance, seek to open ourselves to God's acceptance and thus to muster the courage to be (Tillich), or to embark on a process of unselfing by paying greater attention to the details of the world around us (Murdoch). Nonetheless, human estrangement (Tillich) or selfishness (Murdoch) naturally works against selfless love, to the point that we ultimately rely on divine grace breaking into our existence from without (Tillich)—or that we must live with the sobering realization that some of us will simply remain incapable of love (Murdoch). Tillich's and Murdoch's thought on love here indeed implies that persons whose potential for love remains unawakened—say, because they have never received love, as I will go on to suggest—will find themselves tragically unable to flourish.[1] In this sense, the human being, as understood by Tillich and Murdoch, remains incapable of autonomously fabricating his or her personal fulfilment, just as he or she cannot simply 'access' and instrumentalize either God or sovereign Good.

Advancing the Earlier Debate

It will have become obvious that Tillich's and Murdoch's defences of selfless love share significant similarities with the thought of Søren Kierkegaard. Both continue Kierkegaard's attempt to bring to the fore the concrete existing individual and (especially in Tillich's case) his powers of self-affirmation, while nonetheless privileging a notion of selfless love. Both share his conviction that the human individual exists in relation to a transcendent reality which is foundational for the human being's own reality, and

which profoundly affects how he should live his life. But they also hold that the existential individual is alienated from this reality. For them, like Kierkegaard, this properly results in a more or less agonized personal, moral, and spiritual struggle for genuine subjectivity (Tillich and Murdoch), meaning (Tillich), and goodness (Murdoch). As already noted, Murdoch in particular adopts Kierkegaard's awareness that even seemingly selfless love is often little more than self-love in disguise.

On my proposed reading, both Tillich and Murdoch nonetheless offer a more successful integration of selfless love and human flourishing by bringing to the fore the existential individual's active role in selfless love. For one thing, they both strengthen the importance of human eros for selfless love, and thereby bring us at least a step closer towards recognizing the human being's natural desire to flourish as a resource for selfless love, and as being satisfied by such love. Although we saw that Tillich's integration of eros and agape is not without faults, it involves a basic hopeful recognition of the finite individual's created goodness and of her intrinsic connection with the saving ground of her being that is lacking in Kierkegaard. The individual's erotic desires are not blindly accepted in all their manifestations, but are nonetheless seen capable of opening and—in principle at least—guiding the individual to the divine ground in which lover and beloved are united. Murdoch, similarly, is cognisant of eros's ambiguity, yet at the same time recognizes eros as a fundamental and indispensable force towards Good. Without this inner mechanism or attraction, the human being would lack an intrinsic motivation for goodness, and thus for unselfing love. Implied in this greater valuation of eros is a more unambiguous endorsement of the finite individual and his or her well-being in this world.

Tillich and Murdoch achieve a greater integration of selfless love and human flourishing also by virtue of developing a more relational anthropology. In contrast to Kierkegaard's claim that the knight of faith is 'sufficient (unto himself', Murdoch, and especially Tillich, labour at demonstrating the interdependency of human individuality and relationality. Again, their proposals ultimately remain insufficient in this regard. Murdoch seems to retain something of Kierkegaard's solipsistic tendency in her scepticism towards the desire for a return of one's love. Tillich has been found to underemphasize the shared and mutual nature of true love. Nonetheless, both embed the human individual more firmly within the world and the relationships this brings, and recognize precisely the human being's self-centredness or self-concern (even where this expresses itself as a concern with one's own virtue) as detrimental to true and flourishing selfhood.

By simultaneously strengthening the existential individual's role in love and emphasizing that individual's intrinsic relationality, Tillich and Murdoch also help counter the impasse between the defenders and the detractors of selfless love examined in Chapter 3. In different ways, Nygren, Weil, and Sartre all denied either the human being's individuality or his relationality. Nygren's talk of the ideal human being as a tube through which God's love flows leaves little room for personal individuality, and instead reduces the human being to a vehicle for God's love of himself—that is, to pure relationality. The radical nature of Weil's call for a process of unselfing entails a similar compromise of human individuality. Again, the human being is to be reduced to a vessel 'through which God's love flows'. Sartre's understanding of human freedom, on the other hand, lets selfless love, and human relations in general, appear as nothing less than a threat to the core of a person's identity.

Tillich, in particular, supports his claims regarding the interdependency of individuality and relationality by reference to the human being's intrinsic relationship with a transcendent reality that grounds his

being.[2] On the one hand, the individual's foundational relationship with the transcendent bestows on him an inviolable dignity, and reinforces his significance as divinely created. On the other hand, the same relationship serves as the foundation for understanding relationality as such to be life-giving. It is in acknowledging these two poles and the tension between them that Tillich, and to some extent Murdoch, ultimately challenge the radicality of Sartre's claims about the instability of the human self. Although they admit that the self is unstable insofar as its identity is continually moulded by (dynamic) relationships, they nonetheless hold on to a minimal stable core—or, as Murdoch puts it, some basic degree of self-being—on account of which the human being can enter into desirous relationships and attachments in the first place. I would thus suggest that, contrary to Sartre's or indeed Nygren's self, Tillich's and Murdoch's self can be described as a *relational substance*.

It will have become evident that grounding the interdependency of individuality and relationality in the tension between finitude and infinity not only helps mediate between, say, Nygren and Sartre, but also helps overcome the impasse between freedom and determinism, and that between eros and agape. For as we saw, it leads Tillich and Murdoch to affirm and endorse the human capacity to transcend the status quo, while also recognizing that this capacity is itself embedded in, and constrained by, the finite world. Likewise, it leads them to embrace the human being's erotic drive as a meaningful symptom of this tension, while also acknowledging the priority and normative import of a more agapeic love that seeks the good of the other. If the individuality of human selfhood is interdependent on its relationality, then love can neither, as Nygren and Weil propose, sacrifice the individual (say, to the relationship with God) nor, as Sartre proposes, sacrifice relations with the other to one's own fight for individuality. Instead, so Tillich and Murdoch argue, both individual flourishing *and* love require precisely a loving surrender to the other and a valuation of the individual lover himself.

Weaknesses and Unresolved Issues

Thus far I have largely highlighted the positive contribution Tillich and Murdoch make to the question of selfless love. Yet in order to clarify where and how a viable account of selfless love may have to move beyond Tillich's and Murdoch's proposals, it is important briefly to recapitulate their main weaknesses, as already stated towards the end of Chapters 5 and 7.

There I argued that both Tillich and Murdoch fail to adequately acknowledge and foster the personal dimension of the human being. I suggested that this shortcoming is intertwined with a tendency to underrate the role of mutuality or reciprocity in love. These weaknesses, like Tillich's inclination to turn eros into a law unto itself, once again amount to a portrayal of selfless love as an overly individualistic or solitary endeavour. Notwithstanding their awareness that the call to selfless love is conditional upon a relational anthropology, Tillich and Murdoch do not sufficiently live up to this criterion and fail to fully liberate themselves from a more solipsistic understanding of the human person.

Among other things, this prevents them from adequately demarcating true selfless love from the kind of self-destructive and exploitative relationships feminist thinkers typically associate with the term. To be sure, simple accusations of a misogynist conservatism[3] are misguided in relation to both Murdoch and Tillich. For, as I have shown, both ground selfless love not in a patriarchal order or a narrow and antiquated set of moral norms or duties but in an ungendered understanding of the human being's anthropological make-up—in what they argue to be every human being's dependency on, or even intersubjectivity with, God and the world. As Hämäläinen has pointed out, Murdoch's key inspiration—

Weil's notion of submission—is itself more of 'a radical Christian … bent', and envisions the figure of 'the warrior-angel or martyr-saint, rather than the mother, wife or muse'. As such, 'it occupies, arguably, a slot which is genderless and always adversarial to habitual relations of power'. Nonetheless, Tillich and Murdoch brush over the lover's need to receive love before he can—and should attempt to—give love, as well as over the lover's desire for his love to be returned such that selfless love leads to the kind of communion with the other that the human person naturally desires.

Thus, while Tillich and Murdoch have certainly underlined the continued relevancy of the notion of selfless love and offered valuable foundations for selfless love, they do not satisfy the full range of criteria for selfless love established in Chapter 1 of this book. In what follows, I wish to make some suggestions as to how some of these weaknesses may be counteracted. Unable to offer a complete account of the preconditions for defending selfless love, I focus on three key features which Tillich and Murdoch either reject or leave undeveloped, yet which would help bolster their case for selfless love. The three elements I have in mind are: (1) a determined endorsement of the human need to receive love before giving love, as well as of the human desire and potential for mutual love; (2) an emphatic embrace of the fact that transcendent, objective Good is necessarily the Good of self *and* other and, thus, the unifying meeting point of the two; and (3) an account of the transcendent as a personal reality who instigates and makes possible selfless love in the first place. In order to demonstrate the relevance of these points, it will be beneficial to have recourse to the personalism of Martin Buber, with whom Tillich and Murdoch share much in common and on whom both comment. I will also make some suggestions as to how Tillich's and Murdoch's accounts of love provide the foundations for, and can accommodate at least some of, these features more easily than is suggested by their prima facie scepticism, or even antipathy, towards one or more of these features.

Giving and Receiving in Selfless Love

Selfless love, I firstly propose, can facilitate the flourishing of lover and beloved only if it rests on a prior reception of love. Although rooted in the lack of a full self, selfless love must properly be understood as rooted also in a plenitude of love. This dependence of selfless love on a gift of love must manifest itself in the selfless lover's openness to receiving love also from his beloved. On the basis of this insight, I secondly argue that selfless love ultimately tends towards mutuality. This does not mean that selfless love should not be directed towards our enemies or that each and every love relationship must be two-directional. It does, however, mean that the selfless lover is not indifferent to the return of his love, but is indeed oriented towards this.

Tillich, to some extent, admittedly acknowledges the dynamic of giving and receiving in love. Before the human individual becomes capable of selfless love, so he argues, such love has to break into and transform existence from without, thus acknowledging that 'the sick cannot overcome the sick'.[7] Implied in this is the suggestion that full human selfhood depends on being participated in *by* another even before participating in the other. Coupled with Tillich's insistence that such divine participation becomes fruitful only where it is accepted, human flourishing is therefore ultimately tied to a *cooperative* effort *between lovers*. Yet, as we saw, Tillich does not fully spell out these insights, and instead undermines them by de-emphasizing the personal nature of the transcendent, and by failing to fully unravel the mutual or 'communal' nature of true love. Murdoch's understanding of transcendent Good as a passive reality that cannot be communicated with and that does not love the human being

cuts the person off from any kind of external help and, in that sense, isolates her even more. Her moral subject 'must do it all [her]self'.

Receiving Love from the o/Other

As the lover's gift to his beloved, selfless love must have been received before it can be given or passed on. This claim, which of course echoes 1 John 4.19 ('We love because he first loved us'), is most fundamentally true insofar as the lover's very existence depends—at least in a broad sense—on the reception of love. In addition to the procreative act, the acts of clothing, feeding, and nurturing a newborn baby necessarily involve something of what Tillich and Murdoch define as selfless love: they issue from the care-giver's loving and attentive turn away from self and towards the needs and well-being of another, the baby. Without being 'loved into being' in this most basic manner, the human being dies. That a person's being should depend on such elemental acts of love almost naturally invites the suggestion that the *fullness* of her existence, her flourishing, also depends on the reception of love in a sense that goes beyond external acts.

As we saw, a person's ability to love selflessly, moreover, rests on self-awareness and a sense of self-worth. In order to love selflessly, a person must (consciously or unconsciously) know herself to be a free moral agent with a calling to God or Good, and must believe her own love to be worth giving to another. All of these capacities grow with being loved by another first: they grow on account of a person's experience of being respected and affirmed as an individual of intrinsic value and with the powers of agency and judgement; and they grow on account of her having experienced the value of relations with others. Though not a guarantee, the experience of being loved is certainly a benefit, and most likely a prerequisite, for one's own ability to love—an insight confirmed both by everyday experience and by insights into the psychological development of the human person.

Recognizing the importance of receiving love for giving love does not necessarily amount to endorsing also self-love. It does, however, underline that selfless love cannot rest on self-disdain. Such an attitude would obstruct a person's openness to allowing herself to *be* loved, and would thus undermine that sense of self-worth, without which she would not consider her own love worth giving. A viable defence of selfless love must therefore acknowledge that such love is premised on a benevolent self-acceptance or self-affirmation, wherein the subject affirms herself as the relational and necessarily other-oriented person that she is, and on account of which she can allow herself to be loved by others.

Desiring the o/Other's Love

Selfless love furthermore involves a special openness towards receiving the love of the *beloved*. For, as Gabriel Marcel has argued, the lover's sense of self-worth does not derive simply from being loved but from 'being loved by other **(p.189)** beings *who are loved by me*'. In the long run at least, selfless love can only be sustained if it is returned by (at least some of) those to whom it is given. The lover must thus openly receive and even invite or desire a return of her selfless love. This follows also from the very purpose of selfless love. If selfless love wants to affirm the other and promote his well-being, then it must make a lover of him too: the axiom, which dovetails with my argument throughout this book, 'that the more exclusively it is *I* who exists, the less do I exist', applies to lover and beloved equally. True love of the other and his or her Good cannot, therefore, consist merely in respect for the beloved's otherness, but must also entail a (selfless) desire for the *beloved* to love what is outside of him, including the lover herself. As David Bentley Hart has pointed out, where the other's response to my love is, as in

Levinas, neither 'expect[ed]' nor 'want[ed]', 'the other is not really other at all … but the infinite orientation of *my* ethical adventure'; 'by expecting nothing of the other, wanting nothing, I leave the other behind; and stripped of the dignity of the desirable … the other becomes merely my "occasion"'.

We can conclude from this that the human person's desire to *be* loved, though oftentimes maligned by modern thought, has not only a legitimate but a fundamental place in selfless love. This desire, which includes the desire to be loved by one's beloved and, thus, the desire for a mutuality or a communion of love, is relevant both to the effort of sustaining one's selfless love and to seeking the good of the beloved. Selfless love indeed reaches its climax and bears the greatest fruit where this desire is fulfilled: it culminates in a reciprocal relation such as that of friendship, wherein each party gratefully returns the other's selfless love and thereby gives the other back to himself anew and enriched. Indeed, it is precisely in its quest for the other's Good that selfless love naturally tends towards mutuality and thereby acknowledges that the Good is ultimately attained, not as a result of unilateral action *on behalf of* another, but through cooperation *with* another.

Clarifying Reciprocity

It must be stressed that such an affirmation need not undermine love's gratuitousness or the particular value of non-reciprocal relations—concerns that constitute the tenor of Murdoch's implicit scepticism of reciprocity, and of her explicit critique of Martin Buber's notion of dialogical relation as the foundation of human personhood. Firstly, the quest for reciprocity as I have commended it is not motivated by self-interest, and does not entail 'the reasonable expectation that one will receive a return in proportion to what one gives to the other'. Instead of involving a Sartrean redefinition of love as the 'demand to be loved', it involves the *desire* and the *hope* of a return for the sake of the *other*. It also grants a sense of the 'unreturnable' insofar as it acknowledges and embraces the fact that, as soon as a gift (such as the gift of love) 'passes into someone else's hands, it is marked by their character, by their usage' and will, if returned, be qualitatively altered. An affirmation of reciprocity in selfless love does not undercut the Christian command to love our enemies so typically associated with selfless love. It still implies that selfless love is given 'without the guarantee of return' and bears with the lack of a return. At the same time, it does mean that selfless love of one's enemies aims not at *sanctioning* but, precisely, at *undoing* hostile relationships by laying the ground for a mutual understanding that is fully actualized only where the love received is returned.

It is, secondly, misguided to suggest that an affirmation of reciprocity necessarily implies an undue elevation of *symmetrical* relations that devalues relations with the weak and vulnerable, or even non-human. In this respect, it is helpful to turn to the personalism of Martin Buber, whom both Tillich and Murdoch engage, yet whom Murdoch, at least in part, misreads. Buber fiercely rejects the notion of 'love without dialogue' and, much like Tillich after him, suggests true dialogue and individual personhood to be interdependent. The fully personal self emerges in the context of 'mutual' or dialogical relations. Where the human being says 'Thou' to the other, or where he opens and gives himself to her, the other will respond in a similar way, such that a mutual relation emerges, in which self and other reveal their very being to one another.

As Buber makes clear, this dialogue, which is critical to full personhood, does not necessarily consist in a visible and conscious exchange between two human parties of similar standing. Instead, it consists in a 'mutuality of inner action', which need not be oral or even conscious, and which can take place also with

non-human beings, such as animals or trees. Buber grounds this in an appeal to a reality which transcends the finite other and which he identifies as God: where I meet a finite reality as a 'Thou', it is not only this finite other who reveals himself to me, but also God, the 'eternal Thou'. Where the other does not visibly or consciously respond to my saying Thou, God's presence in what Buber calls the 'between' of self and other nonetheless allows a revelation also of the finite other's being. It is in and through this divine presence, then, that dialogue can take place even where one or both parties are not explicitly aware of it, and it is in and through the various 'moments' of dialogue with others that 'there arises for us with a single identity the Lord of the voice, the One'. The reciprocity enabled by the I–Thou relation does not, then, equal 'speech' in the sense of conversation. A tree lovingly addressed as 'Thou' will not, for instance, respond visibly or consciously, yet it will nonetheless respond—by disclosing Although perhaps qualitatively different, even less complete, than an *openly* two-directional dialogue, such a *seemingly* unidirectional dialogue is all the more possible between human persons. It is conditional, however, on a God who reveals Himself in and through the other.

An appropriate understanding of the importance of reciprocal relations to selfless love thus hinges on the recognition that reciprocity has many guises, and includes much of what appears to be non-reciprocal. At the same time, it need not, as Murdoch fears, correspond with a rejection or depreciation of non-reciprocal relations. In this respect it is necessary to move beyond Buber: while Buber does not, as Murdoch seems to imply, *reject* the non-mutual I–It relations, it is true that his elevation of I–Thou relations comes at the cost of *making positive sense* of genuinely non-mutual relations. Instead of exploring the positive value of the many, and oftentimes inevitable, cases in which reciprocity is absent, Buber attempts to conceive of all authentic or meaningful relations as somehow dialogical (for which he has been criticized by Franz Rosenzweig). Implied in this seems to be the problematic suggestion that, where the other does not respond to my love, I have failed in meeting them as a Thou. Yet, while Murdoch, by contrast, appears to find greater value in such non-reciprocal relations, even she does not give a fully convincing explanation of why these might be morally relevant. Her insinuation that they most aptly mirror our supposedly non-mutual relation with transcendent Good is unsatisfactory insofar as it would seem to entail an *elevation* of non-mutual over mutual relations that does injustice to the human being's personal needs and potential. The suggestion that they, analogically speaking, confront the lover with the reality of death, on the other hand, fails if—as Christians believe—death is not an end-point.

A more satisfactory (and Murdoch-inspired) explanation of the moral significance of non-reciprocal relations might be that such relations can school and deepen a person's capacity for selfless love by furthering the purgation from selfishness that is necessary in order for selfless love to manifest itself to the full. Unreciprocated love arguably creates a certain distance between lover and beloved that invites the lover to question—and purify—the motives for his love. Murdoch illustrates this in the character of Diana, whose love of the dying Bruno is (seemingly) unidirectional and 'profitless' (in the sense of offering no personal satisfaction), but which—for this very reason—frees her from resentment and quite tangibly 'joins … [her] to the world' and, with this, to transcendent Good. Reciprocity can thus be endorsed without denying the fully valid, though nonetheless penultimate and provisional, value of non-reciprocal relations.

The claim that selfless love is grounded in reciprocal relations does not, then, correspond with a dismissal of non-reciprocal relations. Equally, it does not amount to a dissociation of selfless love from

the many forms of relation in which reciprocity is impossible. Instead, it entails merely the acknowledgement that even such love relations—such as manifest in love of the dead, love of enemies who are bent on remaining enemies, or love of an abuser, from whom the lover must stay away for the sake of his own well-being—can only be sustained on the basis of a 'larger' or overarching mediatory relation of mutual love. The most complete form of such a mediatory relation is doubtlessly that between the lover and God. For, God's comprehensive love of all human beings joins the lover with his beloved and sustains the lover's capacity to love even where the beloved does not actively respond to the love he receives. (It is against this background that I go on to suggest, below, that a personal transcendent, with whom the lover can enter into a mutual love relation, is another critical factor in defending the up-building potential of selfless love).

Meanwhile, the link between selfless love and reciprocity serves to underline that non-reciprocal relations with other human beings are truly loving only to the extent that they continue to invite a direct or indirect form of reciprocation. Indeed, the sole hope of precisely those human beings who are unable or unwilling to love selflessly lies in their experience of being loved in a way that continues to hold out to them the possibility of becoming lovers themselves—and thus of entering into a mutual love relation. In a Christian context, which involves an eschatological vision, the promise that the possibility for such mutuality extends beyond this life further sustains the lover in his love of an unresponsive, or even hostile, beloved.

The notion that selfless love not only strives for, but rests on, cooperation and mutuality or reciprocity, finally, constitutes an important element in ensuring that selfless love be distinguished from what Marcel calls a 'pathology of giving', which ends in a 'moral suicide where one person abdicates and annuls himself completely for the benefit of another'. It is the logical conclusion of premising selfless love on the interdependency of self and other, and thus of distinguishing selfless love from the complete and unidirectional self-sacrifice of one person for another. The recognition that selfless love is intrinsically geared towards overcoming the lack of its return (even while it will, in principle, bear with such a lack), should make the notion of selfless love more palatable to feminists such as Margaret Farley, who has closely associated agape with a mutuality of equal giving and receiving between lovers. Farley's suggestion that 'receiving and giving are but two sides of one reality which is other-centred love' indeed aligns with selfless love as I have described it. It equally indicates that feminist writers such as Barbara Hilkert Andolsen or Sarah Coakley are right to point out that emphasizing 'openness and vulnerability', or a 'dependence upon love from others', is no selfish indulgence but an important challenge precisely to the individual's selfish self-enclosedness. In this light, then, Murdoch's worry that the quest for reciprocity accommodates human selfishness is too one-sided. Selfishness can take on many forms, including a lack of openness towards, even of concern for, a reciprocation of one's love.

The Oneness of Good

Affirming the place of reciprocity in selfless love is one more aspect of clarifying that selfless love, in principle and properly understood, benefits self and other equally. Doing so closely corresponds with a recurrent insight from my discussion of love and the self in Tillich and Murdoch: the Good of the self is intertwined with that of the other. I now propose that a viable defence of selfless love demands a greater emphasis not only on reciprocity but, connected with this, also on the oneness of Good.

Although this follows particularly from Murdoch's theory of Good, it is underemphasized by Murdoch herself.

As Murdoch implies, contra the successors of G. E. Moore (though not against Moore himself), the objectivity of Good is intertwined with its oneness. We saw that Murdoch's understanding of the human being relies on the notion that all his or her desires are harmonized and fulfilled in the one true and objective Good. Only thus, she argues, can one maintain an authentic moral philosophy—as opposed to an ideology concerned merely with gratifying one's various personal, conflicting, subjective desires. Murdoch—unlike Tillich—gives expression to this conviction by consistently speaking not of the 'Good of the self' and the 'Good of the other' but only of 'Good' as such. This manifests itself also, and particularly, in her depiction of eros. Whereas we saw Tillich define this as the desire for the fulfilment of *self*, Murdoch portrays it solely as an (admittedly fallible) desire for 'Good'. In doing so, Murdoch may be motivated above all by her somewhat one-sided sense of human selfishness and by her related insistence that we must love Good 'for nothing'. This arguably leads her to underemphasize the extent to which this one Good does, after all, concern not only the beloved but also the lover himself. Nonetheless, her reference solely to the one Good is a valuable reminder that the oneness of Good means that Good is a reality shared by all. Tillich's definition of eros and agape as the desire for the fulfilment of self and the desire for the fulfilment of the other respectively is less helpful in this respect.

Notwithstanding the individuality of self and other, the Good of the self is neither parallel to, nor at odds with, that of the other. Instead, it is entwined with this. The individual cannot flourish privately, apart from the other and 'their' Good, nor is his or her flourishing, as Sartre would have it, inevitably at odds with that of the other. Indeed, where the moral subject perceives a supposed act of love to be bad for himself, this act cannot fully benefit the other (and vice versa). Thus, although selfless love seeks the Good *in* the other to whom it is oriented, it is, ideally speaking, a shared endeavour in which self and other naturally meet—an insight which corresponds with my suggestion above that selfless love tends towards reciprocity. As a common reality, the Good is indeed most perfectly sought *with* the other, such as in friendship. This means also that it is appropriate—and nearly inevitable—for the selfless lover to be aware of the fact that his love, though directed towards the other, in whom Good is found, will be also to his own benefit. As has been established, selfless love cannot be motivated by self-interest. Yet it is nonetheless undermined by the idea that the Good of the other rules out any gains for the self.[44]

A Personal Transcendent

I finally propose that selfless love does most justice to the personal potential of lover and beloved, and thus promotes human flourishing most fully, if the 'ontological third reality' to which both Murdoch and Tillich appeal is, analogically speaking, *personal.* By this I do not mean to cast the transcendent as an anthropomorphic being among other beings. Rather, I seek to establish and justify the claim that the transcendent loves the human person in his or her individuality, such that this reality—most commonly and aptly named God—can be understood to facilitate and sustain an intimate and interpersonal love relation with the human being that respects his or her freedom to refuse such a relation. This definition is rooted in more classical definitions of personhood as entailing a will and an intellect, the former being the precondition for the ability to love. It also reflects, however, the Christian belief that God has shown himself in a concrete and loving human person, and thus gestures towards a Trinitarian understanding of God, which I discuss further below.

In arguing for the importance of the personal nature of the transcendent, I, likewise, do not presume to demonstrate the actual existence of a personal God but merely to show how the traditional conception of a personal God places selfless love on a more coherent and tenable foundation. With this third proposal I most clearly move beyond Tillich's and Murdoch's thought: while they both are open to casting the transcendent in terms of a personal God on a loosely symbolic level, I propose that the language of 'personhood' can be attributed to God really and properly, albeit, imperfectly and non-exhaustively. The point here is that personhood or personality can be attributed to God in a way that is qualitatively different from other divine attributes which are commonly termed 'symbolic' or 'metaphorical'. God is truly personal because he truly knows us and loves us in a way similar to how other humans know and love, and which in turn illuminates and informs (and ultimately causes) our own personhood (even as it infinitely surpasses that which we experience as personhood in this world). As I will argue, such a view supports a more firm endorsement of the personal nature and potential of the human self, and of the previously described elements of reciprocity and of the oneness of Good.

The Personal Transcendent and the Finite Other

The importance of the personal nature of the transcendent has already suggested itself by the fact that both Tillich's and Murdoch's problematic depersonalization of the human being is embedded in a metaphysic centred around a (more or less) impersonal transcendent. The link between one's understanding of the human being and of the transcendent is reinforced where love of human persons is, as in Tillich's and Murdoch's case, thought to connect the lover precisely with the transcendent. Murdoch's thought is particularly indicative of this difficulty. She rightly stresses that 'a love which … treats [the beloved other] as an *end* not as a *means*, may be the most enlightening love of all'.[45] Aware that she would violate this principle by positing that Good is encountered *through* the other, she suggests that Good is encountered *in* the other.[46] In doing so, however, she falls into the untoward situation in which the moral subject looks for what is impersonal in what is personal, effectively being tempted to love the personal, human other as one would love Good—that is, with an impersonal love, which loves the other 'for nothing' and without envisaging a response. As I have argued, such an impersonal love of what is personal fails to love the other for the person they are and runs past their—and the lover's—particular needs and potential. The implication of Murdoch's metaphysic is that an impersonal Good ultimately depersonalizes even the human relationships of the one who loves this Good, thus hampering the possibility of mutuality and communion, or of that form of relationship in which human *persons* would seem to flourish best.

As I have already suggested, human personhood, and the human being's consequent capacity for love relations, is equally endangered where God is understood as an impersonal ground of being or life-force. The term 'persona' originally means mask and can thus be understood to refer to that which is not 'present-at-hand' or which exceeds what we can see and control.[47] Personhood thus involves the reality of a will and, hence, freedom. It signifies, precisely, the *transcendent* and *free* nature of God. This is critical both to God's capacity to love (for a determined or an imposed love cannot be love) and to the human being's freedom and capacity to love. Only where the ground of our being is personal and thus free can we be, and experience ourselves as, free agents of love.[48] One who is grounded in an impersonal, deterministic 'force', cannot truly love.

Apart from better explaining the foundations of our capacity to love, understanding God as personal also establishes a more coherent symmetry between loving the human other and loving God (or the

transcendent Other). Within such a framework, the lover is free to encounter God in the human other without having to depersonalize his love-relation with that other. By better ensuring that the lover acknowledge and love the other as the person he is, the notion of a personal God also helps free the moral subject's relations with the beloved from undue pressures, and thus to safeguard the beloved's freedom and individuality. One of the greatest challenges of rooting selfless love in a relational anthropology (and thus in the interdependency of self and other) lies in explicating that the lover's flourishing is *affected* by the other's response but does not wholly *depend* on this. As I have argued, selfless love itself prescribes that the lover cares about the other's response. At the same time, it would seem almost impossible to think of him as wholly dependent on such a response without in some sense making the other into a liability—thus giving rise to a Sartrean antagonism between self and other.

Where the selfless lover stands in relation both to a finite other and to a personal transcendent, he or she can allow and desire the former's loving response while being able to accept also the lack of such a response. The finite other plays a definite, but not an exhaustive or exclusive role in the unfolding of the lover's personhood. It is helpful, in this respect, to call to mind Buber's already mentioned notion that the personal self of the lover is bestowed by the divine third, which 'has its being *between* [the finite lover and beloved], and transcends both'. Buber does ultimately consider the *mutual* love between self and other the necessary context for the emergence of an I–Thou relationship, and thus for the development of the lover's full, personal self. Yet his understanding of transcendent reality as personal and loving at least frees him from tying the constitution of the self to the other's concretely visible response, and indeed broadens the meaning of the term 'response'. Most importantly, the lover's self is not built up by the finite other directly but by the God who shows himself in the space *between* self and other.

Understanding the transcendent as personal thus helps free the finite beloved from undue pressures to respond to the love of another in a particular and externally visible way. At the same time, it does not render the externally visible response of the beloved immaterial to the lover's flourishing. Where the beloved does return the lover's love, the beloved for instance manifests and makes visible the divine response in a manner appropriate to the human being's embodied and emotional nature. The lover's selfhood and well-being is thus promoted more tangibly and completely, its shared and incarnate nature becoming more obviously apparent. Where the finite beloved does not openly return the lover's love, both lover and beloved will, in turn, be more likely to struggle to perceive and receive that transcendent love, which sustains the lover *qua* lover and which builds up his self. Nonetheless, where the transcendent itself is conceived of as a personal respondent, the lover is not fully dependent on his beloved's response. The beloved's lack of active participation in the love relationship can thus be respected even while it prevents love from becoming fully manifest.

A Foundation for Reciprocity and the Oneness of Good

The notion that the transcendent is best thought of as personal is in line also with my above argument for the special value of reciprocity. Given human personhood, a fully mutual relationship can be had only with a partner whose personal potential—that is, whose freedom and capacity for love and subjectivity—matches or exceeds that of the human being. It follows that if selfless love can be most fully practised in the context of mutual love relations, it is most fully present in relations of mutuality between persons. Although the transcendent may, as Tillich seems to imply, be more than personal (such that it can for instance be the source of being and fulfilment also of realities transcending

the human person), it is precisely its similarity to human personhood which is of particular significance for a viable account of selfless human love. In making such a claim, it is worth noting that it is no less scandalous to apply the analogy of love to relations with the Good than it is to apply the analogy of the personal to the Good. Only where personal reciprocity becomes possible within the love relation with transcendent Good itself is justice done to Tillich's and Murdoch's claim that true love issues in, or involves, a love relation with the transcendent and that this relation is the ultimate foundation of the fullness of being of self and other.

Configuring the transcendent as personal also adds cogency to the claim that the one transcendent Good of which Murdoch speaks is, or includes, the Good of the human being, thus constituting the source of her flourishing. Since the human person's Good consists in an actualization of her *personal* potential, the manner in which we speak of Good should reflect this. While the transcendent may, again, be 'more' than personal, the fact that the Good of the human being is personal suggests that the transcendent must, analogously speaking, also be thought of as personal, and that it is this quality of transcendent Good which is particularly relevant to the human being. Similarly, and following my above suggestions regarding a connection between love, freedom, and personhood, if the language of love is central to conceptualizing the origins of the human being, and if this applies particularly to the human being's relation with the transcendent, then personal language is arguably the most satisfactory and 'capacious' language available to us for conceptualizing both the human being and the transcendent. Only a transcendent conceived of as personal, that is, an ultimate reality, which, though distinct from the human being, is—analogically—also pictured as relational, adequately reflects the human being's Good and the utmost or fullest object of her love. In short, if transcendent Good includes personal goods, then it must be especially apt to characterize this Good itself as personal.

The Transcendent as Trinity

In Christian theology, the notion of a personal transcendent reaches its acme in the doctrine of the Trinity. Implying that 'the persons in God are nothing less than relationships', this expresses the personal nature of the transcendent not only in terms of a relationship between God and world but also in terms of a loving, inner-divine relationality. The Trinity thereby highlights the unfathomable nature of the transcendent (stressed by both Tillich and Murdoch). When analogously used as a basis for clarifying the nature of the human being, it furthermore underlines that loving relationships are not accidental to the human being but constitutive of who he or she *is*. At the same time, the fact that each of the Trinitarian persons retains an individual distinctness, confirms the claim that relationality, again, does not come at the cost of individuality but that these two elements condition one another. As Enrique Cambón has pointed out, the Trinitarian persons' equal distinctness and loving relationality also clearly distinguishes selfless love, as I have called it, from self-annihilation: 'A trinitarian relationship between two or more persons means that each one is himself or herself while bringing the other to be.'

By characterizing the divine life as marked by a reciprocity of giving and receiving among persons, the doctrine of the Trinity, similarly, lends support to my above claim that, if it is to do justice to the personal nature of the human being, then the gift of selfless love must ultimately correspond also with a reception of love. Traditional understandings of the Trinity associate the movement of giving with the Father and that of receiving with the Son. The doctrine thus underlines the interrelatedness of these movements: just as a father and son logically imply one another, so do the movements of giving and receiving love. Assuming that this Trinitarian scheme, mysterious though it is, sheds light also on human

love, we can say that the human being's *gift* of love, which seeks the Good of the other, imitates in particular the love of the Father, in whom the lover participates through his act of love. As such, the gift of love logically corresponds with the human beloved's active *reception* of this love (or indeed the lover's prior reception of love), which in turn constitutes a participation in God the Son, who is called the 'beloved'. The fact that, while engaging in this dynamic reciprocity, the Trinitarian persons remain in a perfect, though complex, unity ties together my above two points about love's proper striving for reciprocity and its rootedness in the unity of Good: the Good of the Father and the Son is one.

Pushing the analogy between divine and human reciprocity yet a step further, we can say that—insofar as it imitates that of Father and Son—the relation between lover and beloved makes present God the Spirit, who brings forth the flourishing of both lover and beloved. Incidentally, such a perspective lends further backing to Tillich's notion that the 'Spiritual Presence' forms the precondition for human flourishing. It is also in keeping, of course, with Buber's notion that God speaks from the space *between* lovers. The doctrine of the Trinity thus also corresponds with my above suggestion that the reciprocity of selfless love properly speaking involves not two but three parties, insofar as the self is built up not solely through the lover or the beloved but also and especially through the love of a transcendent third.

It is noteworthy that the link between the doctrine of the Trinity and mutuality or reciprocity has led Christian feminists, too, to see in this doctrine a particularly important image of loving relations. As already indicated, Farley, for instance, asserts that the three persons of the Trinity engage in a reciprocal giving and receiving of love. Elizabeth Johnson sees in the doctrine of the Trinity 'a symbolic picture of totally shared life at the heart of the universe'. As she argues, the doctrine emphasizes 'the connectedness of all that exists in the universe', and portrays this connectedness as one of mutuality between 'different equals'. The Trinity is here considered to convey that relation is the very fabric of reality and, in its right formation, holds the key to 'the flourishing of all creatures'.

Compatibility with Tillich's and Murdoch's Thought

As I argued, Tillich's claim that the abstract language of being allows for a better grasp of the transcendent than personal language, stands in tension with his own characterization of the human *telos* as one of personhood. My proposal that the transcendent be conceived of as personal does not contradict Tillich's thought, therefore; rather, it is more in line with, and undergirds, his insight into human personhood. As Schwartz points out, as Tillich moves from Volume I to Volume II of the *Systematic Theology*, he himself comes to realize 'that a two-fold access to God, non-symbolic and symbolic, is impossible' and concludes that all language of God is symbolic. Tillich thereby opens the door to the more thoroughly Trinitarian perspective I here propose.

My above proposal constitutes a more definite break with Murdoch. Murdoch recognizes the metaphorical relevance of references to a personal 'God', but nonetheless insists on the actual unreality of such a God. Based primarily on a concern about selfish elevations of the ego, her view here lacks a firm philosophical foundation, however. Murdoch for instance passes over the question of the origin of being; she gives no account of what it is that makes the depraved human being capable of undergoing the hard work of attention; and she leaves the tension between our supposedly intrinsic desire for Good and our equally natural selfishness unexamined. It has thus been argued that her philosophically wanting foundation for the Good leaves her unable to substantiate the Good: doing so would, again, mean giving

in ‘to the forces of self-gratification, vanity and destructive self-love’, and thus, to seeing the world according to the fantasies of the ‘fat relentless ego’ rather than ‘as it really is’. Murdoch thereby arguably makes faith in Good impossible.

That Murdoch’s assertion of Good is more a precaution against selfishness than a consistently argued philosophical conclusion would help explain why, in her understanding of the Good, Murdoch seems in some ways not to move beyond ‘the characteristics of the old God’. As we have seen, she holds on to the incarnate nature of Good and continues to associate our path towards Good with a selfless kind of love. Her attempt to do this independently of the personal nature of the transcendent arguably involves her in various difficulties, however. As Stephen Mulhall, for instance, notes, Weil’s sense that ‘the void can give spiritual succour’ becomes distorted in Murdoch’s metaphysics. It lacks the coherence such an insight receives from Christianity’s ability (as Mulhall puts it) to ‘incorporate … the ultimate human experience of reality’s resistance to meaning and value within the life of God’, who died in the person of Christ on the cross and rose to life. A more personally conceived transcendent would not only better confront some of these problems, but would also help solve many of the philosophical problems elicited by Murdoch’s rejection of the idea.

Selfless Love and Human Flourishing

I began this study with the observation that the modern turn to the individual human self has, in many places, created a stalemate between selfless love and human flourishing. In Sartre’s case, for instance, it has resulted in an opposition of self and other and in a definition of love as ‘the project of making oneself be loved’. The biblical promise that we gain our life through losing it is thus rendered unintelligible. For, contrary to the New Testament, Sartre implies that personal fulfilment is achieved not through lovingly turning away from self and towards the other, but through asserting oneself over against the other.

Our study of Tillich’s and Murdoch’s thought on love and the self has suggested that modern thinkers such as Sartre nonetheless offer valuable insights into the nature and powers of the self, and are right in seeking to foster human individuality, freedom, and self-transcendence. However, it has also suggested that, insofar as these insights have led it to dismiss selfless love, modern thought has been misguided. As we saw, Tillich and Murdoch endorse in particular the modern awareness of the fragile and dynamic nature of the human self, and the conviction that the individual’s natural capacities, needs, and desires are instrumental for his or her flourishing. Yet they also insist that this does not yet settle the matter of selfless love, and they invite us, instead, to nuance modernity’s perspective on the human self—and only then to draw conclusions about the nature of love and its relation to human flourishing.

For, while philosophers such as Sartre rightly recognize the human being’s tendency to assume a false self-stability, they fail to see that their response to this state of affairs—namely, the endorsement of individual self-affirmation and self-assertion—in fact remains trapped within the parameters of the problem it seeks to address. The human being’s refusal to recognize the fragility of the self and the attempt to handle this by asserting the self over against the other are, on Tillich’s and Murdoch’s account, two sides of the same coin. Both stem from a failure to acknowledge and accept the intrinsically relational nature of the human self.

This relationality implies that the human self cannot, as Norris Clarke puts it, 'be looked on as primarily an isolated, self-sufficient individual, with freely chosen relations added on', but is 'intrinsically ordered toward togetherness with other human persons … i.e., toward *friendship, community*, and *society*'. The human self is properly co-determined or co-constituted by the o/Other, to the point that its flourishing—indeed, its very *being*—rests on actively welcoming the o/Other into itself. It is this make-up of the human self which ties human flourishing to an inner opening to and receiving of the o/Other or to what I, drawing on Tillich and Murdoch, have described as selfless love.

Despite its mentioned shortcomings concerning love and the self, modern thought provides distinct resources for making sense of this connection between selfless love and human flourishing. As Tillich and Murdoch recognize, the modern awareness of the self's instability, lack of self-containedness, and erotic drive all point to the self's intrinsic relationality and consequent need for the o/Other that founds this link. That the connection between selfless love and human flourishing is obscured in spite of these pointers is the result of a second modern failure—an unwillingness to accept human fallenness or the ambiguity of human desire, which is capable not only of revealing but also of concealing reality.

Where the relational nature of the human self and the fallenness of the self's desires are acknowledged, however, the link between selfless love and human flourishing begins to become evident. Signifying a turn away from self and an opening towards the o/Other, selfless love is that disposition towards the world by which the individual properly acts out his or her intrinsic relationality and enables his or her desires to reach their true goal. As we saw, this does not entail a renunciation of the individual's natural drives and desires so much as their reorientation. Rightly understood, selfless love, for instance, capitalizes on the self's dynamic drive towards self-transcendence and towards greater freedom, but also orients this drive *towards the o/Other*. Underlying this is the recognition that it is only in the context of overcoming its misguided self-seclusion from the o/Other that the human self is fully unfolded. As I have argued throughout this book, the flourishing facilitated by such a loving self-opening to the other is of a shared nature, yet nonetheless that of individual subjects. Mark McIntosh illuminates this point when he writes that, 'my freedom is always a freedom-for-the-other, but it is nonetheless the identifier of my self'; for, not only am I '*never more myself than when I give myself away for my neighbour in love*', but it is also 'the personal traits and vehemence' by which I do so which 'mark' me 'as a subject'.

The human being's hope of flourishing as a free individual thus rests on his relinquishing the self-concerned pursuit of personal well-being, and turning to the o/Other in selfless love instead. By definition, such a reorientation precludes the idea of using the o/Other as a means towards obtaining personal fulfilment. Indeed, it sees the o/Other as an end in itself. This implies not that selfless love is unmotivated, but that it is motivated by a desire for the one true Good, which, by definition, includes self and o/Other equally and wherein each finds his or her personal fulfilment. As Bernard of Clairvaux puts it:

> True charity is never left with empty hands, and yet she is no hireling, out for pay, but 'seeketh not her own'. … True love seeks no reward; and yet it merits one. Nobody ever dreams of offering to pay for love; yet recompense is owed to him who loves, and he will get it if he perseveres. <>

The Rapture of God: Balthasar's Theology, Exposition, and Interpretation by William Lloyd Newell [Hamilton Books, 9780761871880]

Editorial Evaluation: This book is a deep dive into the mystical, tangible theology of faith as present in the core of Balthasar's theological enterprise. **The Rapture of God: Balthasar's Theology, Exposition, and Interpretation** not only offers an orientation to reading Balthasar but also provides a masterful diachronic contextualization of Catholic theology during the 20th century. As such, I know of no better account of making Balthasar contemporary to a prayerful and contemplative faith seeking love and understanding within the radical sacramental presence of Christ as an invitation to become truly human(e).

The Rapture of God: Balthasar's Theology, Exposition, and Interpretation recommends Balthasar's theological oeuvre as a kerygma of Christ's love proclaimed theologically as Christ's esthetics of glory in his mission to reinvent himself, the world and us as beauty and glory. Balthasar's hypothesis is that there is true theology and there is false theology. For him, theology is the unique science across the methods of which the decision of faith cuts and divides it into two halves that cannot be united to each other: a genuine theology, which presupposes faith and does its thinking within the nexus of Christ and the Church; and a false theology, which rejects faith as methodologically dubious and irresponsible, and subsumes the truth of the phenomenon which discloses itself, under an anthropological truth (however this may be understood).

In William Newell's book he deeply reflects on the radical thinking being done in Catholic theology since the 1940s in Europe and now in the United States. Each chapter, each excursus, each elision, ushers the reader towards consolations without previous causes, the essence of mysticism in its first stages. The book, as with true theology, is a 'come and see' beckoning the reader to an endless furtherance of the archetypal experience of Christ.

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Rounding on a Theological Esthetics: Hans Urs Von Balthasar

If philosophy ends with beauty, theology begins with it. But modernity has made a pariah of beauty in both disciplines, so Christians should begin the science of theology with beauty since it and truth are transcendentals bonding God with the world.

Beauty plays its way into the mind partnered with the True and the Good. Of the three, beauty is the only disinterested one; without it the ancient world could never understand itself.2 In any age, but especially in ours, beauty demands courage of its acolytes because empirical science and even philosophy are anti-esthetic. The ministerial mission of Jesus' Incarnation, his priestly call, was to reimagine the world and us in it by inventing his inner beauty in concert with being seen, heard and touched in his interior senses by the Father. The glory of God is God's beauty. It renders God and the Christ believable and persuasive. Christ became believable and persuasive by overcoming the death of Adam's and Eve's innocent eros (desire) by discovering his own and offering it to them and their children, all of us. In Christ, eros became caritas (love). Thus, to be Christian, and especially to be a Christian theologian—not a religionist, a theologian—is to see and articulate God's glory/beauty for him- or herself so it can be given away as Good News for all.

But beauty has gone the way of the petite bourgeoisie and has become an adornment of a bygone age, the nineteenth century and Romanticism. Elsewhere, I have written of desire in the works of Rene Girard. As a litterateur, he details the best of the nineteenth century writers as they broadcast the fallen desires of their heroes and heroines as ressentiment, desire gone pathological. Balthasar bemoans the theological impotence of both Protestants and Catholics in their failure to retrieve glory from its true and only sources, the Scriptures and the Fathers; the way of doing theology from the beginning of Christianity to Scholasticism.4 Balthasar notes pithily that when beauty goes Being goes with it, rendering one incapable of prayer and love because, "man cannot bear to live with the object of his impotence, that which remains permanently unmastered. He must either deny it or conceal it in the silence of death."

For Balthasar, the good is not desirable unless it is beautiful. Shorn of beauty, the good becomes unattractive and denies the self-evidence of why it must be done rather than evil. Denuded of beauty, evil's attractions beckon one to try Satan's depths.6 If beauty no longer draws desire, logic's cogency slips away as proofs since truths find adherents whose arguments persuade only those whose religion and philosophy are habitual and willed, but not drawn by the beauty and elegance of logic founded on metaphysical truth (Being), and the glory of the Lord welling up out of the scriptures.

Aquinas calls Being a "pure light for that which exists." If one loses one of the transcendentals the other two are darkened and one becomes unable to read the language of beauty in the light shed by the

witness of Being since its witness offers one nothing trustworthy.' The tightness of transcendental unity strikes one in the work of Heidegger. In his early book on the logic of metaphysics he captures for us the substance of logic, the stuff of which is metaphysical: Being.8 In his remarkable essay on van Gogh's painting of a pair of peasant's shoes he delineates for us the fact that the artist captured the symbol, the very Being, of them with his art, and that in that painting there was the movement, the working, of Being; and because of that we call it and all art a work of art.9 Something is alive in it; Being suffused with beauty. When Benedetto Croce said that a playwright writes a work, the theater gives it place for the players to play it, and the audience closes the circuit, and what results is art; again, ontic action suffused with beauty. The One, the True, the Good and the beautiful dance around the foundational pole of the *speciosus* (comely) and *species* (likeness).

Balthasar has it that there is an inner radiance that transforms the species into the *formosus* (beautiful). Etymologically beauty is rooted in the word forma (form) or shape. Splendor renders a likeness (species) of the object beautiful; luminosity shines from within the form creating beauty. Something has to gather the randomly scattered fragments of beauty, uniting it as form and they communicate what it has become: things taken and put together by an artist who went into the empty place of creativity in himself to tell it first to himself and then to us also as art, an intrinsic togetherness needing nothing to be added to became art, beauty. There is an innerness here, soul, and its body communicated in what Balthasar called "free discourse governed by laws and clarity of language." And who can neither read nor see beauty falls prey to whatever is opposed to the true and good as well. The proclamation of the Gospels in the liturgy transforms the species (likenesses of Christ) into the Formosa, the salvific Presence and beauty of Christ. The inner luminosity springs forth and the glory of the Lord shines with a luminosity that makes of the participant an eyewitness who sees Christ, is touched by him, hears him, tastes him in the sense of an inward relishing of him, rolling it over one's inner tongue with the joy that Jesus imparted to first-listeners and makes of us first-listeners as well.

Plato reduced form, our origin, to a secondary level, rendering it derivative and thus reducing it to allegory to save our immortality and simplicity. For him, what we see is not symbol but allegory, a discourse not about us but about something else. Aristotle stayed true to what the senses see epistemologically since what we see is what is. However, his philosophy held out no hope for immortality. Greek tragedy was a crie du coeur against death. Balthasar concludes that only new flesh risen from the earth for eternity can stanch the hemorrhage inflicted on Christian theology by Neo-Platonism. Christ found his freedom in the power of being at home in himself so he could express himself by going out to another. This is the Gospel. We arise from our cultural and logical grammars, but they fell and were symbolled by Babel's logo-centric maze and the ensuing darkness it bespoke. Christ is the vault past humanity's inability to communicate itself to the new default of the supernatural. Freedom redivivus is the power of us all, in Christ, to say, this is my body and blood, linguistically and ontologically gifting ourselves and others with what makes us: being isomorphic with him in and through ourselves. Thus the freedom Christ won for himself by becoming the Christ he gives to us, so by obeying its laws, we regain the power to communicate ourselves. Like Christ, we hominize ourselves by having been communicated. But he became the Christ per contrario, that is, by hiding his glory in human darkness, the blind folds of muscles over bones. And we become Christian in the same way, by hiding our egos in the darkness of God and the darkness of the night of the soul, in obedience, with him, to suffering.

As he grew to manhood, Jesus found that his light as man was his freedom to become the mirror of the Father. The grace of salvation passes that grace of hominization on to all of us open to receiving it. For both him and us the attainment of freedom was a freedom to be and to have light (knowledge) and splendor (beauty). One's form is one's origin or ground that is identical to freedom. Duns Scotus limned it out for us: will is spontaneity, the Yes! Or No! To the self and God. The ground of us and God as ground, though two, are bonded in what the contemporary mathematician Georg Cantor formulates as one plus one is one.

Balthasar bemoans estheticism; it comes about when beauty is no longer identical with Being. Form is the event of Being. He invokes Schilling to describe the appearance of form. At dawn, heaven and earth remain one.

Earth is bathed in the celestial luminosity before heaven takes on its individuality. "Such is the charm of youth, in which the spirit plays in the body unselfconsciously." At midday the two have established themselves, but the light of the spirit remains in us shattering and transcending both the medium and instrument of its appearance. This destruction of the left alone earthly is the proclamation of the spirit's lordship and the beginning of our dignity. From the chrysalis of beauty shattered, the ethical flutters forth. Thus midday's destruction of the break-of-day-beauty creates our worth and issues the inner call to goodness due to the spirit's greater radiance than what it had at dawn. The ethical is beauty's inner coordinate enabling it to blossom to the full as the transcendental attribute of Being. For Origen, the moral emerges with urgency from the radiance and inner recesses of revelation. The Spirit's light (beauty) demands that we become better people. Revelation is God seeing us, the ground of both glory (beauty) and Jesus' having seen his disciples and issued the moral call to come, and see where he lives. The same being seen was the first step in OT (Old Testament) visitations from God. God saw Abraham and Moses and then moved into their hearts. Being seen happens yet in the NT (New Testament) and OT revelations. Seeing is the form of revelation; it happens in images. Balthasar says of art that it can die by being seen by too many dull eyes. Holiness too can be dulled by the indifference of those who see it with glaucomic eyes. God's beauty is the presence residing in all art and nature. Balthasar says that so much of the OT was poetry; that those writings antedated prose as we know it. God's glory (beauty) pulsates in the forms of the scripture's seventy two books; not the fickle flesh or words, but the dauntless flesh of the Word.

Esthetics

Balthasar crosses the boundaries between nature and grace in a somewhat care-free manner since charis means the charm of the beautiful but it also means grace. The nuptial psalm (44:3) sings "Charis is poured upon your lips." He believes that the beautiful in this world flows naturally towards rendering moral decisions; and that to religion and the question of God, whose sovereignty freely imposes judgment on us, due to the oughts God imposes on us, belongs faithful obedience. Crossing the lines demarcating the natural from the supernatural with such ease goes with the sapor of the beautiful. It is a nand that necessarily anoints one with the esthetic calling for the world to transform itself from its fixation on the instant passing of beauty. When metaphysics hoves towards a reconciliation with ethics, an esthetic sensibility results in their harmony.

The spirit toiling to form itself from within will necessarily submit to a higher sculptor in its efforts at sighting the higher law that honors one's autonomy, since it is the power to create its autonomy as its

ground. This is the spirit of inspiration instinct with the god (*en-thusiasmos*) obeying the command containing its form even as it imposes form. The ancients sensed this but only the Christian catches it with the accuracy of faith. Balthasar coins an axiom for us, "that from inspiration as a principle of self-formation and determination to inspiration as the state of being indwelt by a higher spirit there exists a genuine connecting step . . . faith in a supremely personal and freely sovereign Spirit-God." God is the primal ground destroying all other forms as Creator and the Christian commits him- or herself to him by faith. Such destruction is not the Hindu dissolution of worlds but the creation of them as their creative form; this in the face of the fact that the dross of our and things' forms must be burnt off in the creative process. For our part, we must allow God to be God by concurring with that work; that is faith.

The art of the creative Spirit becomes visible in the Church in the lives of its chosen. Not that these chosen form themselves. Nothing could be further from the truth. Prophets are stripped of their ability to shape themselves by becoming available to God's shaping work. The Spirit's art is hidden yet it is so conspicuous "that its situations, scenes, and encounters receive a sharp, unmistakable profile and exert an archetypal power over the whole history of faith."26 One would expect the opposite when someone placed himself completely at the disposal of the utterly Undefined and Unlimited. God's art takes on radically new and untried forms shaped out of the new clay of the Incarnation. God has always aimed at shaping us as he would have us be, begun in Eden's garden. It is impossible not to conclude that there is an analogy between God's formation of nature and man. History is the story of how both gave birth. We would misuse the analogy if we commit the abuse of subjugating revelation to metaphysics, ethics and worldly esthetics without respecting the sovereign work of God. The abuse is more egregious with worldly esthetics since it possesses a charm and persuasiveness that metaphysics and ethics lack, in comparison. Only fools make assertions about the essence of the world while anyone charmed or enraptured by the beauty of nature or art knows more than a little of the nature of beauty. The beautiful is self-evident and needs no mediator to enlighten us. But when we approach revelation with the beautiful as our focal lens it cannot focus on revelation's transcendent form; and so we stop before God's awesomeness.

Balthasar finds that the application of worldly concepts of the beautiful creates too many insurmountable problems and advises that one eschew applying them to theology for the simple reason that any theology employing worldly concepts of the beautiful on revelation would cease to be a theological esthetics and degenerate into an esthetic theology. What would happen is that the theologian would eviscerate the essence of theology ending up with worldly, not God's, views of beauty. But then, even though beauty in theology is a dangerous road Balthasar thinks it worthy of embarking on it; of course, such an enterprise requires special equipment and expertise. Can one beatuiful as one of the transcendentals of Being and apply it to anon? There is a high precedent for just that. Both the Fathers of the Church and the best of the Scholastics did that. What impelled them to do so were: First, they all had a theology of creation which assigned the esthetic values of creation to the Creator. Second, they had a theology of redemption and the perfection of creation attributed in the highest degree to God's best work in particular his work in the eschatological age. This work begins with the Resurrection in its sublimity in the Church and the offer and universal bestowal of grace. Hence, the Fathers of the Church view beauty as a transcendental and therefore see theology from this vantage point. Their theology of beauty could only be done in "a beautiful manner."

Balthasar's theological esthetics is kataphatic rather than apophatic; he views the theological method of the creation and paradise narratives of Theophilus, Irenaeus, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, and Anastasius of Sinai as God's beautiful epiphanies to us. It holds true as well for understanding the enduring and redeeming presence of God in creation and the incarnation of the divine Word in the theologies of Clement, Origen, Methodius, Athanasius, Jerome, Victorinus, and Augustine. It is also equally true of viewing the flesh of the Cross in the theologies of Ignatius, Hermas, Tertullian, Gregory of Nazianzen, Anthony, Cassian, and Benedict. He questions the theological appropriateness of exclusively viewing the economy of the Cross in an apophatic way, that is, the hiddenness of God in Christ's passion. But having said that, he details the Fathers' doctrine of contemplation; from Origen to Evagrius, Macarius and Augustine and on to Gregory the Great and Maximus the Confessor. They agree that contemplation is an ascent in which God's light ultimately transfigures the hidden earthly configurations of salvation. Contemplation is the sudden anticipation of the eschatological illumination of glory in the Servant. This is a kataphatic type of the contemplative experience where one sees or hears what the Holy Spirit sees or says. Others prefer an apophatic ascent in which one unknows the known and forgets what is remembered and lives behind the scrim of experiential darkness where, as with Origen, God's fire illuminates the letters of scripture. Irenaeus traces the Spirit's presence and highest art in salvation history. "Cyprian and Hilary see the splendor of love in the moral as well as sacramental and institutional unity of the Church. Leo the Great sees the highest harmony in the choral dance of the Church's feasts, and Evagrius sees the eternal light shining through the purified soul that knows God." Whatever method they follow, the Fathers are united in having experienced the esthetic contemplative moment lasered in this very moment.

Moving Up to Theological Esthetics: Task And Structure

Up to this point, Balthasar's view of the beautiful has been that of the layman. As such, it was an unreflective concept. To move beyond that, to a theological concept of the beautiful would, for the moment, prejudice the study both philosophically and theologically. However, one may distinguish between two characteristics of the beautiful without damaging the possibility of creating a theological esthetics: forma (species) and splendor (lumen), or form (Gestalt) and splendor as the ground of esthetics. Since Aquinas these two have controlled every esthetic. Form allows one to grasp the beautiful materially and graph it as relations of numbers and harmony subject to the laws of Being. Protestant esthetics not only failed to understand that but even excoriates this as heretical countering with the essence of beauty as an event of the irruption of the light in which form carries with it a depth and sublimity beyond our reach. Kant and Schiller describe it as gracefulness and dignity. The Spirit appears in the world in a concealed way [Luther's sub contrario] and in an even more concealed way due to its boundless freedom and superiority to the world. It is God disclosing God-Self in history in God's creation and the structured order of salvation. Being has been seen, experienced and one cannot grasp this without ethics and logic; the values and sublimity disclosed are grounded only in Being, that is, the boundlessly valuable. Beauty seen is infinitely fascinating, bestowing on us inexhaustible goodness and splendor. The gift of beauty given arouses depths of eros in the beholder. One knows the depths have appeared when one experiences the form of them as revelation. Balthasar says that such a revelation of the depths bespeaks an indissoluble union of things: one has experienced the real presence of the depths that are the whole of reality, and it is the transcendent real pointing one beyond itself to those depths. The classical period stressed the depths; Romanticism emphasized the boundless infinity pointing beyond itself to those depths. Both aspects are inseparable existentially. Together they constitute Being. The

rapture beheld will not allow one to jettison the horizontal form for a plunge into the bared depths. The glory of Being enraptures us as we see the splendor of its form. The rapture embraces us as we contemplate the depths which impel us to them. We inhabit a horizontal domain and never leave it to plunge headlong into the naked depths. Why are we confined to the horizonal? Simply since God is not a thing subordinate to Being, nor is God Being. As the epiphany happens, God manifests Godself in everything that appears as form. Protestant theology correctly rejects applying the application of the schema deriving from pre-Christian and particularly Greek philosophy since they distinguish between the ground of Being and the appearance of Being. God is a free spirit and God's expressions are structured differently from the gradations of sub-spiritual and organic beings. There are analogical gradations in God's triune and supremely free manifestations in creation, reconciliation and redemption. These are true self-representations certainly not done by one acting in the background but supereminent epiphanies of one acting decisively in nature, humanity and history. In the Preface of the Mass for Christmas the church prays, "Because through the mystery of the Incarnate Word the new light of your brightness has shone to the eyes of our mind; that by knowing God visibly we might be thoroughly seized by a love of invisible things by it." Faith, while not mentioned ex professo is implied in the two things containing it:

1. The eyes of the mind are struck by this new light from God, enabling them to know, visibly [contemplatively], an object which is God mediated through the sacramental form of the mystery of the incarnate Word.
2. Through this mediating vision we experience both rapture and that transports us to eros [love] for the unseen things that burst upon us by the physical appearance and revelation of the enfleshed Word.

The first point emphasizes seeing or beholding, not hearing or believing. Hearing is there implicitly by virtue of the Word that has become man; believing is there implicitly by virtue of the fact that what is seen is the mystery pointing to the invisible God. The all encompassing act of hearing and believing is a perception, taking to oneself, as true, that which was offering itself. This perception demands a new light to illumine the form breaking out of the form itself. This new light enables one to see the form at the same time that the one seeing is being seen along with the form. The splendor of the mystery offers itself in a way that no other esthetic radiance can offer. Thus, the two esthetic radiances are in no way to be equated. The world and all its beauty cannot offer this radiance; secular beauty pales in comparison. Though hidden, we can see, hear, and know God who is offering something to us that we can see and understand. God comes to us in a way that accords with our nature. God does not address us in total mystery demanding of us blind and passive faith. Rather, what God offers we can not only understand but can appropriate it and live from it.

What the second point intimates is that what God is offering us is not to be realized passively; on the contrary, this new light is an enabling luminosity rendering us capable of making it real. Thus, we are transported because we have seen the invisible God in a human way. The seeing arouses eros (amor) in us, not caritas. The whole person is moved with desire and love by the event of God entering history as one of us. Faith resides in this movement. The movement it causes is theological, ec-centric, since it moves us away from ourselves to God through Christ, a movement founded in the mystery of Christ and enlivened by his grace. The God seen enraptures us even in our recalcitrance and unwillingness due

to sin; grace renders us willing coefficients through our Christian eros; all this impelled by the divine Spirit enthusing and inspiriring us to collaborate.

The whole movement of man is eccentric, away from himself towards God through Christ who enraptures us. Thus, the vision of God is not a psychological transport but a theological one grounded in the light of grace in the mystery of Christ. The mystery of this movement towards him which God creates in us and enraptures us is co-effected freely by us through our Christian eros elevated and inspired continuously by the Holy Spirit who both enthuses and inspires us to collaborate even as we react freely and yet with recalcitrance due to sin.

Balthasar steps aside for a moment to elaborate on the use of eros (desire) rather than caritas (love). For that he invokes the Areopagite's apology for using eros in Christian theology. He stresses that this is not in contradiction to the Scriptures. What is at stake for Denys was the sense of the transporting of man's being and he found that eros catches its sense much better than does agape. Denys sees this as not only creating an esthetic statement but also a soteriological one as well. Balthasar quotes the whole passage so we can listen to it:

> And the divine Eros also brings rapture, not allowing them that are touched by it to belong to themselves, but only to the object of their love. . . . And hence the great Paul, constrained by the Eros, and having received a share in its ecstatic power, says, with inspired utterance: I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me. These are the words of a true lover, of one who (as he himself states) was beside himself (out of his senses!) and into God (2 Cor. 5:13), not possessing a life of his own (2 Cor. 5:15) but the life of his beloved, a life surrendered on all sides by an ardent love. And we must dare to affirm (for this is the truth) that the Creator of the Universe himself, in his beautiful and good Eros towards the Universe, is, through his excessive erotic Goodness, transported outside of himself, in his providential activities towards all things that have being, and is overcome by the sweet spell of Goodness, Love, and Eros. In this matter he is drawn from his transcendent throne above all things to dwell within the heart of all things in accordance with his super-essential and ecstatic power whereby he nonetheless does not leave himself behind. This is why those who know about God call him zealous because he is vehement in his manifest and beneficent Eros towards all beings, and he spurs them on to search for him zealously with a yearning eros, thus showing himself zealous for love inasmuch as the things that are desired are considered worthy of zeal and inasmuch as he allows himself to be affected by the zeal for which he cares. In short, both to possess eros and to love erotically belong to everything Good and Beautiful and eros has its primal roots in the Beautiful and the Good: eros exists and comes into being only through the Beautiful and the Good.

What Denys rehearses is the weakness of God, a theme we will treat deeper in this book. God's eros bespeaks his erotic zeal not only for us but for all his creation. All is instinct with his beauty and love. All is beyond itself, ecstatic, transported by God's love, especially humans. Of course Denys' text is biblically grounded though it is larded with neo-Platonism. Balthasar attests that it is consistent with the covenant-theology of both Testaments:

a theology that sees the jealous and consuming loves of the divine Bridegroom doing its work in his Bride in order to raise her up. Invite her, and bring her home to the same answering love. All divine revelation is impregnated with an element of "enthusiasm" (in the theological sense). Nothing can be done for the person who cannot detect such an element in the Prophets and the "teachers of wisdom,"

in Paul AND John, to mention only these. Nor can anything be done for the person who persists in denying the fact that all of this quenches and more than fulfils the human longing for love and beauty, a longing which, previous to and outside the sphere of revelation, exhausted itself in impotent and distorted sketches of such desperately needed and yet unimaginable fulfilment. For how else are we to understand both the religious and aesthetic enthusiasms of extra-Biblical religions with all their empty systems of divine epiphanies and avatars.

Later I shall dwell on the proleptic grace of Christ which impelled the great and wise teachers beyond the two covenants. Without that grace Bal-thasar affirms that all the distortions and confusions of the empty systems of those religions would amount to, at best, ineffective rhetoric, which is all man's eros can attain without the divine irruption in graced anticipation of Christ. And, "Only the mysteries and sacraments of Christ's revelation effect what they signify (Trid. Can. De sacr. 6-8; DZ 849-851)." What God reveals through a sign happens in reality. Because of this Balthasar sees Plato's imago-metaphysics melding on a higher plane with Aristotle's causa-et-finis metaphysics and because of this one cannot approach ether Christian eros or Christian beauty from a purely Platonic idealism and expect to interpret either adequately. In the Christian faith, enthusiasm is not mere Platonic idealism; on the contrary, it irrupts from actually real Being. False enthusiasm is tinctured with aestheticism and idealistic proleptic illusions and is brought down to earthly sobriety and truth by God's Word (I Thess. 5:6-8; I Pet. 1:13; 4, 7, 2 Tim. 4:5; Mt. 24:42; 25:13; 26:41; Rev. 3:2f, 16:5; etc.). "But the Word calls us no less persistently out of the profanity of a worldly life to a pneumatic existence spent 'in spiritual psalms, hymns, odes, singing through grace to God in your hearts' (Col. 3:16)—in a word to that world of prayer in which the Colossians are admonished 'to be watchful in thanksgiving' (Col. 4:2) . . . the glory of Christ unites splendor and radiance with solid reality, as we see pre-eminently in the Resurrection and its anticipation through faith in Christian life."

Balthasar affirms Karl Barth's inclusion of this law of including in Christian beauty the Cross and all that even the most realistic secular esthetics bars from the ambience of beauty because it is unbearable. This broad inclusiveness not only embraces the Platonic theory of beauty with its shadows and the ugly contradictions of life in its style of art but also the foul ugliness of sin and hell raised to beauty by the loving condescension of God bringing the divine art and its beauty to where secular esthetics is chary of even touching it as elements of beauty.

Balthasar's Retrieval of The Supernatural: The Kenotic Love of the Trinity

For Balthasar the key to the retrieval of the supernatural lay, I surmise, in his theology of the kenotic essence and love of the Trinity for each other, each in his unique fashion. The kenotic love of the Trinity becomes historical in the Incarnation of the Logos in the person of Jesus. It climaxes in Jesus' pouring himself out for us as love through suffering on the Cross. This translates to the grace of Jesus the Christ donating himself gratuitously to those united to him in the mystery of the Cross visited in their flesh. They have died with him in the flesh and begin their kenotic rise in him throughout their own life and suffering. In the Trinity it is the stripping away of the subject to generate the Other. It is no less so in Balthasar' s theology or mine.

But who is Jesus Christ? Balthasar says that the question can only be answered from below, and that below is only supplied by the New Testament. There we see that Jesus is sent by the Father in such an absolute sense that his mission coincides with his person and that both add up to God's exhaustive self-

communication. Hence, Balthasar asserts that the answer to whom he is both astounding, unforeseen and unforeseeable.

The Drama and Pathos of Jesus' Mission: The Trinitarian Inversion

In the life of Christ he preached and lived absolute poverty. In the Trinity the mission of the Logos has no imaginable beginning. The consent to his mission to become historically enfleshed is both absolute and free between the Son and the Father. Its realty becomes the economic form "of their common spiration of the Spirit." This is the first aspect of the Holy Spirit and its spiration becomes per contrario, hidden for the sake of salvation history. And Balthasar extends the glory of it by asserting that this hiddenness is the second aspect of the Holy Spirit which means that the Spirit assumes the role of presenting the obedient Son with the Father's will. This staggers not only the Son in ultimately knowing the rule of the Father's rigidity but also those who contemplate it in their reading and heaving of it in the preaching of the Gospel. The upshot of it all is the suffering inflicted on the Son in obeying the Father's demand rehearsed for us by John (10:18; 12:49f; 14:31) where Jesus does not follow his own will but that of his Father (6:38; cf. 4:34; 5:30; 12:27f). There appears no pity for the Son on the part of the Father, but John/ Jesus adds to 6:38 that the will of the Father is that he will lose "nothing of all he has given me, and that I should raise it up on the last day" (Jn. 6:39). Here one sees proleptically the Jesus of John 12: 31 and 32, "Jesus questions whether he should ask to be relieved of his hour and answers his own query that it was for this very thing that he has come. And so, Jesus besought the Father to glorify his name and a voice from heaven said that "I have glorified it. And I will glorify it again" (Jn. 28). And Jesus picks up the cudgel he has come for, the cessation of the terrible loop of sexual union, suffering and death, the loop of original sin; he proclaims to this end, "Now sentence is being passed on the world; now the prince of this world is to be overthrown. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself' (Jn. I 12:31-32). This is no brittle utterance of rapture, an effete declaration of apokatastasis, but the very utterance of the Trinity enfleshed in Jesus, stating proleptically that he, the first fruits of the Spirit, will harvest those thrown into thralldom by the prince of Hell and thereby free them. Paul levels the Trinitarian economic calculus on all of us in that neither can we know anything or boast of anything other than the Cross of Christ and the Cross enfleshed there in his suffering heart; we too suffer and add to his suffering what is lacking there to Jesus' reconciling obedience (Col. 1:24). He reconciles everything and becomes all in all, and all exists in him (Col. 1:17; 3:11).

Kenosis as Trinitarian Inversion

The essence of Jesus' relation with the Spirit consisted of carrying out his mission of exinanitionis where he acts out his possession of the Spirit and in his obedience to him which constituted his and in both his absolute poverty and self-abandonment, but also in his status exaltationis, the accomplishment of his mission (Jn. 1930). On the Cross he breathed forth the Spirit of his mission (Mk. 15:37; Lk. 23:46; Mt. 27:50). This begins his exaltation, he has become the exalted Lord and been invested there with full power in his humanity in the Spirit to breathe the Spirit into the Church and world. This is the Holy Spirit, the interpreter of the Christ. Balthasar concludes that here the Trinitarian and soteriological inversion is transcended in Christ's exaltation even though the Son's very humanity is due to the operation of the Spirit who continuously points his followers back to the Father's will in the freedom achieved on the Cross and the events of Easter.

Balthasar's soteriology is Trinitarian. As the Father empties himself of the perfections of his truth, goodness and oneness to generate the Son in the loving exchange of those infinite perfections, so does the same exchange process happen in the Son who exchanges his infinite perfections in love to generate the Holy Spirit who returns the exchange in love for the Son and the Father. This is the immanent Trinity. In the economic Trinity, irrupting in history as the exchange, or communicatio idiomatum, that is the Incarnation of the Logos as the God-man Jesus. The Trinity exchanges its predicates to create Jesus, the One sent from all eternity in human history. Balthasar's soteriology is the rehearsal of the life of Jesus, an exinanitio or loving kenosis in which the Logos is chary of retaining the glory of the immanent Trinity and, in the Incarnation, takes on the complete human flesh of the servant (Phil. 2:6-11). The life of Jesus was one of loving, kenotic suffering in obedience to the Father as he fulfills his mission of being the good news to the poor. As we said earlier in these pages Balthasar begins the hour of Jesus on the Mount of Olives where Jesus is stripped of his peace and said "My soul is sorrowful to the point of death." (Mt. 26:38) Balthasar construed this as Jesus exchanging himself for his Church as he took our terror of damnation (timor gehennalis) on his own shoulders.

The exchange was pivotal on the Cross where Jesus took our sinfulness on himself (Gal. 3:13). The Fathers call this inversion admirabule commercium. Balthasar's soteriology throughout Jesus' hour is essentially grounded on the economic Trinity's inversion of the constitution of the immanent Trinity. Christ assumed the punishment due us for the second death. The pain he endured was the pain of damnation, the pain for the loss of God. This is the nub of his suffering, and inversion of what was really due us. Note that Balthasar does not say that anyone was enduring that pain. Jesus was suffering for the ones he had called. His fate was the fate of the damned. The sin of the world fell on him.

God's final judgment on sin, suffered by the Son, is the Cross (2 Cor. 5:21). Paul says that God made him who knew no sin to become sin so he might free us to become the righteousness of God in him. Balthasar asserts that the central drama of revelation is to show that Jesus was condemned with Justice. In John, however, he accomplishes that by his very existence, (3:18) and that is brought about by his being elevated on the Cross (Jn. (12:31); his advocate, the Spirit, will argue that he is innocent precisely because of the Cross, and that over against the world (16:7ff). Hence, all the world's injustices are consumed by the wrath of God making God's righteousness available to the sinner. Balthasar summarizes saying, "That is the Gospel according to Paul' who saw the fulfillment of the 'directional meaning' of the whole Old Testament in the Cross and Resurrection of Christ." No one but God could accomplish this purification. <>

BALTHASAR ON THE SPIRITUAL SENSES: PERCEIVING SPLENDOUR by Mark McInroy [Changing Paradigms in Historical and Systematic Theology, Oxford University Press, 9780199689002]

In this study, Mark McInroy argues that the 'spiritual senses' play a crucial yet previously unappreciated role in the theological aesthetics of Hans Urs von Balthasar. The doctrine of the spiritual senses typically claims that human beings can be made capable of perceiving non-corporeal, 'spiritual' realities. After a lengthy period of disuse, Balthasar recovers the doctrine in the mid-twentieth century and articulates it

afresh in his theological aesthetics. At the heart of this project stands the task of perceiving the absolute beauty of the divine form through which God is revealed to human beings. Although extensive scholarly attention has focused on Balthasar's understanding of revelation, beauty, and form, what remains curiously under-studied is his model of the perceptual faculties through which one beholds the form that God reveals. McInroy claims that Balthasar draws upon the tradition of the spiritual senses in order to develop the means through which one perceives the 'splendour' of divine revelation. McInroy further argues that, in playing this role, the spiritual senses function as an indispensable component of Balthasar's unique, aesthetic resolution to the high-profile debates in modern Catholic theology between Neo-Scholastic theologians and their opponents. As a third option between Neo-Scholastic 'extrinsicism', which arguably insists on the authority of revelation to the point of disaffecting the human being, and 'immanentism', which reduces God's revelation to human categories in the name of relevance, McInroy proposes that Balthasar's model of spiritual perception allows one to be both delighted and astounded by the glory of God's revelation.

Review

"As a relatively brief study, and one written clearly, it would serve well in an advanced university course or a graduate course, yet it also works well as an introduction...His discussion of Balthasar's theological aesthetics in particular is both smooth and sure. There and elsewhere, McInroy shows himself to be a promising scholar who has done a service to scholarship."--*Anglican Theological Review*

"[A] fine study...This work could be said to provide a very important guide to a crucial (and easily misperceived) tool in Balthasar's fundamental theology. Mark McInroy's elucidation of the inner workings of Balthasar's theological epistemology helps us understand more profoundly how to construe the Swiss thinker's real achievements....McInroy gives us a thought-provoking contribution to the modern/postmodern conversation about how 'knowing' happens....This is an enormously well conceived and handsomely well-achieved study. It goes without saying that it will forward Balthasar studies hugely."--*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*

"The study is strongest in the story it tells about what, exactly, Balthasar takes from the Fathers, how he differs from his contemporaries in his use of the doctrine, and the importance he places on the interweaving of bodily and spiritual perception."--"The Journal of Religion

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The theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–88) has significantly shaped Catholic and Protestant thought for some time. He is most widely known for the particular manner in which his thought confronts the anthropocentrism of many modern theological schemes: namely, through the use of aesthetic categories in mediating divine revelation to humanity. At the heart of this 'theological aesthetics' stands the task of perceiving the absolute beauty of the divine form (*Gestalt*) through which God is revealed to human beings.

Although extensive scholarly attention has focused on Balthasar's understanding of revelation, beauty, and form, what remains curiously overlooked is his heavy reliance on the classic Christian doctrine of the 'spiritual senses' in his theological aesthetics. Balthasar expresses the significance of the doctrine in a crucial section of *The Glory of the Lord*, in which he claims that his theological anthropology actually 'culminates' with his treatment of the spiritual senses. And yet Balthasar's secondary commentators have for the most part missed this vital point, in part because the doctrine has a 'capillary' quality: it is present throughout Balthasar's corpus, but it manifests subtly, and attention is seldom drawn to it (excepting the one portion of his aesthetics noted above). Indeed, the spiritual senses theme has been hidden from view because, although the language of sensation certainly permeates Balthasar's aesthetics, he does not consistently make clear to his reader that it is 'spiritual' sensation of which he speaks. For instance, he discusses 'seeing the form' of divine revelation throughout *The Glory of the Lord*, but one must be attuned to the spiritual senses motif in order to discern that it is actually *spiritual* sight that performs this task.

Highly significant in this connection are the numerous interpretive difficulties that the doctrine of the spiritual senses presents to contemporary scholarship; the spiritual sense of scripture as a hermeneutical strategy is much more widely known, and the idea of the spiritual senses as perceptual faculties remains relatively unfamiliar. As a result, many scholars misread discussions of the spiritual senses as pertaining to biblical interpretation. Furthermore, because Balthasar is often read in opposition to Karl Rahner as adopting the revelation-centred theological method of Karl Barth, Balthasar's theological anthropology (of which the spiritual senses are a crucial component) has been largely occluded from scholarly view.

I argue in this study that Balthasar's account of the reception of revelation can only be effectively explained by reference to his reliance on the doctrine of the spiritual senses. At the very core of Balthasar's aesthetics lies the idea that our perceptual faculties must become 'spiritualized' if we are to perceive the splendour (*Glanz*) of the form through which God is revealed. The spiritual senses tradition therefore emerges as an essential resource for Balthasar's articulation of this spiritual aesthesis; it serves as the anthropological correlate to the splendour of revelation. These findings significantly revise regnant understandings of Balthasar's aesthetics, anthropology, and epistemology, and they also demonstrate the surprising contemporary relevance of this long-obscured aspect of the Christian tradition.

It should additionally be said that, in deploying the spiritual senses in his theological aesthetics, Balthasar is not content simply to repristinate the doctrine out of its patristic and medieval versions. Instead, Balthasar places traditional understandings of the spiritual senses in conversation with the thought of his contemporaries, most particularly Karl Barth (1886–1968), Romano Guardini (1885–1968), Gustav Siewerth (1903–63), and Paul Claudel (1868–1955). What emerges from this dialogue is a re-forged

model of the doctrine that displays noteworthy discontinuities from its previous instantiations. Balthasar thus uses his contemporary interlocutors to advance a highly creative and *modern* rearticulation of the doctrine that diverges significantly from its historical precedents. It is only when the spiritual senses have been recast in a modern form that they will serve Balthasar's project in the manner described above.

On the 'Doctrine of the Spiritual Senses'

A preliminary question must be faced at the outset of this study: what exactly is the 'doctrine of the spiritual senses'? Although the term is not used univocally throughout its long history, the phrase frequently denotes a set of five 'spiritual' perceptual faculties that function in a manner analogous to their corporeal counterparts. In other words, just as there are corporeal senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell that apprehend physical objects, there are also spiritual senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell that perceive 'spiritual' entities (God, Christ, angels) in an extra-corporeal register. Augustin Poulain and Karl Rahner, in separate, highly influential studies, developed a 'definition' of the spiritual senses as fivefold, 'analogical' uses of the language of sensation. In other words, they argued that there are indeed five discrete spiritual senses, and they further insisted that exponents of the doctrine used the language of sensation in a manner that was not 'merely metaphorical'. Instead, they claimed that we observe in these descriptions of mystical encounter a 'stronger', 'analogical' use of sensory terms. It was this version of the spiritual senses tradition that Balthasar inherited and utilized, though not—as we shall shortly show—without added novelties of his own.

Why the Neglect of the Spiritual Senses in Balthasar's Thought?

In spite of the repeated (albeit often scattered) references to this theme throughout his corpus, Balthasar's appropriation of the doctrine remains largely unexamined at present. Only a handful of scholars have observed that the spiritual senses are a noteworthy feature of Balthasar's aesthetics,[8] and even among those who are aware of the doctrine's significance, only Stephen Fields and Agnell Rickenmann have undertaken article-length investigations of the topic.[9] Rickenmann provides an excellent summary of Origen's position on the spiritual senses (from which Balthasar draws) and a helpful exposition of Balthasar's overall goals in his theological aesthetics. Fields offers an instructive account of key points of contrast between the readings of Bonaventure advanced by Balthasar and Rahner. However, due in large part to of the brevity of any article-length treatment of the issues, neither Fields nor Rickenmann gestures toward the wide array of influences on Balthasar's creative rearticulation of the doctrine, nor do they investigate the systematic significance of the spiritual senses in relation to Balthasar's theory of aesthetic form. As the essays by Rickenmann and Fields are the only articles on the topic, and there is at present no full-length study of Balthasar's use of the spiritual senses tradition, the secondary literature on this aspect of Balthasar's thought remains unexpectedly incomplete.

At the risk of oversimplifying the reasons for this lacuna, much can be explained by reference to Balthasar's well-known emphasis on resuscitating an *objective* revelatory claim for modern theology. That is, Balthasar's resistance to theologies that follow Immanuel Kant's 'turn to the subject' has influenced many commentators on his texts to focus on the *object* of theology in his thought, and as a result examinations of his model of the human *subject* have been comparatively minimal. Indeed, the most notable point of contrast between Balthasar and Rahner is often said to be that, whereas Rahner

(and, more broadly, all of so-called 'transcendental Thomism') is concerned with the transcendental structure of the human subject, Balthasar is deeply critical of this approach, and he instead focuses his theological attention on that which lies *beyond* the human being. The spiritual senses, then, may have gone largely unnoticed because of the fact that they, as epistemological features of the human being, do not occur to many Balthasar scholars as especially pertinent to the broader themes of his theology.

It should additionally be noted that interpreting Balthasar on any topic is a notoriously difficult task, and elucidating his many comments on the spiritual senses proves to be no exception to this general rule. In characteristic Balthasarian fashion, a frequently opaque account of the spiritual senses is put forward in *The Glory of the Lord*, and as a result it is not immediately obvious to Balthasar's readers how carefully his reading of the spiritual senses tradition is considered, nor how well it serves many of Balthasar's overarching aims. Although we will find in some instances that Balthasar simply does not provide his reader with sufficient clarity, I also suggest that a number of claims in Balthasar's texts that may at first glance appear to be overly epigrammatic can in fact be shown through careful analysis to have highly developed theoretical backing.

Also significant on this question of scholarly neglect, as mentioned briefly above, are the numerous hermeneutical difficulties the doctrine of the spiritual senses presents to its interpreters. The very term, 'spiritual senses', tends to disorient more than illuminate, and it often initially brings to mind the spiritual sense of scripture as a hermeneutical approach to the Bible. The notion of the spiritual senses as a set of perceptual faculties analogous to the physical senses remains relatively unknown, and even to those familiar with the idea, a number of interpretive issues complexify contemporary understandings of the doctrine.

Most pressing among these difficulties is the fact that, throughout the long history of the doctrine, an exceptionally broad constellation of phrases is used to describe spiritual perception. The term 'spiritual senses' certainly receives the most attention in modern scholarship, but more prevalent in patristic and medieval texts themselves are phrases such as 'inner senses', 'interior eyes', 'eyes of the soul', 'eyes of faith', 'eyes of the mind', 'eyes of the heart', 'eyes of the spirit', 'ears of the heart', 'touch of the spirit', 'divine sense' and many others. This variety of terms—which itself often changes from one historical period to the next—makes it extremely difficult to identify when an author is speaking of spiritual perception, properly understood.

Additionally, various figures in the spiritual senses tradition respond differently to even the most basic questions about how spiritual perception functions. For example, what, exactly, do the spiritual senses perceive? One finds that they have different objects, depending on whom one consults. Do they operate purely *independently* of the corporeal senses, or are they joined with them? Does one receive them through grace alone, or does practice play a role in developing one's spiritual senses? Who receives spiritual senses: only 'mystics', or all Christians? What are they good for, theologically speaking? The fact that there are wide-ranging answers to each of these questions means that any academic treatment of the spiritual senses will need to investigate an unusually large number of variables to determine how the doctrine is understood.

Balthasar's Interest in the Spiritual Senses

Despite the challenges associated with our enquiry, one thing is clear: Balthasar himself regarded the spiritual senses as highly significant for his theology. His interest in the doctrine can even be observed as early as 1934: in October of that year he wrote a letter to the German philosopher Josef Pieper, to whom he commented on Rahner's recently published studies on Origen and Bonaventure. Just a few years later, in his 1939 Origen anthology, Balthasar grouped together over 150 passages from Origen's works that describe, in Balthasar's terms, 'spiritual "super-sensibility"' (*geistliche Übersinnlichkeit*). In that same year Balthasar published an article titled 'Seeing, Hearing, and Reading within the Church', in which he extensively treated the spiritual senses. Balthasar also mentioned the spiritual senses in his monographs on Maximus the Confessor, Karl Barth, Romano Guardini, George Bernanos, and his volume on Thérèse of Lisieux and Elizabeth of the Trinity. Additionally, the spiritual senses motif appeared in a number of Balthasar's well-known works, such as *Mysterium Paschale*, *Love Alone*, *Prayer*, *The Moment of Christian Witness*, *Science, Religion, and Christianity*, *A Theology of History*, *Elucidations*, *Christian Meditation*, *Truth is Symphonic*, *Light of the Word*, *New Elucidations*, and of course his *Theo-Drama* and *Theo-Logic*.

Toward the end of his career, Balthasar made overt reference to the importance of the spiritual senses for his theological aesthetics. In an address given upon receiving an honorary doctorate from the Catholic University of America in 1980, he commented, 'My intention in the first part of my trilogy called "*Aesthetik*" was not merely to train our *spiritual eyes* to see Christ as he shows himself but, beyond that, to prove that all great and history-making theology always followed this method'. This self-assessment demonstrates not only that Balthasar regarded the spiritual senses as highly significant for his own theological project, but also that he held the notion of spiritualized perception to function as a leitmotif throughout the history of Christian theology.

Most important to this study are the references to the spiritual senses that pervade Balthasar's theological aesthetics. Throughout *The Glory of the Lord* Balthasar draws from various phrases associated with the tradition, including 'spiritual senses', 'spiritual perception', and 'inner senses'. One also finds repeated references to senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell that are described in an extra-corporeal, 'spiritual' register. Of considerable import for the argument made in this study, Balthasar writes in the first volume of his aesthetics that his treatment of the human being 'culminates' in his treatment of the spiritual senses.

Progression of Argument and Chapter Outline

The study is organized around two sets of questions. First, why does Balthasar write what he does about the spiritual senses? Who are the key figures in his reading of the spiritual senses tradition, and how does he interpret those figures? In other words, the first issue this study addresses is that of influences. This will be the concern of Chapters 1–3. Second, what does Balthasar do with the idea of the spiritual senses in his own theology? How does he articulate his version of the doctrine? What place do the spiritual senses occupy in his theological aesthetics? How does the doctrine function? The second set of questions, then, is one of constructive position and systematic significance of the spiritual senses for Balthasar's own thought. This will be the concern of Chapters 4–6. A more specific account of the exact manner in which these two sets of questions are addressed now follows.

Chapter 1 examines Balthasar's reading of patristic figures on the spiritual senses. Origen receives greatest emphasis here, both because he stands at the beginning of the spiritual senses tradition (Rahner credits him with 'inventing' the doctrine), and because of his special significance for Balthasar. Broadly speaking, the most distinctive feature of Balthasar's approach to patristic writers on the spiritual senses entails the positive reading he gives to the corporeal senses to which the spiritual senses are analogous. That is, many patristic authors are ordinarily read as articulating a 'dualist' model of the doctrine whereby the spiritual senses are disjuncted from their corporeal counterparts. We shall see in Chapter 1, however, that Balthasar repeatedly interprets patristic authors as valuing the corporeal dimension to perception in addition to its spiritual correlate. As a result, Balthasar occasionally advances a somewhat hermeneutically massaged reading of patristic sources; the Church fathers whom he reads do not always actually espouse the positions he claims they advance. It will also be shown, however, that Balthasar does not push this positive reading of the body as far as might be expected, given his concern with corporeality. Additionally, we shall observe throughout the first chapter and the next the massive influence of Rahner on this aspect of Balthasar's thought. Indeed, it is first and foremost Rahner who mediates the doctrine of the spiritual senses to Balthasar, as Rahner's patristic and medieval studies extensively shape Balthasar's own examination of these figures.

Chapter 2 investigates Balthasar's reading of figures from the medieval and early modern periods. Bonaventure is most significant for Balthasar among medieval expositors of the doctrine, and Ignatius of Loyola for Balthasar's reading of the early modern period. As was true in his reading of the patristic authors, Balthasar again celebrates the material dimension to perception in the medieval and early modern figures he examines, drawing from those versions of the doctrine the most positive reading of the physical senses that he can credibly summon. In this chapter we shall also see that Balthasar finds in Bonaventure one who regards the spiritual senses as possessed of an explicitly aesthetic dimension, an attribute that has obvious affinities with Balthasar's project and his own appropriation of the doctrine.

Chapter 3 looks closely at the influence of Balthasar's contemporaries on his version of the spiritual senses, with special attention to Karl Barth, Romano Guardini, Gustav Siewerth, and Paul Claudel. Here I show that Balthasar actually evinces substantial discontentment with the versions of the doctrine articulated throughout its earlier history. Most importantly, all four of the modern figures upon whom Balthasar draws equip him with an anthropology of 'unity-in-duality' between body and soul. He then uses this anthropology to frame the doctrine of the spiritual senses such that spiritual and corporeal perception occurs in a single unified act. With modern figures as his guides, Balthasar therefore finally unites spiritual and corporeal perception, which is something that he starts—but does not finish—in his examination of traditional figures. Additionally, Balthasar draws from the 'personalism' of Barth and Siewerth to claim that the 'definitive arena' within which one receives one's spiritual senses is encounter with the neighbour.

Having assessed in the first three chapters Balthasar's (often idiosyncratic) reading of various figures in the spiritual senses tradition and its modern continuations, I describe in Chapter 4 Balthasar's own version of the doctrine in his theological aesthetics. Here I cull various aspects of Balthasar's engagement with the sources outlined in the previous chapters in order to highlight key features of his constructive use of the doctrine. We will see that Balthasar advances a highly original understanding of the spiritual senses that is distinct from those models that precede him.

Chapter 5 puts forward the central claim of this study: Balthasar's theological aesthetics calls for perception of the 'form' (*Gestalt*), and that form consists of both sensory and 'supersensory' aspects (i.e., a material component and a 'spiritual' dimension, *species* and *lumen, forma* and *splendor*). Therefore, some account of the way in which this human perception *exceeds* the material realm is absolutely essential to the success of Balthasar's project. In other words, it is precisely because the form itself has both sensory and supersensory aspects that the *perception* of that form must be both sensory and supersensory. Balthasar's theological aesthetics thus clamours for a doctrine of the spiritual senses; in fact, one could go so far as to claim that if such a doctrine did not already exist, then for purposes of his theological aesthetics Balthasar would need to invent it.

Chapter 6 explores the far-reaching implications of the claim made in Chapter 5 by looking at Balthasar's engagement with the pressing theological issues of his day. I argue that many of Balthasar's critiques of Neo-Scholasticism, Catholic 'Modernism', Rahner, and Barth all actually have, at their core, his version of the spiritual senses. By examining topics such as the nature of faith, natural theology, apologetics, aesthetic experience, and the relationship between nature and grace, we shall see that the spiritual senses comprise an integral component of the Balthasarian solution to the problems encountered in these debates. Therefore, the treatment of the spiritual senses in this chapter offers ways of advancing theological discussion, not only for Balthasar scholarship, but, more broadly, for a recurrent set of challenges presented to modern theology.

Implications

In examining these aspects of Balthasar's appropriation of the spiritual senses tradition, this study contributes to scholarship at a number of different levels. First, and most obviously, it adds to a growing body of literature on the spiritual senses tradition. In particular, it demonstrates that the doctrine of the spiritual senses, long viewed as something of an oddity by many modern theologians and historians, in fact occupies an essential position in the thought of one of the most significant theologians of the twentieth century. Far from an obscure relic destined for insignificance, the spiritual senses are shown here to have an unexpected relevance for modern theology.

This book also contributes to the ongoing reception of Balthasar's *oeuvre* by observing that crucial features of his thought are illuminated by reference to the doctrine of the spiritual senses. Balthasar's use of the spiritual senses offers a corrective to those who regard him as relatively unconcerned with theological anthropology, and his use of the doctrine demonstrates a depth of epistemological concern that some scholars may find surprising. Additionally, situating Balthasar within scholarship on the spiritual senses gives his readers some idea of what to make of the dizzying array of sensory language he uses in his theological aesthetics. Indeed, placing Balthasar in the spiritual senses trajectory guards against collapsing his use of sensory language into 'merely metaphorical' descriptions of the encounter with God. Furthermore, when the spiritual senses are shown to be central to Balthasar's theological aesthetics, we see that his understanding of perception, faith, nature, and grace are all importantly inflected by his use of the doctrine.

Last, this study charts new avenues through which to appreciate previously unexamined lines of influence between Balthasar and a number of his contemporaries. Claiming that Rahner stands behind one of the most important features of Balthasar's thought underscores the fact that, despite their frequently discussed theological differences, an important commonality obtains between these two most

influential Catholic theologians of the twentieth century. Additionally, to argue that Karl Barth had a hand in shaping Balthasar's model of spiritual perception is a highly counterintuitive suggestion that stands to deepen and expand our understanding of the relationship between these two seminal figures in twentieth-century theology. This study therefore adds to scholarly assessments of the relationship between Balthasar and Barth by arguing that Barth is important to Balthasar not only in terms of his emphasis on revelation and his Christocentric approach to theology (as is well known), but also, and much more unexpectedly, for his theological anthropology and his claim that the human being is capable of perceiving God.

Furthermore, the spiritual senses are shown in this study to be highly relevant to contemporary thought when they are situated, as they should be, in the very centre of the most lively debates in modern Catholic theology: the 'Modernist' critiques of 'extrinsicism' and Neo-Scholastic ripostes to the 'immanentist' alternative, the critique of Neo-Scholastic proofs of God's existence, and the intricate descriptions of the relationship between nature and grace.

With a sense of the development of our argument now in place, we turn first to Balthasar's engagement with patristic versions of the spiritual senses. <>

A Theology of Criticism: Balthasar, Postmodernism, and the Catholic Imagination by Michael P. Murphy [Oxford University Press, 9780195333527]

A number of critics and scholars argue for the notion of a distinctly Catholic variety of imagination, not as a matter of doctrine or even of belief, but rather as an artistic sensibility. They figure the blend of intellectual, emotional, spiritual and ethical assumptions that proceed from Catholic belief constitutes a vision of reality that necessarily informs the artist's imaginative expression. The notion of a Catholic imagination, however, has lacked thematic and theological coherence. To articulate this intuition is to cross the problematic interdisciplinary borders between theology and literature; and, although scholars have developed useful methods for undertaking such interdisciplinary "border-crossings," relatively few have been devoted to a serious examination of the theological aesthetic upon which these other aesthetics might hinge.

In **A Theology of Criticism,** Michael Patrick Murphy proposes a new framework to better define the concept of a Catholic imagination. He explores the many ways in which the theological work of Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) can provide the model, content, and optic for distinguishing this type of imagination from others. Since Balthasar views art and literature precisely as theologies, Murphy surveys a broad array of poetry, drama, fiction, and film and sets it against central aspects of Balthasar's theological program. In doing so, Murphy seeks to develop a theology of criticism.

This interdisciplinary work recovers the legitimate place of a distinct "theological imagination" in critical theory, showing that Balthasar's voice both challenges and complements contemporary developments. Murphy also contends that postmodern interpretive methodology, with its careful critique of entrenched philosophical assumptions and reiterated codes of meaning, is not the threat to theological meaning that

many fear. On the contrary, by juxtaposing postmodern critical methodologies against Balthasar's visionary theological range, a space is made available for literary critics and theologians alike. More important, the critic is provided with the tools to assess, challenge, and celebrate the theological imagination as it is depicted today.

The turn of the millennium has brought with it a vigorous revival in the interdisciplinary study of theology and art. The notion of a Catholic imagination, however, as a specific category of aesthetics, lacks thematic and theological coherence. More often, the idea of a Catholic imagination functions at this time as a deeply felt intuition about the organic connections that exist among theological insights, cultural background, and literary expression. The book explores the many ways that the theological work of Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988) provides the model, content, and optic for demonstrating the credibility and range of a Catholic imagination. Since Balthasar views arts and literatures precisely as theologies, the book surveys a broad array of poetry, drama, fiction, and film and sets these readings against the central aspects of Balthasar's theological program. A major consequence of this study is the recovery of the legitimate place of a distinct "theological imagination" in the critical study of literary and narrative art. The book also argues that Balthasar's voice both complements and challenges contemporary critical theory and contends that postmodern interpretive methodology, with its careful critique of entrenched philosophical assumptions and reiterated codes of meaning, is not the threat to theological meaning that many fear. On the contrary, postmodernism can provide both literary critics and theologians alike with the tools that assess, challenge, and celebrate the theological imagination as it is depicted in literary art today.

Review

"Michael Murphy's book is a singular contribution to the study of Hans Urs von Balthasar's theological enterprise. Murphy skillfully extends von Balthasar's aesthetic and dramatic concerns into a critical dialogue with postmodern assumptions about philosophy, theology, literature and the arts. Murphy argues, in effect, that von Balthasar offers both theologians and literary critics a path for doing "theological" criticism. Masterfully weaving his argument through the works of Flannery O'Connor, Walker Percy, David Lodge, Denise Levertov, and Lars von Trier, Murphy demonstrates the vital link between theology and culture often missing in today's intellectual discourse." --Mark Bosco, Loyola University Chicago

"Michael Murphy has advanced the fields of theology and literary criticism with this marvelous look at the relevance of the great theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar to literary studies. More important, in the connections made between literature and the Catholic imagination, Murphy paves a road towards a twenty-first century critical reading of the religious import of literary fiction." --Alejandro Garcia-Rivera, author of *The Community of the Beautiful*

"Michael Murphy's **A THEOLOGY OF CRITICISM,** is a remarkable and eye-opening book precisely because it fulfills the bold interdisciplinary promise of its title. It is at one and the same time an illuminating exposition of Balthasar's aesthetic theology and an equally illuminating explication of a number of modern texts-- fiction, poetry, and film-- that substantiates how Balthasar's thought can inform critical reading. Murphy offers a fresh paradigm and exemplum for criticism, and on both the

theoretical and practical levels he writes with intellectual incisiveness and passionate conviction." --Albert Gelpi, Stanford University

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A major theoretical premise of this work is that no person stands alone. I am pleased to report that the writing of this book helped me commune more intimately with this truth—to see its many forms and to witness it in action in countless ways.

Locating Difference: Theological Imagination, Narrative Expression, and Critical Discourse

In addition to laying out a general groundwork for the Catholic imagination as a critical lens—and suggesting a variety of ways that the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar aids critics in articulating such a theological vision—the chapter also attempts to locate the particular phenomena of postmodernism and deconstruction within the intersection of theology and narrative art. Balthasar anticipates the tendency of current critical theory to privilege and emphasize the amorphous breadth of both linguistic and cultural expression; and he anticipates the critical tension between those who read Catholicism as theological truth and those that might read Catholicism as a "fluctuating signifier," as a cultural and/or literary text. Under this general theme, a dialog is opened with such diverse critics as William Lynch, Paul Giles, Michel De Certeau, and Jacques Derrida. Like them, Balthasar's theology plots a route for appreciating the aesthetic complexity and theological possibility of a broadly canvassed intertextuality and interdisciplinarity. However, Balthasar's program also defends the critical uniqueness of certain theological commitments (e.g., the transcendentals, the Incarnation, and the trinitarian structure of being) and looks to the arts to demonstrate the formal expression and aesthetic span of these phenomena. The chapter concludes with the proposition that it is the recognition of these essential questions that both challenge and aid the articulation of a Catholic imagination and that a turn to representative work in literature, poetry, and film will aid in such an articulation.

While this examination is not primarily an historical study, history is still a vital part of it. There is a genealogy to the Catholic imagination that needs to be recognized as a subtext, and the Catholic literary revival of the early twentieth century is of particular import in this regard. The movement began primarily in France in the years between the world wars and was characterized by its antimodernist/antipositivist bent. Poet/philosopher/bordello resident Leon Blòy (1846–1917) was essential to the early formation of the revival (and later Blòy became particularly instrumental in the

conversion of the great neo-Thomist philosopher Jacques Maritain and his wife, Raissa). Playwright/poet Paul Claudel (1868–1955) was also a significant figure. The movement was always interdisciplinary but reached literary heights in the 1930s with the work of Georges Bernanos (1888–1948), François Mauriac (1885–1970), and the Franco-American Julien Green (1900–1998). The French-Catholic revival became a flash point for a larger Catholic revival that had worldwide influence in the later decades of the twentieth century.

> In degenerate ages, arts are pastimes. —Holbrook Jackson, 1911
>
> If it's just a symbol, to hell with it. —Flannery O'Connor, c. 1956
>
> Reason comprehends rationally that He is incomprehensible. —St. Anselm of Canterbury, c. 1100
>
> Philosophy ends with beauty, theology begins with it. —Hans Urs von Balthasar, 1984

Theology and Literature: A Continuing Conversation

> We cannot know his legendary head
> With eyes like ripening fruit. And yet his torso
> is still suffused with brilliance from inside,
> like a lamp, in which his gaze, now turned low,
> gleams in all its power. Otherwise
> the curved breast could not dazzle you so, nor could
> a smile run through the placid hips and thighs
> to that dark center where procreation flared.
> Otherwise this stone would seem defaced
> Beneath the translucent cascade of the shoulders
> And would not glisten like a wild beast's fur:
> Would not, from all the borders of itself,
> Burst like a star: for here there is no place
> that does not see you. You must change your life.
> —Rainer Maria Rilke, "The Archaic Torso of Apollo"

Theology and literature have long been disciplinary companions, and the "Word" has historically been at home in the warm environs of literary and narrative form. As Graham Ward rightly asserts, "Theology's business has always been the transgression of boundaries,"[1] and the same can be said for the "business" of literary art. Narrative, for example, the central trope of literary art, is itself endowed with so many of the metaphysical and epistemological qualities that are associated with theological activity that it has long served as a prime mode—a prime aesthetic—in everything from inductive making of myths to deductive meditations on divine revelation. Since it would be injudicious to deny the theological possibilities implicit in narrative form (or that literature is a prime model of both thought and consciousness),[2] this book will use the relationship as a guiding premise. However, the presumption also initiates a dilemma, and immediate questions arise: if narrative is theological in character, do we not have an obligation to be specific about what we mean by "theological"? Can we not furnish ourselves with more descriptive epithets, even, than "spiritual" or "religious" (terms, oddly, that tend to domesticate theological inquiry) when we engage in these kinds of discussions? Can we not get beyond, even, "Jewish" or "Christian" distinctions, for that matter, especially since we are finally disposed to viewing these specific religious

distinctions more expansively? Conversely, as serious critics—and as serious theologians—do we not owe it to ourselves, to the literary art we engage (as well as the mysteries they purport to illuminate) to follow the text where it leads even if it leads to the politically dicey regions of specific denominational doctrine and dogma?

The answer to all these questions is *yes.* We must follow the clues where they lead. Unfortunately, the tendency today is to shy away from making such hard theological distinctions. There are many reasons for this, of course, ranging from the political to the theological to the cultural, and some reasons are more valid others. Many in the academy, for example, are accountable to several disciplines (or other institutional commitments) and are therefore more prone to protecting cultural diversity and less disposed to promulgating divisive opinions that often accompany truth claims. Similarly, the reticence to claim theological uniqueness can arise from patently ideological reasons: many scholars, for fear of making snags in the fragile garment of intellectual pluralism, relegate serious theological discussion to the extreme margins of academic discourse. These scholars have become reticent about using any other epithets beyond *religious* or *spiritual* or, worse, *ideological* when it comes to assessing arts and literatures, for example, that convey theological themes. These developments, of course, are understandable, especially given the volume of one-dimensional fundamentalist interpretations that often encroach upon more nuanced and careful readings. However, the wholesale flight from making specific theological distinctions ultimately does a disservice to any valid notion of scholarship in the same way it curtails the freedom of thought upon which good scholarship is rooted. The need to reclaim narrative as a prime model of theological inquiry, then, is revealed. The time is ripe to reestablish the promise of astute religious criticism for what it is: a meticulous and imaginative epistemology. A theological imagination in the narrative arts is no mere window dressing, but rather an element that inspires and constitutes its very expression. Religious criticism, then, remains a valid option against the more nihilistic and restricting versions of criticism, versions that hold considerable sway in certain quarters of current scholarship.

A Catholic Imagination (A): Elucidating a Hypothesis

The main purpose of this study, then, is to suggest creative and credible options for religious critics. As a Catholic reader of fiction, poetry, and film, I am interested specifically in how a theological imagination is "worked out" in some contemporary fictions and how these fictions might merit the qualifying adjective of "Catholic." Since Catholicism is a *kath holon*, a seeking "after the whole," this kind of project demands that one venture outside the threshold of one's own native intellectual discipline (which, in my case, is English and American Literature) and into the larger arena of interdisciplinary study. Indeed, it can be speculated that the intrinsic interdisciplinarity of Catholicism, the fact that Catholicism, for better or worse, proposes a holistic and interdependent ontology, is precisely what is behind the historical tendency of literary writers and critics alike to jettison the myopia of their own narrow disciplines and foray into a more expansive and more interdisciplinary mode of scholarship. This development has sparked a renewal in the scholarly consideration of the theological imagination. The Catholic imagination has become, perhaps in a spirit of déjà vu, one such "school"—in aesthetics and in religious criticism—a distinct expression within the boundless parameters of what I'll refer to, broadly, as the "theological imagination."[3]

However, the notion of a *Catholic imagination*, as a category of aesthetics, lacks specific thematic and theological coherence. It functions at this time as a deeply felt intuition about the nature of an organic connection among theological insights, cultural background, and literary expression. Part of the problem in articulating this intuition is the difficult interdisciplinary borders that must be crossed between theology and literature. For example, even though in the latter half of the twentieth century (and on into the twenty-first century) a fair amount of work has been done by literary scholars and cultural critics in interdisciplinary "border-crossings"—in articulating the various ways that Catholicism, for example, can have a literary or cultural aesthetic—a relatively scant amount of space has been devoted to a serious examination of the *theological aesthetic* upon which these other "aesthetics" might hinge. Another part of the problem in articulating this intuition, as I suggested, is political. The term *Catholic imagination* incites a variety of strong reactions. On one side of this particular polemic, the prospect of a *Catholic imagination* is perceived by some as imperialist and hegemonic, which entails a rank exclusivity; on the other side, the high regard for pluralism and ecumenism inherent in other perceptions of Catholicism implies that such an imagination ought to be inclusivist, even to the point at which this imagination may lose any of its cultural or intellectual distinctiveness. As we will see, one of the main tendencies of a Catholic imagination is to negotiate such wide "opposites," so as to reveal the mysterious harmonies that often dwell in such tensions.

Along with Thomas Aquinas, Jacques Maritain, William Lynch, and Michel de Certeau (and, of course, with Hans Urs von Balthasar, with whom we will be very well acquainted in short order), I recognize the primacy of the *complexio oppositorum* that resides at the heart of any theological imagination. Moreover, I assert that intuition is an indispensable human sense that helps locate the paradoxical logic that is revealed by the coincidence of opposites I propose. "Intuition," according to classical Thomism, "brings a person in touch with the real"[4] and fertilizes the imagination. This discussion admits intuition as a foundational faculty of personhood and asserts that intuition, contrary to rationalist Cartesianism, precedes *ratio* and provides, as Maritain posits, a fundamental approach to God. Balthasar, for his part, specifically links intuition to imagination and upholds this relationship as a theophanic site:

The essence of worldly things consists so truly in their imagining God, and this image itself is so transparent, that God seems to shine forth immediately [*immediate*] from it. There is then, a form of 'intuition' specific to symbolic cognition, which consists in a psychologically immediate transcendence of the ontological sign [medium quo], though without removing it at any time.

In this study, then, I seek not only to interrogate the notion of a Catholic imagination but also to add depth—specifically theological depth—to the term *Catholic imagination*. In this sense, its uniqueness may be admitted as a bona fide category in literary criticism, a context of Catholic Studies, and an aspect of a larger theological imagination.

Upon serious examination, then, we find that the Catholic imagination is not merely a cultural or sociological distinction, as so many have recently posited. Quite the contrary: it is fundamentally a way of figuring the world. "Imagination," to borrow from William Lynch's definition, constitutes "all the resources of man, all his faculties, his whole history, his whole life, and his whole heritage, all brought to bear upon the concrete world inside and outside of himself, to form images of the world, and thus to find it, cope with it, shape it, and even to make it." The imagination, according to Lynch (1908–1987), a Catholic literary critic, is a borderless and holistic faculty. It is, to employ a Catholic taxonomy, a

sacrament, a palpable manifestation of what is apprehended by the intuition, a sensible manifestation of the real. As an aesthetic operation, the Catholic imagination seeks to describe the peculiar dynamism that exists between religious and artistic experience and to hold this mix up as an ontological and aesthetic category. It is an imagination, theologically speaking, that sees Christ as the revelatory key to the cosmos and figures aesthetics in terms of the Incarnation as axial miracle of history, as existential, as continually eucharistic, and as locus of (and reason for) community.

In my view, the challenge of interrogating and elucidating a Catholic imagination seems particularly timely, and our current academic and intellectual context provides a perfect occasion in which to engage the argument. To this end, my effort becomes a discourse within a burgeoning intellectual community, Catholic Studies, just as it is a discourse in narrative criticism. Part of my goal, then, is to interrogate the credibility of a *Catholic imagination* as a valid aesthetic category for religious and literary critics alike.

Seeing the Form, Forming a Thesis: Christ in Ten Thousand Places

The key to my approach in articulating the Catholic imagination lies in the interdisciplinary style of the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988). I will argue that the theological work of Hans Urs von Balthasar provides a model, content, and a lens for interpreting and demonstrating the Catholic imagination as it is depicted in selected narrative arts. In his monumental seven-volume series, *The Glory of the Lord*, Balthasar meditates upon the significance of first approaching the unity of God through the transcendental attribute of beauty rather than through the other transcendentals, truth or goodness, the ways more traditionally associated with engaging in theological studies. A textured consideration of beauty aids in developing a theological imagination that is more comprehensive and perceptive: it helps one *see the form* of God's revelation. For Balthasar, the fruit of this concentration on the beautiful results in a theological aesthetics that locates "the form of God's self-revelation" and then constructs an analogical theory "about the incarnation of God's glory and the consequent elevation of man to participate in that glory." Balthasar's other major works—particularly his *Theo-Drama* and his *Theo-Logic*—enhance and activate his aesthetics in order to further provide, among other things: (1) A Theology of Time—an approach that locates the divine *logos* not merely as speculative but as historically incarnated and identified with Jesus of Nazareth; (2) A Theodramatic Aesthetics—a theology that, because it sees all existence as endowed with a theatrical structure, consequently sees all existence as revelatory and eschatological. In this schema, Jesus is not merely an iconographic expression of the beautiful but rather a "central actor" in creation; and (3) A Trinitarian Logic—a logic that sees human persons as free players/agents who respond to and participate in, because of God's *incarnation* and *kenosis*, the dynamics of an inner-trinitarian dialogue. The theological perspectives that Balthasar promulgates in all of these instances implies that our responses to beauty—our "action" or "in-action" upon encountering (theological) art, our various responses to both "The Word" and, analogically, to other words, and so on—are immediate, ethical, relational, transformative, and, therefore, profoundly theological acts in nature.

This book looks favorably upon Balthasar's theology. However, I will examine and employ Balthasar's work also as an epistemological model for critics of literature, poetry, and film who possess broader theological sensibilities. While I'll affirm that a turn to Balthasar will show that reading narrative art through his theological optic (because Balthasar is a Catholic theologian) will point to the validity of a Catholic imagination, my discussion is not meant to be exclusive. Quite the contrary: while parts of this

study will certainly tend to the "Balthasar as lens" approach, this study is not a Frankensteinian grafting of Balthasarian theology upon a host of narrative art in order to provide a sustained apologia for Catholic Christianity in literature. Rather, it is meant to be a study of: (1) how the concept of a Catholic imagination gains distinct credibility when considered against Balthasar's interdisciplinary theological program, (2) how the proposition of a Catholic imagination in narrative arts gains unique intelligibility when viewed in the light of Balthasar's aesthetics, (3) how some representative "Catholic" fictions, when conceived under a Balthasarian light, transmit both cultural and theological relevance, and (4) the Catholic imagination as but one expression of a transformative theological imagination. Of course, most of us will allow that art can be transformative; but Balthasar will persuade us that art is transformative precisely because it is a theological enterprise. Just as Rilke's "The Archaic Torso of Apollo" demands that, upon encountering beauty, we must *Change Our Lives*, so, too, does encountering Balthasar's theological program.

While Balthasar articulates the depth and breadth of his theological imagination in a unique way, his work is not esoteric. His voice harmonizes with an eclectic group—artists, philosophers, theologians—who speak in a common theological tongue. Balthasar takes as premise the traditional theological doctrine of logocentrism that much current scholarship, especially since 1945, has questioned. A postulate to his approach is that the "word" is a theological aesthetic, a sensible and historical manifestation of the spiritual. The word is at the service of the transcendentals—Truth, Goodness, and Beauty—which, again, as, properties of God, illuminate the unity of *being* and, in Catholic intellectual tradition, "regulate reality." The word, to put it directly, transcends. It has both a sacramental and teleological quality about it that some thousands of years of logocentric theology has sought to comprehend and that some current modes of scholarship seek to critique, supplant, or annihilate.

This development, however, presents a beautiful irony: while Balthasar joins his voice with others who share in his sacramental imagination, I will also show how his sustained critique of the dry logic of enlightenment certainty can be seen in league, however obliquely, with many of the concerns raised by the very postmodern theorists who would otherwise critique his logocentric imagination as naïve and provincial. His work, therefore, goes a long way in aiding both the critic and the theologian who inhabit postmodern spaces. The tools that Balthasar (as theologian) offers may give new interpretive options to the literary critic; the tools that Balthasar (as critic) offers demonstrate the many ways that a facility with literary sources can aid the theologian in conveying deep insights about meaning. We see once again the beauty of intellectual pluralism—of interdisciplinarity—and recognize it as a viable interpretive option that might address the current "crisis in meaning." If theology is to remain instructive as a prime interlocutor of meaning, it must come to grips with the deconstructive interpretive milieu that postmodernity proposes. However, this need not be a cause for alarm, as the challenge also discloses yet another oblique complementarity: I will suggest that any cleavage between the theological imagination and postmodernity boils down to faith, which, in turn, is largely a matter of grammar. As Balthasar describes, faith is a vision and an imagination. Faith persuades us to its vision based largely on "subjective evidence," and issues in "subjectivity" also preoccupy postmodernist criticism. In the interest, then, of demonstrating another indirect kinship between postmodernism and theological investigation, my approach is a traditional *fides quaerens intellectum* and proceeds, largely, along those normative lines. Faith, in this way, may be seen as a prime ingredient that facilitates the reconstruction of texts, an impulse that works through the more nihilistic tendencies that lie at the heart of

deconstruction. In fairness, postmodernist critics have rightly insisted that the appropriate social function of the imagination operating through the arts (especially narrative art) is to submit to destruction the standing assumptions of the day; but faithful vision demands that we redeem that destruction through a process of rebuilding and reimagining.

I will now turn to issues in methodology in order to elucidate my approach further. Drawing on tools employed by literary critics and by employing Balthasar's own methods, I will continue examining the issue of logocentrism. As a kind of demonstration, my brief foray into this topic will serve as an exemplum that indicates how I plan to make use of several disciplines in my general examination. I will then round out the chapter by offering additional remarks on methodology, several "contexts for criticism," a short reflection on the significance of this work, and a note on chapter sequence.

Theology and Interdisciplinarity (A): A Methodological Exemplum

Balthasar makes prudent and judicious use of a vast array of sources. For example, he recovers Augustine not only for Augustine's theological credibility but also for Augustine's relevance as a resource for aesthetic and rhetorical commentary. As one of the earliest logocentrists in Western history, Augustine exemplified and fostered a characteristically Latin attention to language, rhetorical forms, and expression. While Greek Christianity tended to prize visual representations and looked to liturgical praxis for the development of doctrine, Latin theological reflection explored a multilevel textual hermeneutic in which metaphor, parable, and other narrative forms are seen as vehicles of revelation. In keeping with his exaltation of auditory art, Augustine's *De Ordine* (particularly the first twenty chapters) outlines how grammar and literature—how forms of the word—participate dialectically in the revelation of God. Such a focus anticipates the twentieth-century concern with language and transmission of meaning, not so much in the obsessive, self-loathing, and fetishistic aspects that linguistic concern has taken on, but rather with language as a primary and pluriform host for meaning. Language, for most deconstructionists, has taken on a contradictory and convoluted character. It is, oddly, the locus of everything and nothing at the same time; it is the essential vehicle that illuminates the important idea that nothing, after all, is essential or meaningful. Language, to quote Rene Girard's critique on the matter, gives "to airy nothing a local habitation and name," which is to say that language, for strict deconstructionists, is, ironically, a location for conveying the fact that there are no locations. We will interrogate this intriguing notion more deliberately in short order and find that deconstructionism, among its other attributes, shares a buoyant affinity with mystical theology (and other "negative" forms of theology), at least as far as language is concerned.

In *De Musica*, Augustine's sustained meditation on beauty, Augustine anticipates the postmodern suspicion of language and culminates his project by establishing the link between the divine animation of beauty—specifically in the creative and visual arts and in spoken word—in the conversionary effects of the Eucharist. Balthasar will develop such connections into a theological aesthetics and endorse the prime value of "seeing the form." Augustine writes, "I find 'O taste and see that the Lord is good *suauis*' (Ps 34) … If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious (1 Peter 2)." The poet Denise Levertov (1923–1997) is instructive here. Her poem "O Taste and See" (1964) dwells on this deep mystery: the mystery of presence in the Eucharist. With its wider span and its attention to the subtleties of sacramental vision, it extends Augustine's theology. Therefore, it is a good example of a theological aesthetic—postmodern in era, certainly, but not in ultimate effect:

> The world is
> not with us enough.
> O taste and see
> The subway Bible poster said,
> meaning The Lord, meaning
> if anything all that lives
> to the imagination's tongue,
> grief, mercy, language,
> tangerine, weather, to
> breathe them, bite,
> savor, chew, swallow, transform
> into our flesh our
> deaths, crossing the street, plum, quince,
> living in the orchard and being
> hungry, and plucking
> the fruit.

As I've mentioned, Balthasar's aesthetics, following Augustine, is concerned primarily with "seeing the form"—with meditating on a local expression, on a concrete universal. Levertov's poem provides one such "form." She unifies thought and thing by faithful vision, by imagination itself, and then by linguistic/poetic affirmation, "imagination's tongue." While this poem was written before her formal return to Christian belief, she illuminates this fecundating negotiation by adorning her poem with a sacramental scaffolding, by an implicit (if buried) reference to the eucharistic event of Christ: "O taste and see … meaning The Lord." The astounding revelation of the Lord is conveyed, beautifully, in the blasé setting of a subway through a reproduced artifact of two-bit advertising, a "Bible poster." Next, Levertov casts a variegated range of lush moments, so that eucharistic presence bursts out from this underground experience and blooms in a panoply of effect. She tastes and sees the Lord in actions ("to breathe them"), in objects ("tangerine," "orchard"), in emotions ("grief"), in primal human need ("being hungry"), to categorize just a few. We work to center of the poem, toward an in-the-flesh oriented plea to taste and see. We are confronted with a compelling invitation to conversion that recalls the Augustinian exhortation: "bite, savor, chew, swallow, transform into our flesh our deaths," invited so that Christ may *Easter* in us, that we may "cross the street," banally, as if to the post office, to a holy encounter.

Clearly, Levertov's Tuesday morning subway ride is a revelatory event, and her meditation on tasting and seeing the Lord is both intimate and expansive. Her poem, furthermore, identifies a core issue of philosophical aesthetics: that of language and (real) presence. It renders some aspect of the mystery of the Eucharist without dogmatic qualification and without a systematic commentary. It's a good way station on our road toward understanding how Balthasar negotiates the difference between theological aesthetics and "conventional" theological reflection. For example, theologian Catherine Pickstock, who is also concerned with the sacramental beauty of the Eucharist, expounds philosophically on what is occurring in poetically in Levertov's piece:

> So whereas, for Marion, the Eucharist is something extra-linguistic that makes up or compensates for the deathliness of language, it is on the contrary the case that the Eucharist situates us more in side language than ever. So much so, in fact, that it is the Body as word which will be given to eat, since the word alone renders that the given in the mode of sign, as

> bread and wine. Yet not only is language that which administers the sacrament to us, but conversely, the Eucharist underlies all language, since in carrying the secrecy, uncertainty, discontinuity which characterize every sign to an extreme (no body appears in the bread), it also delivers a final disclosure, certainty, and continuity (the bread is the Body) which alone makes it possible now to trust every sign. In consequence we are no longer uncertainly distanced from "the original event" by language, but rather we are concelebrants of that event in every word we speak (the event as transcendental category, whose transcendality is now revealed to be the giving of the Body and Blood of Christ). The words of Consecration "This is my body" therefore, far from being problematic in their meaning, are the only words which certainly have meaning and lend meaning to all other words. This is because they fulfill the contradictory conditions of the beneficent secrecy of every sign (certain/uncertain, continuous/discontinuous, iconic, arbitrary, present/absent) to such a degree of oppositional tension that the inhering of bread and Body is not a relation of signification (as for a Zwinglian view), but more like a condition of possibility for all signification.

Pickstock asserts in prose what Levertov renders in poetry. The eucharistic moment is never at a distance: Christ is on a subway; Christ is frying fish in olive oil on the shores of the Sea of Galilee a week or so after his death; Christ is somehow present both in quince and in handshakes of strangers. Clearly, this kind of distinction—between prosaic/systematic and aesthetic theology—is a central question in this study and will be addressed in the second half of this book. My hope is that such an articulation will result in more clarity about theological aesthetics and the contours of the theological imagination.

In any case, Pickstock's point is striking: transubstantiation in the Eucharist uniquely validates the possibility for human meaning. Balthasar agrees:

> We cannot separate his word from his existence: it possesses his truth only in the context of his life, that is, in the giving of himself for the truth and love of the Father even unto the death on the Cross. Without the Cross, which means equally without the Eucharist, his word would not be true … it would not be the two-in-one christological world which reveals life in the three-in-one … it is he, in his presence here and now, who is the fulfillment of all the past, and by fulfilling it makes his own past and the past of the Kingdom present. The "words" that he treats here as present … are a continual reconversion to the reality of the Gospel.

For his part, Augustine is likewise "aesthetically optimistic" in regards to linking language with reality. In any case, my brief consideration of the vitality of a Catholic imagination reveals a curious point: the imagination I propose develops a list of theological tendencies, but the list is not exclusive, dogmatic, or ultimately final. Augustine was certainly Catholic, but not in the way that reverberates with current versions of Catholicism; Levertov, to reiterate, wrote "O Taste and See" before her formal return to the church; Pickstock is Anglo-Catholic. The Catholic imagination herein proposed, then, derives more from theological intuition than it does from institutional affiliation. The common focus on sacramentality and transcendence, on Incarnation and Eucharist, links these thinkers, and the broad chasm that would seem to divide them is made narrow by their common imagination. This relationship bears ripe fruit today for those who read and view not only literary narrative but also all the vast universe of language and sign with theological sensibilities.

Theology and Interdisciplinarity (B): Further Remarks on Methodology

Balthasar demonstrates the variety of ways that we can consider theology or, rather, the variety of ways in which theology demands consideration. As we will observe more systematically next chapter,

Balthasar was a vastly integrated person, the "most cultivated man in Europe." Balthasar was a theologian; an expert on culture, philosophy, and literature; a publisher and editor; and would-be cardinal. The deep respect Balthasar pays to interdisciplinarity, in turn, reveals and models a central facet of the Catholic imagination that I propose. As a Catholic, Balthasar, again, "seeks after the whole"; he seeks to negotiate a variety of conflicting elements in order to integrate them into an intelligible theological system. Balthasar commentator Aidan Nichols observes well:

What the reader who comes to the trilogy from a background in human letters will marvel at is the range of reference which can integrate into the dramatics a myriad dramatic constructions suggested by actual plays, and into the aesthetics rich raids on the mythopoeic, the common fund of images understood (or at any rate understandable) by members of the race. But Balthasar is no Chateaubriand, seeking to impress the secular critic with the genius of Christianity via his own. The entire trilogy is controlled by a deep feeling of docility.

Balthasar makes judicious use of the complexities of narrative art to interrogate theological mystery. Therefore, just as Balthasar integrates a broad range of work by narrative artists and commentators to clarify his vision, so will I. In this regard, my methodology is deliberately mimetic. Moreover, while the book focuses on Balthasar's contribution to religious criticism, Balthasar is not always in the foreground. As a writer, Balthasar is particularly astute in that he discerns the moments when texts and topics ascend on their own merit and can stand alone without comment. In the following discussion, there are sections in which a text or topic will stand alone without qualification against Balthasarian commentary; in other sections, I will refer to Balthasar in order to add specific depth to the issue at hand. At minimum, this approach seeks to emulate Balthasar's methodology so as to endorse both the textual uniqueness of theological expression and the wide scope of theological imagination.

Narrative then, as Balthasar illustrates, is fundamentally a theological act. By examining some exemplary instances of narrative art, this study will put forward the ways that Balthasar's work reveals that "doing theology" is as much an artistic enterprise as anything else. Balthasar, who earned his first doctorate in German literature, formulated his theology through the lens of many "literary" artists, from John of the Cross to Georges Bernanos to John Steinbeck. While, curiously, he never referred to himself as a "theologian," his theology is unique in that it looks to literature, drama, and poetry (and music, which only sweetens the mixture) to "see the form." Literary texts, in his view, are incarnational tapestries *par excellence*—living canvases that play host to the great theological questions. Because his theology dwells upon and makes use of the rhetorical power of narrative art, it provides a model by which other literary forms can be theologically interpreted.

Another method has to do with the musicality of presentation. Balthasar's trilogy meanders, arcs, and crests like a great symphony; and readers will find no surprise in this fact since Balthasar, from his youth, was an accomplished musician. He perceived the world largely through the prism of music and tracked the intelligibility of the world—the nature of being, history, and revelation—in musical terms:

> The world is like a vast orchestra tuning up: each player plays to himself, while the audience takes their seats and the conductor has not yet arrived. All the same, someone has struck up an A on the piano, and a certain unity of atmosphere is established around it; they are tuning up for a common endeavor. … In his revelation, God performs a symphony, and it is impossible to say

> which is richer: the seamless genius of his composition or the polyphonous orchestra of creation that he has prepared to play it.

The works selected in each of the following chapters mimic and illuminate the various stages of Balthasar's theological excursion. However, while the architecture of my remarks relies on the organizing principle by which Balthasar guides his trilogy, we must note that Balthasar is also relatively asystematic in his approach. As we will see shortly, his is a *concentric* vision; he repeats and deepens theological themes, often in a nonlinear order. To an extent, I will follow suit: the general structure of my discussion moves from the aesthetics to dramatics to logic, but I will amplify and circulate around several select themes that I see as important in the reconstruction of a valid religious criticism. My choices, I hope, will make sense on the other side of the journey. As Balthasar astutely proposes in his *Theo-logic*:

> What does a Mozart symphony mean? To answer this question, one must begin by listening to the piece over and over again and by taking in its fullness of meaning through sympathetic understanding. Only afterward can we talk about the symphony, and only with those who have opened themselves to the same tonal image.

While it would be a traditional approach to select one author and engage in a Balthasarian reading of his or her work, ultimately such an approach would not do justice to large scale of Balthasar's concern. Therefore, since "transmission" in literary art has been so important in current discourses, I offer several different narrative and poetic voices that "transmit" a Catholic imagination. For the last thirty years, literary studies have been preoccupied not so much with authors or meaning but with how authors transmit meaning. Balthasar is likewise concerned with aesthetic and linguistic transmission, but mainly as a means and mediator of transcendental truth:

Everything that exists is allusive, is a pointer and a reminder, and any conceptual clarification or univocal definition of these infinite significations would appear to him as an impoverishment, perhaps even profanation. [The knower] understands *that* things 'signify'; they do it so intensely that one simply should not ask *what* they signify. It is enough if they regard us with their deep, inscrutable eye.

In my view, postmodernism's diminishment of the "transcendental signified" has been a negative development and thrown otherwise well-intentioned critics off the scent. In this sense I develop a discussion of how Balthasar's thought offers practical ways in which meaning (and transmission of the meaningful) can be retrieved and reconciled and suggest options for postmodern critics who have finally become exhausted by deconstructing music videos or by writing about the other ephemera of pop culture.

Balthasar the Humanist: Contexts for Criticism (A)

It is fair to say that Balthasar's work sits at the nucleus of the current movement to revitalize aesthetics. He also sits at the center of discussions in theology and art, which are rapidly gaining in popularity and scope. The philosophical consideration of aesthetics, though, like theories of religion and literature, did not emerge as a distinct discipline in the West until the eighteenth century. Widespread enthusiasm for disciplinary categorization in scholarship was at least one by-product of the Enlightenment; and aesthetics was one of the earliest examples of a discrete "self-conscious discipline" in the modern/secular age. As Balthasar notes, "In the age of German idealism, an attempt had to be made to bring together the theory of beauty, which by now had become self conscious, with Christian revelation,

and beyond this, to identify the two, if at all possible." Balthasar recognizes that the task of these Enlightenment idealists seems noble enough: to offer a sustained and systematic account of what beauty is and what beauty can "do," especially as an attribute of God. However, upon closer inspection, the undertaking of these early modern "aestheticians" can also be construed as an exercise in a philosophical pacification of beauty, a sterile, abstracted, and ultrahygienic "taming" of something constitutive in the universe, something that *is* the universe, "the love," according to Dante, "that moves the sun and the other stars."

How we view beauty (and the arts of the beautiful) has changed so radically over the last three thousand years that it is striking in itself to pause and take stock. The modern notion of a museum, for example, to take one repository of "beauty," would be an idea totally repugnant to Plato or Augustine and would strike them as an inordinate use of community space. The ultimate consequence of Kant's aesthetic, to take the apex of Enlightenment aesthetics, is a disinterested (and decontextualized) stroll through this museum. Our encounter with beauty, in this scenario, comes off merely as a project in artifice, one task in *aestheticism*, three or four removes, at best, from beauty's intimacy. Even our critical observation of the figurative gallery-goer is itself a kind of remove, a *watching* of the *watcher* of beauty, an apparition *par excellence* of the alienation between "art" and its organic roots, its grounding in the artist and the community. In Ralph Waldo Emerson's words, "if eyes were made for seeing, then Beauty has its own excuse for being," and we need to be very careful when we speak of beauty and endeavor to make beautiful things. If Nadine Gordimer is on to something when she says, "truth isn't always beauty, but the hunger for it is," we need to be mindful that beauty touches the very heart of our desire, the very heart of what it means to be uniquely human. And if Jean Anouilh is right when he proposes, "beauty is one of the rare things that do not lead to doubt in God," we need to remember that discussions about beauty are essentially holy and sacred events. And Balthasar knows this well: even though he can traffic in the language of Enlightenment-generated philosophical aesthetics, his is a "discourse from the knees," a contemplation, really, that, in its radical adoration of God, honors the wholeness of human experience.

Balthasar's work models the vitality of engaging historical concepts, such as aesthetics. Moreover, his work explicitly endorses a continuing dialog with history, but it is also a hermeneutic critical of the historical-critical method spawned in the Enlightenment. Balthasar seeks to monitor the complicated mystery of salvation history and underscores the validity of our personal and communal *via*, the unfolding of our narrative as human persons in relationship with God. As G. K. Chesterton reminds us, such an engagement is essentially pluralistic and cross-cultural: "Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to that arrogant oligarchy who merely happen to be walking around." Balthasar shares this conviction; and his instrumental role in *ressourcement*, the mid-twentieth-century movement of a group of European theologians, demonstrates how a responsible consideration of historical sources can aid scholarship and inform current problems in a variety of disciplines in humanistic study. A chief goal of the *ressourcement* group was to rein in errant epistemologies by reengaging thoughtfully with historical sources. A by-product, of course, was that the recovery of antecedent texts and sources became, ironically, new elucidations on modern thought, which, in turn, provided a foil against the monolithic excesses of Enlightenment rationalism. In Balthasar's case, the experience with *ressourcement* discloses two apparently competing attitudes: (1) *ressourcement*, as I mentioned, honors history and serves as a

corrective to the excesses of the Enlightenment; (2) *ressourcement* contextualizes Balthasar and establishes his rightful place as a major figure in postmodernist thought. Moreover, since a fuller understanding of theological aesthetics resides in more democratic and pluralistic modes of interpretation, we must include active consideration with the past in our study. After all, as Charles Péguy is purported to have said, "One has to go to the bottom of the well to retrieve the freshest water." Marxian literary and cultural critic Terry Eagleton's recent work (with its attention fixed squarely upon Augustine and Aquinas) attests that there really is nowhere else left to look. Balthasar and his colleagues knew they must converse with history in order to be theologically credible. Jacques Derrida, who writes from the generation that immediately succeeds Balthasar, also knows that he cannot avoid history, even in his attempt to be ahistorical. History becomes but one discourse in Derrida, but it nevertheless serves as a constant challenge to him as he engages Plato, Denys, and Eckhart. Even though Balthasar and Derrida end up with two distinctly opposed views on the value of history in thought, the whole of their work relies precisely on history.

The implications of Balthasar's high regard for both aesthetics and history disclose, perhaps, an even deeper value: the theological nature of dramatic art. Balthasar's theology gains particular relevance as a theology of drama, and he employs a vast array of work—from Aeschylus to Shakespeare to Eugene O'Neill—in his theological program. Following Aristotle's aesthetic theory, Balthasar's strong insinuation is that resolution in a drama itself can have what amounts to liturgical and sacramental effects, that is, *transformative* effects that stem from a simple encounter with dramatic art. Indeed, it may be said that Aristotle realized the innate potential, specifically in the arts of tragedy, for the natural development of religious media as well as the possibility for a theological aesthetics. He saw that art, particularly when it seeks to negotiate and explore the ambiguities and paradoxes of life (as it does in tragedy), can fill "gaps" in nature and can account for a unique indeterminacy of human activity that doesn't register on the radar of idealism, whatever its historical manifestation. In short, Aristotle provides for the key component of "mystery" in narrative art, which, in turn, becomes the cardinal hinge in theological aesthetics. In many ways, the acknowledgment of these "gaps," which breaks the rigid hegemony of Plato's ideal forms, provides the starting point in Balthasar's schema. The acknowledgment also highlights the locus of affinity that Balthasar's project (via Aristotle and the Cappadocians) shares with postmodernity: the primacy of *aporia*, of *Khora*, of gap, or, as Balthasar observes (on how theology can confront and heal the dehumanizing mechanization of the modern world), "When everything is blocked off, one must live in the interstices." Balthasar will dwell on this phenomenon in his work and explore how "empty places" reveal dynamic truth in the very same motion that they conceal it.

Balthasar endorses the Aristotelian respect for narrative aesthetics precisely because of its healthy approach to drama. Like Plato, Balthasar's aesthetic begins formally: God, as "form of forms," can be imagined and perceived as monolithic and otherworldly, as iconic and static; but this conception of form on our part is ultimately an esoteric misapprehension and does not provide for the "action" of trinitarian revelation that, once and for all, provides content for human activity. Only in one aspect of our perception can Christ be held in a kind of iconographical stasis: the part that seeks to stop time in the aesthetic/artistic moment of representation (which itself is a paradoxical notion that later iconographers will fiercely refute, for icons, even in their stillness, reveal divine fluidity). As far as God is concerned, that is, from a cosmological perspective, God has chosen to be in motion, has chosen to "traffic" with humanity, and has endowed and animated humanity to be disposed to such "trafficking."

Balthasar's massive trilogy provides precisely for this central attribute in its emphasis on the vibrant inclusivity of all creation in the “household” of God, in the Economic Trinity. God, while self-sufficient and eternal, chooses relationship out of love and thus is ever and always pouring out; Christ is ever and always in “action;” and the Spirit is precisely the “action” of this unfolding, this Theodrama. From at least the second angle, the English poet-priest Gerard Manley Hopkins puts it particularly well in the sestet of his oft-cited “Kingfishers” sonnet:

> Í say móre: the just man justices;
> Kéeps gráce: thát keeps all his goings graces;
> Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—
> Chríst—for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
> Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
> To the Father through the features of men's faces.

As Hopkins meditates, all truth is grounded in and negotiated through Christ. It is revealed thus precisely by human action, by human participation in the great drama of existence, the “grace” of which, according to Balthasar, is *impression*, “the stress of God in man” that plays, incarnates, and *expresses* in ten thousand places. In this regard, the frozen moment is illusory, an aesthetic concept, as we will see later, that cinematic art negotiates so persuasively. Hopkins writes of his own poem: “It is as a man said ‘That is Christ playing at me and me playing at Christ, only that it is no play but truth; that is Christ being me and me being Christ.’” In this regard, both Hopkins and Balthasar extend the implication inchoate in Aristotle and elucidated by Balthasar: that of aesthetic linkage between the visible and invisible aspects of our experience. Christ is historical yet *supratemporal*; Christ is paragon of pluralism yet *supracultural*, “the unique phenomenon Christ is not wedded to any ‘culture,’” writes Balthasar, but “Jesus remains the fulfiller of the Old Covenant for every culture.”

A Theoliterary Project: Contexts for Criticism (B)

At first glance, the idea of “Christ as *supracultural*” or of “Christ as center” is one repulsive to “traditional” postmodernism. Postmodernism's suspicion of metanarrative and its aversion to theological (i.e., absolutist) structuralism challenge such claims. Tensions such as these are at heart in this discussion, so we must offer some prefatory remarks. A judicious, if brief, analysis of current trends in philosophy is needed here to make further sense of the movement that loiters behind my commentary, that of postmodernism. We find that postmodernism is, like all historical movements, a complicated phenomenon. For example, upon sober consideration, it has become increasingly clear that postmodernism is not as generally atheist as some have proposed. This is not to say, of course, that atheism is not a major tendency in the postmodern “system,” as I discussed earlier, for it certainly is. Any hesitation in placing faith in the language of truth claims carries with it the necessary (if not fully articulated) disposition toward atheism or, at the very least, agnosticism. Yet there is also a refreshing honesty in the position that does not presume to know the mind of God, the disposition that remains humble before God (as *Other*, even, of *other*) that does not make absolute claims as we journey through our lives. Such a hesitation strikes one as apophatic; and *apophaticism*, in its examination of all that God *is not*, is a profoundly mystical approach to theology. It becomes very clear that many with a so-called postmodern temperament share this kind of spirituality and are in fact propelled by this kind of theological imagination. The key response to the whole conundrum, furthermore, relies precisely on the faculty of the imagination: in the willingness and ability to see the form and follow it where it leads.

Balthasar is sensitive to this where other theologians critical of postmodernity are not. In freedom, Balthasar "allows" truth to do truth's work, to go where truth will go. His theology is not threatened by other "forms" or by the textured nature of truth. Quite the contrary: Balthasar embraces the expansion of truth that postmodernism proposes, embraces the movement beyond the illusion of dualistic structures; and his theology makes a fundamental provision for the annihilation of such conventions. Balthasar celebrated the "surplus of meaning" that piques the interest of deconstructionist critics but also figures the excess of meaning as an emblem of the "transcendental signified." The key, according to Balthasar, is to remain "open" to such horizons: "This openness to any truth that might show itself is an inalienable perfection of every knowing subject, and, as knowledge increases, it cannot contract but only expand."

The challenge to remain "open," of course, reveals deep tensions that reside at the heart of narrative criticism. According to Graham Ward, "methods of handling texts function on the basis of presuppositions and prejudices." Ward, who is both theologian (he has written on Balthasar, Pannenberg, and Tracy, among others) and critical theorist (he has written on Certeau, Derrida, and Kristeva, among others), is profoundly conscious of the cleavage of perspective that divides theologians from other contemporary intellectuals. He assesses the situation in this manner: "The presupposition of hermeneutics (i.e., the theological tradition) is that universal meaning exists independent of, but is accessible through, all local expressions of meaning. The presupposition of the critical tradition is that meaning is constructed—by the way we perceive, conceive, and think (Kant), and by our language (Derrida)." Rather than being alarmed by the ravine that apparently separates the two camps or by the prejudices each interpretive community harbors, Ward has done well to highlight the ways that critical theory and theological understanding can be of mutual aid to each other. If we approach theology in a "new key" (a concept that Balthasar the musician would surely appreciate), and if our theological method makes good use of the innovations of critical theory, Ward concludes that we will be "reenchanted" with the world. It is then perhaps ironic to conclude that postmodern critical theory is not actually the threat to the theological imagination that many fear but can be employed to articulate and demonstrate a more comprehensive and animated approach to religious criticism.

Derrida's Challenge: Contexts for Criticism (C)

No discussion about postmodern theory would be complete without devoting ample space to its major figure: Jacques Derrida (1930–2004). More important, a brief introduction to Derrida's work will go a long way in presenting vital concepts and vocabulary that will instruct many of my subsequent analyses. Not only is Derrida influential as an instigator of one most significant intellectual and cultural movements of the twentieth century, but also he is, perhaps, the most influential negative theologian since Meister Eckhart. Had this title been ascribed to him thirty-five years ago, most scholars (probably along with Derrida himself) would wave it off as a ridiculous proposition. Derrida began as a philosopher and, as often happens in life, ended up elsewhere. Derrida is the father of deconstructionism, a massive intellectual revolution that critiques the whole of Western metaphysics. Deconstructionism has become a source of sustained ambivalence: it has had vast appeal in the academy and has been, at the same time, a prime source for rancorous backlash, viewed by some as a kind of philosophical snake oil. The very word *deconstruction* is divisive. It inspires blind supplication, and it spawns harsh invective; but it also aids theological discourse, a point that serves as yet another critique of the modern tendency that bifurcates and oversimplifies.

Derrida's work has increasingly become the default optic through which various and disparate disciplines—from biblical studies to anthropology to rhetoric to poetry to architecture—are viewed and analyzed. Derrida's influence has shown up even outside the academy and has invaded the mercurial regions of popular culture. However, Derrida's fundamental interest has always been precisely with metaphysics; he has always been preoccupied with the "big questions" in anthropology, philosophy, and theology. His ardent consideration of theological sources attests to this fact. Just prior to his recent death, Derrida became ensconced in the ever-surging wave of theological discourse. He became increasingly preoccupied with the issues that lie beyond the bounds of "trace" elements in human experience, the same elements that he long held constitute the limits what we can "know." Derrida recalibrated his deconstructionism and concluded that some concepts—concepts such as justice, love, and reconciliation—are not, in the end, deconstructible. It seems that, among other things, the case of Derrida's personal journey illuminates a kind of pragmatism of aging: that all roads, whether begrudgingly or not, lead back to questions of theology—even if one denies, as Derrida did, that theology and deconstruction have comparable objects. Derrida's own pathology may illuminate a compelling personal application of *exitus* and *reditus*: a reluctant creature drawn back to God even against the parameters of his own magnificent logic.

Derrida's profound impact on late modern thought began in 1967 with the simultaneous publication of three major works, *La Voix et le phénomène*, *L'Ecriture et la différence*, and *De la Grammatologie*, works that began to articulate his extensive and sweeping critique of Western metaphysics, a critique that draws, in part, from the writings of Nietzsche, Freud, Marx, and Levinas, but most of all from the watershed phenomenology of Husserl enhanced and refined in casks fashioned by Heidegger. Derrida developed a method of identifying types of patterns within the act of writing and called this process "deconstruction." Deconstruction seeks to identify logocentric paradigms (such as binary dichotomies, transcendental correspondences, connected semiotic schema) and show that the possibility of presence within any contextual language is in constant "play" and "differs" continuously in relation to something else, leaving only a "trace" of the subject/object. In its most favorable light, Derrida's deconstructive strategy is not an attempt to remove paradoxes or contradictions or escape them by creating a system of its own. Rather, deconstruction embraces the need to use and sustain the very concepts that it claims are unsustainable. Derrida was looking to open up the generative and creative potential of philosophical discourse, as I mentioned above; but he takes issue with the way in which much of metaphysical thought, according to his experience, had foundered into a series confining polar oppositions such as male/female, good/evil, interior/exterior, essence/appearance, nature/culture, true/false, and life/death, to name a few. It is in this area specifically that Balthasar and Derrida have much to say to each other. They, along with other figures in the theological inquiry of *ressourcement* (Henri de Lubac, Louis Bouyer, Paul Claudel) and in postmodern critical theory (Michel de Certeau, Julia Kristeva), criticize what they saw as the hegemony of dualism in modern approaches to philosophy, theology, and literature. It is precisely on this front that *ressourcement* and postmodernity can unite to assail the idealistic abandon of modernity, on this front that a vibrant theological aesthetic may be further retrieved, revealed, and developed.

As an aesthetic framework, though, deconstruction is as far away from Balthasar's constant call to "see the form" as possible. Derrida's invocation might be to "see the 'trace' of the (indeterminate) form (and then, just as quickly, erase this 'seeing')," as we erase words from a page. Be that as it may, deconstruction, while wary of dualism and dialecticism, still tends to be paradoxical and apophatic: it

tends to "propose" truth or meaning by "unsaying" it, which strikes critics of deconstruction as the kind binary maneuver that Derrida's stated aims reject. In any case, Derrida's 1986 essay "How Not to Speak" (the title itself relies on a kind of dialectical irony for emphasis) expatiates on this enterprise of resituating and relocating the "said" (i.e., any aesthetic text, film, list, novel, discourse, etc.) against classically dualistic epistemologies in that it revives the very important Platonic term *khora* to aid his quest for conceptual precision. For Derrida, meaning, as I indicated above, lies in the ever-fluctuating zone of the "trace" that navigates the "spaces" and the "gaps" in between, a pattern that John Guare tries to penetrate when he writes of Cezanne in his play *Six Degrees of Separation*: "Cezanne would leave blank spaces in his canvasses if he couldn't account for the brush stroke, give a reason for the color."

Cezanne grapples, aesthetically, with what is unsayable or, rather, what is uncolorable. There is something beyond the boundary of being (or, in Cezanne's case, beyond the spectrum of color) that has not been thought of but that needs to be valued. This is the "zone" of the *khora*; and this kind of inexpressible dynamic begins to get at what Derrida means by seeking a "religion without religion."

Derrida takes *khora* from Plato's *Timaeus* to recuperate difference at the origin, the possibility of a third logic, one that is in "contrast" to all dialectics. John Caputo notes:

> *Khora* is neither form (idea) nor sensible thing, but the place (*lieu*) in which the demiurge impresses or cuts images of the intelligible paradigms, the place which was already there, which, while radically heterogeneous with the forms, seems to be as old as the forms. Plato has two different languages for relating to the forms and to *khora*. When *khora* is reappropriated by ontology and treated "analogically," in various and famous figures, likely stories to illustrate a philosophical point, "didactic metaphors," then it is described as receptacle (*hypodokhe*), space, or matrix/mother. By being said to participate in *both* the sensible and the supersensible without quite being either, *khora* is given a role interior to philosophy, assigned a proper place inside philosophy, and engenders a long history of philosophemes, as the matrix and mother of offspring like Aristotle's *hyle* and Descartes's *extensio*.

But in the other language, the one that is of greater interest to Derrida, *khora* is an outsider, with no place to lay her/its head, in philosophy or in mythology, for its proper object is neither logos nor mythos. In this more negative trope, the second tropic of negativity, there is there (*il y la)* something that is said, very apophatically, to be neither being nor non-being, neither sensible nor intelligible, that is not analogous to either, and is unable to be hinted at by metaphors. *Khora* is neither present nor absent, neither active nor passive, the Good nor evil, living nor non-living (*Timaeus 50 C)*. Neither theomorphic nor anthropomorphic—but rather atheological and non-human—*khora* is not even a receptacle.

Caputo's observation of Derrida's meditation on what is "sayable" (and what is not) reverberates with the Augustinian logic on which Derrida was weaned. Derrida's project, then, to put it succinctly, contributes nothing new to structural (or *deconstructural*) considerations of philosophy, but what he does do is promulgate the importance of grammar in "God talk" and argue that grammatical pluralism and intertextuality are as important as, say, political pluralism and interreligious dialogue. We will see that Balthasar heartily agrees with Derrida on the preeminent need for a "third logic"; but Balthasar will employ an entirely different grammar, a grammar based on the sacramentality of Catholic trinitarian logic. Balthasar will assert the vitality of form, the dynamic of the *apophatic*, the *unformed* and "negative," with the analogical value of the *kataphatic, the formal* and "affirmative." It is not enough to say that, for

Balthasar, Christ is Plato's *Khora* and that Mary is the *hypodokhe*, but, as we will see, it's a really close call.

Derrida's work offers a legitimate challenge to Balthasar's theology of *Gestalt*. Derrida demonstrates that there is an important relationship between “discourses” and “forms.” However, as Graham Ward observes, the closest that Balthasar comes to an overt discussion of “discourse” is in his section “The Mediation of the Form” in volume 1 of *The Glory of the Lord*: “His form in various ways became intertwined with the interrelated forms of his immediate and more distant historical context and with the given forms of the world of nature and of salvation history.”

Ward shows that, while there is a kind of affinity between Derrida and Balthasar (in that Balthasar “affirms a recognition of the intertextual nature of mundane existence”), Balthasar will not dispense with supporting the theological implications inherently proposed by intertextuality. In another turn to analogy, Balthasar asserts that intertextuality is a kind of cosmological model, an invitation to make broader connections in meaning. Ward reaches a similar conclusion: “We have to learn how to read all these forms that constitute the particularity of our existence. We have to learn to see them as forms and not as objects containing a meaning closed within themselves and independent of Christ.”

For his part, literary and cultural critic Paul Giles does well to locate the phenomena of postmodernism and deconstruction within the intersection of theology and narrative art. Moreover, he becomes a very significant interlocutor in both articulating and critiquing the notion of a Catholic imagination within this critical setting. Since current critical theory tends to privilege and emphasize the unique character of cultural expression, Giles is a good way station between points of view that see Catholicism as theological truth and those that see Catholicism as cultural or literary text. In his seminal work, *American Catholic Arts and Fictions: Culture, Ideology, and Aesthetics* (1992), Giles examines why it is that looking to François Mauriac, Flannery O'Connor, or Martin Scorsese can “reveal more about the Catholic experience than reading many wearisome issues of *Catholic Digest.*” While Giles is particularly interested in this notion because of the aesthetic and sociological implications it delivers to narrative art (the idea of that Catholicism is one textuality among many others, that “theology itself might be seen to function as a fluctuating signifier, a series of fictional constructions,” and so on), one can modulate the register slightly and conceive of Giles's insights in regard to aspects of Catholicism that are theologically mysterious and probably supercultural. For example, mulling over the violence of Walker Percy's *Lancelot* or contemplating the theological intensity of the series of Bess's interior monologues in Lars von Trier's *Breaking the Waves* will tell one as much (or more) about the mysteries of *justification* and *kenosis* as reading Rahner's *Hearer of the Word.* Giles's method, while it hesitates to invest explicitly in theological claims, plots a route for appreciating the aesthetic complexity and theological possibility of a broadly canvassed intertextuality. Giles's insights celebrate cultural similarity and cultural difference. In this manner, his work facilitates the recognition of essential questions in order to challenge and aid the articulation of a *Catholic imagination*.

In the second volume of Balthasar's *Theo-Drama*, Balthasar reminds us that the Greek word *analogia* “implies a mysterious, irreducible ‘similarity in dissimilarity.’” We are again struck, then, by the idea that postmodernity and the Catholic imagination have much to say to each other. Seen together, they can offer joint critique of the arid dualism that scaffolds the history of aesthetic theory. Balthasar decries the historical turn to dualism; and we shall witness shortly how he responds to the

constraints of the dualistic imagination with an interdisciplinary articulation of an incarnational imagination, one that mitigates duality by reasserting and demonstrating the legitimacy of the trinitarian structure of being. However, Balthasar's endorsement of the triadic structure of the *imago Trinitatis* is not to be read as a dismissal of the value of binary relationships. Balthasar, as a student of the great Polish Jesuit Erich Przywara, was clear about the existence of the "polarity structure" of the universe. More important, he came to see that "polarity structure" and dualism were not the same thing and that Przywara's presentation of the triadic structure of the *analogy of being* makes it clear that mystery and truth reside somewhere in between the polar extremes of any binary proposition and any dualistic relationship. It is a theme, we shall see, that Balthasar returns to time and again. In the first volume of *The-Logic* (*The Truth of the World*), Balthasar writes: "Truth can be found only in the floating middle between the appearance and the thing that appears. It is only in the relation between these two things that the empty mystery becomes a full, perennially self-replenishing mystery. It is only in their relation … they can now be interpreted." It is perhaps here that Balthasar and Derrida are most closely approximated: what is present is an absence, an unseen reality whose power is perhaps beyond verbal expression. Paul Fiddes refers to this analogical dynamic as nothing less than the grace of God: "Only the gift of divine grace can create an analogy between human speech signs and the reality of God, between the word and the words."

Serving the Community, Reviving Old Relationships

The significance of my study is threefold, the first being theological. In his revival of the patristic notion of Christ as cosmological center of all space and time, Balthasar vivifies the withered hand of scholasticism and grounds some of more theologically restricting tendencies of modern thought: "We now know that love has been given a form," writes David Schindler of Balthasar's fusion of aesthetics with history, the meaning of which "is forged in Christology, and in turn in the analogy of being which is developed in light of that Christology." Again, Balthasar urges us to "see the form [of Christ]" in all manner of being, whether they be human activities, natural phenomena, or, even, human works of art. "Seeing the form," then, becomes a central interdisciplinary theological hermeneutic that promises to be fruitful for all sorts of interdisciplinary investigations in which theology is one of the disciplines.

The second level of significance is literary. One of Balthasar's many contributions is that he furnishes the contemporary religious critic with the tools to reforge a space for *bona fide* theological discourse in environments that have become indifferent—or even hostile—to such activity. Such a retrieval of this powerful relationship between theology and narrative art—between theological rhetoric and literary representation—is a main topic of Balthasar's *Theo-Drama*, and a serious study of the implications that his theodramatics entails for literary theory has yet to be done.

In the true spirit of the trinitarian model, the conjugation of the first two levels of significance produces an essential third. Close inspection reveals that Balthasar has practical contributions to make to discourses in critical theory. Like critical theory, Balthasar's work is theological, literary, anthropological, philosophical, psychological, political, and historical, the disciplines that outline the breadth critical theory's multivalent concern. Like critical theory—and in the spirit of the *ressourcement* theology that shaped him—Balthasar is primarily interested in critiquing the idealistic *excesses* of modernity. Balthasar, too, is concerned with issues of language and difference, with *aporia*, with plurality, with surplus, and with horizons of meaning, to name a few. The difference between Balthasar and the majority of critical

theorists resides in ontological and theological orientation: it is therefore a difference of imagination and of grammar. This book aims to elaborate on this relationship.

I am now in a position to move to chapter 2, in which I offer both a biography of Balthasar and a protracted bibliography of his work. By this effort, I will introduce a more systematic presentation of the main pillars of Balthasar's theological program and begin to convey Balthasar's unique contribution to current discussions about the intersection among theology, history, philosophy, and narrative art. In chapter 3, I focus on Balthasar's aesthetics as a call to *vision*; and I cultivate a parallel between seeing the "word" and "seeing the form." I'll develop an aesthetics of the "word" in the first three sections of the chapter and then apply what I glean to a very close reading of Flannery O'Connor's "Revelation," (1964) particularly as a literary embodiment of a Catholic imagination. In chapter 4, my goal is to isolate several essential aspects of Balthasar's theodramatic theory and to demonstrate how they "play" in and through Lars von Trier's dramatic film *Breaking the Waves*, the first installment of his *Golden Heart* trilogy. It is no coincidence that Balthasar places his theodramatic program precisely between his aesthetics and logic in order to emphasize the spatial centrality of God's dramatic *action* in, with, and through the world. In chapter 5, I offer a reading of David Lodge's novel *Therapy*. Lodge does very well to illustrate that the erasure of God that preoccupies postmodern consciousness significantly affects philosophical conceptions about "subject formation" and theological conceptions about "people in relation." Lodge develops these themes by constructing a narrative that mirrors the existential progression—that is, the aesthetic, ethical, and religious "stages"— identified by the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard. Importantly, a close consideration of Kierkegaard's stages reveals a direct analogy with the transcendentals, which, in turn, illuminates one of the many reasons that Balthasar admired Kierkegaard and that Lodge's novel is a perfect piece to read against Balthasar's *Theo-Logic*. In this sense we can discover again how philosophy and theology work together and discern how God's logic—how human logic—exists in a trinitarian dynamic. <>

KENOSIS IN THEOSIS: AN EXPLORATION OF BALTHASAR'S THEOLOGY OF DEIFICATION by Sigurd Lefsrud [Pickwick Publications, 9781532693694]

The perennial questions surrounding human identity and meaning have never before been so acute. How we define ourselves is crucial since it determines our conception of society, ethics, sexuality--in short, our very notion of the "good." The traditional Christian teaching of "deification" powerfully addresses this theme by revealing the sacred dignity and purpose of all created life, and providing a comprehensive vision of reality that extends from the individual to the cosmos.

Hans Urs von Balthasar is a valuable guide in elucidating the church's teaching on this vital subject. Following the patristic tradition, he focuses his attention on Jesus Christ, whose kenotic descent in his incarnation and passion reveals both the loving character of God and the perfection of humanity. Christ is the "concrete analogy of being" who in his two natures as God and man unites heaven and earth. It is the Trinity, however, that brings to fruition the fullness of the meaning of theosis in Balthasar's theology. The community of divine persons eternally deifies the cosmos by embracing and transforming it into the

paradigm of all reality--the imago trinitatis--overcoming the distance between the created and uncreated while maintaining and honoring their difference.

Reviews

“This lucid and elegantly written study expounds a central and, for many, baffling, feature of Balthasar’s thought: exaltation (fulfillment) is only possible through humiliation (self-emptying). Sigurd Lefsrud does an admirable job in explaining the metaphysical, christological, and trinitarian background to this key Balthasarian conviction, and the ways in which it both does and does not correspond to the deification thinking of the Greek Fathers and their successors, the Byzantine theologians. By alerting the reader to parallels or divergences in Western Catholic and Lutheran (and other Protestant) approaches, his book should facilitate a wide-ranging ecumenical discussion of the nature of what Christians mean by ‘salvation.’” —Aidan Nichols, OP, author of A Key to Balthasar and The Shape of Catholic Theology

“This important book on the theology of deification should facilitate dialogue between Eastern and Western Christianity. It deals effectively with difficulties that deification raises for divine transcendence and human creatureliness. The work convincingly illustrates how Hans Urs von Balthasar’s theology of Holy Saturday underpins his teaching on deification.” —Gerald O’Collins, SJ, Professor Emeritus, Pontifical Gregorian University, author of The Beauty of Jesus Christ

“Although theosis, or deification, has become a well-established concept in modern soteriological thinking, it has not previously been studied adequately in one of its major Western exponents, Hans Urs von Balthasar. Sigurd Lefsrud has produced an important work, drawing together numerous threads running through Balthasar’s entire oeuvre to give us a richly textured account of a theology in which participation in the divine nature is inherently connected with Christ’s self-emptying love. I cannot commend it too highly.” —Norman Russell, Honorary Research Fellow of St Stephen’s House, University of Oxford

“Sigurd Lefsrud offers a beautifully written, lucid, intelligent, and generous engagement with Hans Urs von Balthasar’s theology of kenosis and theosis. Tracing the threads of his thought dispersed throughout his works, Lefsrud unveils a glorious tapestry that displays von Balthasar’s understanding of the astonishing good news of God’s self-emptying in the incarnation and the life of the redeemed as an eternal growth into the likeness of God through participation in Christ. Experts and non-experts alike will benefit from reading this illuminating study.” —Harry O. Maier, Professor of New Testament and Early Christian Studies, Vancouver School of Theology

“These important essays presented here by Sigurd Lefsrud make up a remarkably harmonious book which shows how the life that God gives us through the Theo-Drama as theosis is gained with kenosis and the experience of death. In this academically learned yet spiritually rich book on Balthasar’s contribution to the theology of deification, we realize that love is grounded in Christ’s self-emptying example. Rooted in the depths of the unified Christian tradition, Lefsrud shows that the ethos of theosis is the fruit of a Christology of kenosis.” —Maxim Vasiljevic, Bishop, Diocese of Western America, Serbian Orthodox Church

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> God created the human being as "a kind of second world, great in its littleness: another kind of angel, a worshipper of mixed origins . . . standing halfway between greatness and lowliness . . . cared for in this world, transferred to another, and, as the final stage of the mystery, made divine by his inclination towards God. —GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS

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What is the meaning of "man"? What is his origin, purpose, and destiny? In an era when many believe that human beings are merely advanced primates who evolved through chance, that sexual identity is not a biological given but a chosen psycho-social reality, that human life at its most vulnerable moments (in birth and death) has questionable value, it is clear that questions surrounding human dignity and meaning are by no means merely academic but are existentially urgent. We all desire "happiness," but how is this defined? By the individual, society, or an external, objective measure? While manifold answers about what promotes human fulfilment and joy have always been available for us to choose from, history continually reveals that our highest and most noble desires and goals are often tragically thwarted by selfishness and errors of judgement. Therefore, while it is true, as Thomas Aquinas affirms in his Summa Theologica, that "every creature intends to acquire its own perfection, which is the likeness of the divine perfection and goodness," it is equally obvious that humanity far too often "confound[s] the brilliance of the firmament with the star-shaped footprints of a duck in the mud."

The theme of "deification"—humanity's innate desire to be like God— epitomizes this predicament. It is the underlying leitmotif of human existence, humanity's boon and, tragically, bane. For it symbolizes both the most odious pride that has given birth to atrocities and war, and the most virtuous self-sacrifice that has led to the greatest societal and moral achievements. The narrative of Christianity begins and ends with theosis, from the sinful eating of the apple in order to "be like God" (Gen 3:5), to the redemptive consuming of Jesus' body and blood in the Eucharist which effects the eschatological promise that we "shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

The Christian understanding of theosis directly addresses the issues of humanity's origin, purpose and destiny. More importantly, it provides the very means of reaching true fullness of life, not only

individually and communally, but on the cosmic scale. For the meaning of theosis is grounded on the belief that eudaimonia (the Greek philosophical term for "happiness" and/or "fulfillment") consists in knowing God the Creator of all things. Without this objective, metaphysical anchor to illumine our being and guide our actions we are left to the capriciousness of individual opinion that inevitably leads to dissolution and chaos in human life. As Blaise Pascal, the seventeenth-century French scientist, rightly observed,

> For, after all, what is man in nature? A nothing compared to the infinite, a whole compared to the nothing, a middle point between all and nothing, infinitely remote from an understanding of the extremes; the end of things and their principles are unattainably hidden from him in impenetrable secrecy. Equally incapable of seeing the nothingness from which he emerges and the infinity in which he is engulfed.

The human mind alone cannot comprehend the meaning of things or of human existence since the answers are "unattainably hidden": "visible creation clearly enables us to grasp that there is a Maker, but it does not enable us to grasp His nature." Consequently, the only thing that can give us the capacity to see the truth of who we are as created in the image of God is that which is super-natural: divine revelation.

The Lord Jesus Christ "through his immense love became what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself." When St. Irenaeus wrote these words in the second century he was among the first of the Church Fathers to begin exploring the scriptural theme of divinization: God's loving intent that man—and through him all creation—might share in His very divinity. Becoming like God presupposes the need for some knowledge of His nature if we are to have any idea about what this actually entails for humanity. As fully God and man, it is Jesus Christ who reveals both the character of the Divine and the epitome of what it means to be truly human. Thus, any exploration of the Christian understanding of theosis must inherently focus on the mystery of Christ in his two natures.

Traditionally, "salvation" received through Christ has often been understood primarily as reconciliation with God through the forgiveness of sins. However, the full meaning of salvation goes far beyond that: it is about God's desire and promise that we should "come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13). In this way theosis is a richer and deeper term than "salvation" for it conveys humanity's final destiny as intended by God—our transformation into a perfection of being that incorporates all physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual dimensions of existence. As St. Maximus the Confessor affirms, theosis uniquely encapsulates the very purpose of both creation and redemption: "It is through deification that all things are reconstituted and achieve their permanence; and it is for its sake that what is not is brought into being and given existence."

Therefore, it is not an overstatement to assert that the Christian concept of deification defines the core meaning of human existence (that ever-elusive goal of philosophers through the millennia) by elucidating the nature and purpose of man in light of his eternal destiny. Its breadth of meaning encompasses the major themes of theology and sets its impress on all the sciences. What Balthasar says about Irenaeus's notion of recapitulation—which is also about the ultimate unification of the cosmos under Christ the "head"—can equally be said about theosis: "The concept retains a characteristic plurality of internally analogous levels which give it its unprecedentedly fertile richness, though it is a richness it must have if it

is to express the centre of the mystery and not reduce it to a philosophical proposition." For theosis incorporates eschatology, anthropology, soteriology, and most importantly theology proper, since it is defined in relation to the nature of God both in Christ (as human/divine) and as Trinity. What most epitomizes the theme of deification, however, is the simple actuality of relationship—between God and humanity, and between humanity and the cosmos—which is traditionally referred to as "synergy." Humanity's union with God is about realizing and accepting God's grace in all of its forms, and so participating in the very life of God now, not simply in the afterlife.

Balthasar's Contribution to the Theme

Hans Urs von Balthasar is a valuable guide for exploring all of these facets of theosis given both his deep familiarity with the theology of the Church Fathers and astute discourse with modern thought. His breadth of knowledge in philosophy, the arts, and culture affords him a unique ability to convey the immediacy and relevance of the theme in our current era. Balthasar's chief contribution to the theology of deification in Catholic thought lies in its consistent Christological, relational and kenotic thrust. As Cardinal Angela Scola attests, his steady focus on the meaning of Christ's life and redemptive work provides a helpful model for the Church in seeking to truthfully convey not only the heart of Christian faith but the ultimate meaning of human existence:

> If we were to summarize, in a few words, the aspect of Balthasar's thought most fruitful for the Church today and for the new evangelization, we should identify with his invitation to the Church to return to the center, the Verbum caro factum est, 'The Word was made flesh'. Even today only the kenotic love of Jesus, in the horizon of self-giving trinitarian love, can illuminate, explain and promote the mission of the Church.

Balthasar's immersion in the thought of the Church Fathers, both in the West and East, is the essential foundation from which he illumines and develops the Church's teaching on deification. Through his commitment to the ressourcement movement, which sought a "return to the sources" in theology—particularly the classic theological texts of the patristic era— Balthasar gained substantial knowledge of the writings of the Church Fathers allowing him to dynamically address the theme with integrity. He frequently extols the value of patristic thought, asserting that it conveys a "theological wealth that one finds lacking in later writers. This wealth is indispensable if we are to set forth the Christian's participation in the trinitarian relations and in eternal life, unfolding it without any narrowing of focus in the whole breadth of the communio sanctorum." Perhaps the most notable example of Balthasar's mining of this wealth is his commentary on the theology of Maximus the Confessor, Cosmic Liturgy, which spurred a revival in Greek patristic studies and is considered a primary text on St. Maximus's theology in both the East and the West. Through this engagement with the theology of the eastern Fathers, he established a rapprochement with Byzantine theology, helping to facilitate greater understanding between the West and East on many issues including the theology of deification. Balthasar's critical engagement with two of his contemporaries, Erich Przywara and Karl Barth, also played a key role in the development of his theology on the subject. The former, with his metaphysics centered on the *analogia entis* provided Balthasar with the philosophical foundation of his understanding of theosis, while the latter's "theology of the cross" significantly influenced his focus on the theme of God's kenosis.

Upon first exploring Balthasar's theology of deification one gets the impression that it is a neglected theme in his work, given that he has no unified approach to the subject. His treatment of the topic is

scattered throughout his work, under such diverse headings as eschatology, soteriology and theological aesthetics. Attempting to systematize his thought is therefore a challenge because in his voluminous writings he does not present the subject as a cohesive whole. Furthermore, for the most part he does not use traditional terminology for the concept (such as "deification" and "theosis") but prefers to speak of simply "participation" or "union" with God. Nevertheless, upon digging deeper into his theology it soon becomes apparent that Balthasar has an undeniable and pervasive "theology of divinization," for when the diverse fragments of his thought are gathered together they reveal an integrated mosaic. In fact, as we will explore, in countless ways the subject exemplifies Balthasar's theological agenda from start to finish, for the communion of God and humanity, founded upon and modeled after God's own communion as three Persons, is the overarching theme of his entire corpus.

Each part of his threefold magnum opus, comprised of the Theo-Drama, Theo-Logic, and The Glory of the Lord (theological aesthetics) begins or ends on the theme of divinization. For example, Balthasar concludes his pentalogy of the Theo-Drama with a vision of cosmic divinization, rooted in his understanding of the inner life of the Trinity:

> Through the distinct operations of each of the three Persons, the world acquires an inward share in the divine exchange of life; as a result the world is able to take the divine things it has received from God, together with the gift of being created, and return them to God as a divine gift.

Likewise, he ends his three-volume Theo-Logic with a discussion of the beatific vision, concluding the work with a description of the deified state: "Born of the Spirit as we are, we exist in the fire of love in which Father and Son encounter each other; thus, together with the Spirit, we simultaneously bear witness and give glory to this love." Finally, Balthasar introduces his theological aesthetics with a description of theology as a "theory of rapture" wherein God draws humankind to participate in His glory. In doing so, Balthasar provides a short manifesto about the very nature of theology, as well as a summary of the Christian message, both of which have theosis at their heart:

> In theology, there are no "bare facts" which, in the name of an alleged objectivity of detachment, disinterestedness and impartiality, one could establish like any other worldly facts, without oneself being (both objectively and subjectively) gripped so as to participate in the divine nature (*participatio divinae naturae*). For the object with which we are concerned is man's participation in God which, from God's perspective, is actualized as "revelation" (culminating in Christ's Godmanhood) and which, from man's perspective, is actualized as "faith" (culminating in participation in Christ's Godmanhood). This double and reciprocal ekstasis—God's "venturing forth" to man and man's to God—constitutes the very content of dogmatics, which may thus be presented as a theory of rapture: the admirable *commercium et connubium,* 'commerce and marriage' between God and man in Christ as Head and Body.

This "wondrous exchange and marriage" between God and humanity, a frequent theme of the Church Fathers, is a phrase that summarizes God's work of redemption and deification, which (as we shall see in Balthasar's soteriology) are inseparable. Balthasar describes "participation in God," which is the core meaning of theosis, as the very object of theology. Furthermore, this participation "in the divine nature" is made possible through humanity's union with Christ: truth "grips us" because the truth is Christ himself, who personally embraces and draws us into communion with God. All of this occurs in a mutual relationship of synergy between God and humanity through a reciprocal *ekstasis* which implies a kenosis of self, for the meaning of the word literally means "to move beyond oneself," or "stand outside

oneself." This relationship "constitutes the very content of dogmatics" according to Balthasar because it defines the mode of human existence, a reality immersed in the mystery of theosis which begins here and now and continues for eternity.

The aim of this work will be to draw the various strands of Balthasar's thought on divinization together, presenting the basic outline and major components of his theology as conveyed chiefly in his Christology and trinitarian theology. A comprehensive account of his theology of deification is, however, beyond the more modest scope of this work, which is to explore the preeminent role of kenosis within Balthasar's conception of theosis. We will discover that in his theology kenosis epitomizes the character and means of humanity's ultimate union with God. For while fully affirming the patristic emphasis on the centrality of the Incarnation as making divinization possible via Christ's very hypostatic being, Balthasar even more so focuses on the nature of his being as the efficacious factor of God's divinizing grace. In his theology God's kenosis comprises the precondition for the Incarnation, the distinguishing characteristic of Christ's life as revealed in his Passion and descensus ad inferos, and the mode of humanity's synergy with God. It is particularly in the depths of Christ's kenosis—in his "going to the dead"—that the radical distance of sin's alienation between God and humanity is overcome, and the self-expropriating nature of inner-trinitarian relations is most fully revealed, providing the seedbed of Balthasar's thought regarding the meaning of divinization.

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> There is a living stream murmuring within me and saying "Upward and onward to the Father."
> —IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

We began our exploration of Balthasar's theology of deification by noting his ambivalence and even apparent negativity toward the theme. Therefore, it is striking to eventually realize that it permeates his entire body of work, guiding its very purpose and encapsulating its goal. Setting the "titanisms" of false deification aside, Christian theosis, characterized by kenotic love, defines the very meaning of "salvation" in Balthasar's theology. Union with God—which begins in this life but is only eschatologically consummated—is realized through the gift of God himself, in the Word made flesh, who reveals and embodies the mystery of the fullness of the Trinity. Given this Christological core of Balthasar's theology, theosis is inseparable from kenosis, which is its very character and modus operandi. For kenosis is both the "way" of Christ and the perichoretic life of the Trinity and is thus an archetypal principle for the entire cosmos: all that exists, including humanity itself, is an analogia trinitatis, conveying the self-expropriation of the three Persons in and for the sake of love.

Christological Theosis

Our investigation of Balthasar's conception of theosis began with his insistence on a first, fundamental kenotic stance necessary to abolish false notions of deification, which are rooted in the Promethean desire to surpass creatureliness for the sake of realizing a higher "spiritual" existence. He contends that the Christian approach to realizing "likeness" to God demands humility: an unabashed affirmation of the impassable "cleft" between humanity and God, i.e., that we can never be God. However, the chief reason all Christian notions of deification require a kenotic core according to Balthasar is rooted in God's self-revelation itself—in the self-emptying of Christ Jesus. Christ's indefatigable "downward movement" which characterizes his life and mission reveals God's very way of being, thus necessarily defining the path of humanity's "becoming God." As Balthasar asserts, "without the Cross and the Blood

of the Cross, and without the permanent wounds in the risen Lord, we would never have guessed the depth of the mystery of the Trinity." Humanity is destined for communion with God, and Jesus' redemptive acts of the Paschal mystery gift us with a vision of what God is like—who this God is whom we will dwell with for eternity. In the face of Christ, on the cross, in death, as the Risen One, we see the face of God. Thus, in a real way we prepare ourselves for "partaking in the divine nature" by contemplating Christ's kenosis.

Consequently, Balthasar's conception of deification is rooted in the "law of distance and of 'being a servant'" which should never be sought to be "overcome and abolished" as in Gnostic conceptions of "ascent." Humanity (and indeed all of creation) is not deified through somehow being "spiritualized" via shedding its materiality, as in the Platonic schema. Rather, "becoming God" paradoxically means embracing creatureliness as God himself did in Christ: "Salvation is not from finitude; rather is it the taking up of the finite (and so of the other) into the infinite." This "taking up" of the creaturely into divinity is only possible because the eternally begotten Logos "took up" human flesh, as Balthasar continually affirms.

It is Christ's very person—in the hypostasis of his divine and human natures—that is the vehicle for humanity's deification, a theological truth well attested in the writings of the Church Fathers and affirmed in Balthasar's theology. He describes Christ as the "concrete *analogia entis*" who envelops and overcomes the unassailable divide between the created and uncreated through being both the Son of Man and the Son of God. More specifically, it is because Christ's hypostatic union is "expressly consummated in the absolute 'unmixedness' of the two natures, indeed precisely in their greatest separation" that the gulf between humanity and divinity can be bridged. In other words, union with God is not about surpassing the infinite distance between created and uncreated reality, since Christ's two natures remain distinct within the unity of his person. On the contrary, Balthasar stresses that union is achieved in and through this gulf: "the eternity of the cleft is at the same time the eternity of the juxtaposition that allows love to happen at all." Thus, paradoxically, distance is overcome by not being overcome—by maintaining the distinction of non-identity that is necessary for true personhood and community to be realized. It is the "relation of radical difference" in Christ himself that is the very means of union. The overcoming of the insuperable distance between the natural and supernatural to create unity, while maintaining creaturely identity in the presence of transcendence—the chief conundrum of the metaphysical issue in the theology of deification— has already been achieved in Christ hypostatically. Therefore, incorporation into his very Body via baptism and the Eucharist (which presumes full inclusion in the community of the *mystici corporis*) inserts humanity into that established reality. Balthasar emphasizes that it is particularly his glorified human nature "with its senses transfigured and glorified" that is the "medium through which the mystical body makes contact with God."

Nonetheless—and here a critical element of Balthasar's contribution to the theology of divinization comes to the fore—Christ's role as the "Second Adam," drawing humanity to life in God, is not accomplished simply via the Incarnation. For it is not Christ's hypostasis alone which creates the bond between the finite and infinite (otherwise his passion would be superfluous), but equally his loving kenosis: "the obedience of the Son of God represents the concrete universal idea of the relationship between heaven and earth in the form of crucified love." Balthasar emphasizes that Christ's role of cosmic unifier is only made complete when his kenosis reaches its utmost depth in his going to the dead—the place where the fullness of God's kenotic love is revealed, and complete solidarity with

humanity is realized in the divine unterfassung, 'submission'. It is Christ's movement of descent that epitomizes the fullness of meaning and character of theosis in Balthasar's theology. He explains that the deepest aim of Christ's kenosis— "the total self-expropriation of the love of God" —is to "give man the gift of the same love." In other words, it is for the purpose of love that Christ grants the gift of deification—so that love will last, that it can be shared and enjoyed for eternity.

This kenotic emphasis of Balthasar's Christology highlights another unique aspect of his theology of divinization: the fact that he is not simply interested in exploring the issue of how divinization is possible—i.e., how union between the finite and infinite, material and spiritual, can be achieved—but more so what it means, the process through which it occurs. His approach to this issue is less about universal, objective principles than about the existential, personal, and relational aspects of divine truth. For example, in his well-known work, Prayer, Balthasar explains more fully why union with God is not about removing oneself from the world, rejecting its physicality to seek the naked truth non-conceptually, as in Gnostic approaches to deification: "God's 'self-emptying,' his 'becoming poor,' is a direct image of his fullness and richness and the prodigality of his love; the spiritual is made known through its covering, and is brought close to us through its sensible expression." For Balthasar the clearest language of God's love is "the language of the flesh in its humble condition . . . in the humiliation of the Incarnate Word." This emphasis not only keeps deification within its proper creaturely (non-Gnostic) context, but speaks most intimately and powerfully to the depths of the human person.

Trinitarian Theosis

While Christ's very person—in his incarnation, passion, and resurrection— reveals the kenotic nature of God and incorporates creation into divine life, it is the Trinity that brings to fruition the fullness of the meaning of theosis in Balthasar's theology. For deification is by definition life in God—a trinitarian reality. Christ initiates and makes possible both the process and its glorious end, yet it is the community of the divine Persons who eternally deify the cosmos by embracing and transforming it into the paradigm of all reality: the imago trinitatis. Furthermore, Christ's salvific mission is not accomplished solo, but is one with the Father and Spirit, thus only understandable and possible in and through them. For Balthasar, it is the Father's Urkenosis that in begetting the "other" brought love, community, and the very potential of creation's divinization into actuality by embracing all "distances" via his relationship with the Son. And it is the Spirit who is Himself the donum, the "gift that contains the whole being of the Godhead" and the "vinculum amoris between Father and Son" in the extremity of Christ's kenosis in Sheol. Given these conceptions of trinitarian life, it is not surprising that Balthasar describes the Trinity in such a kenotic way, making such assertions as "the identity of the divine essence is found in the positive self-expropriation of the Divine Persons," and that God "cannot be God in any other way but in this 'kenosis' within the Godhead itself." (With such an intense focus on trinitarian kenosis, and in making such definitive pronouncements of this kind about the very nature of God, it must be noted that Balthasar pushes the limits of suitable theological expression. Only time will tell whether or not in the judgement of the Church his theology in this area will be deemed orthodox.)

In Balthasar's theology it is the nature of God as Trinity dwelling in kenotic relationship, nurturing "unity in difference," that provides the fundamental basis for comprehending how the non-divine can be miraculously drawn into the sphere of the divine. Because he envisions inner-trinitarian life as the "generative self-expropriation of the Father to the Son and of both to the Holy Spirit," it is kenotic love that is not only the source of intimacy, but explains how "room" is made for difference. Perichoretic

love nurtures and celebrates “otherness” within the community of unity. It is for this reason Balthasar asserts that “only a trinitarian God can guarantee that man will not forfeit his independent being when united with God.”

Balthasar particularly highlights Christ’s kenosis on Holy Saturday as a trinitarian event that makes humanity’s union with God possible by not only revealing the “abysmal vastness” between the three Persons but incorporating humanity’s “otherness” into the life of the Trinity. According to Balthasar, the death of the Son discloses the nature of the inner-trinitarian relations as embracing both unfathomable distance and an equally “inconceivable nearness,” opening up a new relational way of conceiving the mystery of theosis. Primarily, it is because “the sinner’s alienation from God was taken into the Godhead, into the ‘economic’ distance between the Father and Son” that “room” is made for humanity in the perichoretic life of the Trinity. It is Balthasar’s conception of this unfathomable distance which paradoxically creates greater intimacy between the Persons, and “space” for inclusion of humanity’s difference, that he believes gives “sharpness” to his theology of deification as compared with that of the Church Fathers. Thus in Balthasar’s model of theosis, kenosis is at the heart of creating and maintaining both unity and difference in God, for union in the Trinity is brought to its fullness via the distance wrought through Christ’s kenosis, and likewise distance (“otherness”) is guaranteed via the perichoresis of self-expropriating love. Affirming the thought of Maximus the Confessor, Balthasar surmises that “The highest union with God is not realized ‘in spite of’ our lasting difference from him, but rather ‘in’ and ‘through’ it. Unity is not the abolition of God’s distance from us, and so of his incomprehensibility; it is its highest revelation.”

Consequently, if Balthasar’s theology has any verity (and it clearly has some, given its foundation in the teaching of the Church Fathers), it is of logical necessity that this kenotic, relational mode of life in God must be conveyed and instilled throughout the deification process, for this divine life is the very substance and goal of humanity’s transfiguration. This means that there is an inherent synergy between God and humanity—a reciprocal engagement created and nurtured by God’s grace, yet only fulfilled via human responsiveness. For God will not deify us without our participation, given that he created us specifically in his image—with the dignity of freedom and choice that not only defines us, but brings us into “likeness” with him. That being said, Balthasar consistently emphasizes that humanity’s greatest “work” in this synergy with God consists mostly in simple humility and receptivity to grace, for “becoming God” is chiefly (and paradoxically) about becoming more creaturely, more human—in other words, more like Mary, the Theotokos, and Christ, through whom we are deified.

It is through living in the community of faith, and particularly in worship, that we reflect this fullness of human being, as *homo adorans*. For we are invited into divine life by being incorporated into Christ’s mystical Body, his Church, which is a reciprocal process that occurs chiefly via the sacraments. The Eucharist pre-eminently deifies us by feeding us with Christ’s very being: through partaking of his “atomization” in his body and blood, Christ’s “unmixed” hypostatic union of his divine and human natures becomes part of us, making it possible to enter into God’s very life. Balthasar emphasizes that this “marriage in blood” is the apex of humanity’s participation in the divinization process for it contains “every response on the Church’s part.” This synergy of sacrifice, characterized by a mutual divine-human kenosis, and shared with the entire community of saints and hosts of heaven, represents the fullest form of perichoresis possible in earthly existence and hence the manifestation of theosis in progress.

Beyond Traditional Models

Balthasar's highly personal, relational, and kenotic way of exploring and expressing the theology of theosis—as much as its content—is therefore in itself a significant contribution to the theme. For in focusing on Christ's mode of incorporating humanity into his Person through his incarnation and passion, and the inner-trinitarian way of being as perichoretic self-expropriation, Balthasar shifts the discussion of divinization away from objective and universal abstractions (such as "vision" and "essence") towards the more subjective, dynamic, and existential categories of relationship. Union between humanity and God is conceived and conveyed through the language of "freedom," "openness," and "otherness," within the context of God's life as a *communio personarum*. This approach is a fitting expansion of traditional modes of discourse given the inherent relational reality of theosis, and allows new avenues of understanding to open up through illuminating insights vis-à-vis personhood and community.

Through this methodology, we discovered that Balthasar does not envision final union with God within the framework of the intellect—as a state of static bliss, in contemplatio—as he at times characterized the scholastic approach. Nor is union obviated by the unknown "abyss" of God's essence, a "fourth thing" that precludes God's self-revelation and hence true union with humanity, which he considers the chief flaw in the Byzantine distinction between God's essence and energies. (Nevertheless, Balthasar's model seems closer to the Byzantine than the scholastic in focusing on the existential aspects of theosis rather than primarily its eschatological reality: there is a palpable immediacy and earthiness that characterizes his thought on the subject.) Rather, union with God is described via reflecting on the nature of personal, relational mystery, which inherently affirms the distinction of persons while likewise allowing for intimacy. This approach helps to illumine the reality that God is both revealed and hidden, both present and seemingly absent, for, as Balthasar asserts, love itself seeks expression, yet also demands "veiling," for it "wants to remain a mystery to itself." Furthermore, he asserts that love, as the "worshipful core of all things . . . turns its gaze away from itself," once again highlighting the other-centered, kenotic character of all authentic personal communion. Thus, throughout his treatment of the theme, theosis has more to do with embracing and revering the mystery of God and others (a mystery that will remain, and even intensify, for eternity) than "knowing" in the sense of intellectual enlightenment. For it is particularly in his hiddenness that we come to know God: "in the ultimate concealment on the Cross, when he abandons the Son, he is most revealed in his love for the world." In this emphasis, Balthasar continually affirms the apophatic nature of divinization "to the extent the creature comes nearer to God and becomes more 'similar' to him, the dissimilarity must always appear as the more basic, as the 'first truth.' . . . Or, as all the authentic mystics express it: The more we know God, the less we know him."

Balthasar's personalist model thus contributes to the theology of deification in redefining how "difference" is conceived, and hence maintained, within the union between God and creation. This model is by no means perfect, for it can at times come across as uncomfortably too psychological and hence anthropomorphic, nevertheless it is a valuable addition to traditional modes of discussion given that theosis is first and foremost an existential issue: personal salvation is realized solely through relationship with God in Christ. We are deified in, through and for loving relationship, hence relational logic and constructs could even be said to be more "substantive" regarding ontological being than "substance." This leads to the implication that all theological disciplines—which are not only effected by,

but ultimately subsumed under the theme of theosis—are inherently rooted in synergy (or praxis) or they are not true theology, for our responsiveness to God's loving approach vitally matters. Prayer is humanity's first and most basic response: as Evagrius Ponticus rightly insists, "If you are a theologian, you will pray truly. And if you pray truly, you will be a theologian." Or as Balthasar puts it, one must approach divine truths "on one's knees," praying theology (betende Theologie).

Regarding the multi-layered, more apophatic means inherent in expressing divine truth via relational categories which some may object to (especially those with more scholastic inclinations), Balthasar's offering of various inter-reliant "resolutions" to the classic unity/difference conundrum of the theology of deification need not be considered problematic, but can in fact be viewed as appropriate and helpful. For they reflect the reality of God's infinite ekstasis—that for eternity He will be pouring Himself out for us, revealing new facets of His truth, goodness, and beauty. For Balthasar, Christ's hypostasis, his extreme kenosis in Sheol, the Father's Urkenosis, the perichoretic nature of the Trinity, the Eucharist are all means by which God opens up his very life the to the world, overcoming difference and distance that "all may be made perfect in one" (John 17:23). Balthasar is on the right track in emphasizing that this metaphysical issue necessarily has multifold "answers" involving Christology and trinitarian theology, each of which is incomplete in and of itself. For together these various "sketches" begin to fill out the portrait of deification in its infinite depth. This wealth of perspectives is also fitting in that it reflects the very nature of the Trinity which permeates all being: unity in multiplicity, coherence in diversity.

Theosis and Plerosis

Balthasar's greatest contribution to the theology of deification may be his illumination of the fullness of the nature of love itself. He broadens (or one could even say inverts) common interpretations of what "kenosis" means in Philippians 2: it is not a "self-emptying" in the sense of the Son losing something; it is rather the very manifestation of divinity. As Balthasar affirms, "it is clear that only the highest divine power [is] capable of such a form of loving self-surrender." He therefore helps to reveal the truth that weakness does not so much conceal power, as reveal the form of true, divine power which is love. As a result, kenosis must ultimately be spiritually understood as *plerosis*—fullness—for the Son, who "let himself be robbed over everything in utter obedience," is "the most exact expression of the absolute fullness, which does not consist of 'having,' but of 'being = giving.' In other words, Balthasar's thought inexorably conveys that kenosis is not only the path that brings us to the greatest fullness of being, but is itself that fullness of being. Deified being is inherently kenotic being.

Even though Balthasar's theology of theosis is defined by kenosis, it is not ultimately distinguished by an emphasis on suffering and death, but rather leads one to consider the path to fullness of life in God. This reality is beautifully illustrated in the classic "Icon of the Resurrection of Christ," which portrays Christ's descent to the dead to save the lost. In the icon, Christ has demolished the gates of Sheol, and is reaching down to Adam and Eve to lift them up from the confining darkness of death toward the expansive light of eternity. There is perhaps no more striking image that expresses the vital unity between kenosis and theosis, for the transfigured Christ appears with a face of compassion, reaching down with divine help, taking hold of Adam and Eve by their wrists, which conveys both their utter helplessness and his determination to save. The message is abundantly clear: the glory of Christ is his self-emptying love—his sacrificial willingness to take upon himself both sin and death in order to raise humanity to new life. In many ways the icon is therefore an icon of theosis, for it depicts what being in

the "image and likeness" of God means, the sheer giftedness of grace, and the hope of glory in communion with God.

This glory is described in Balthasar's theology of deification as being "taken up into the entirely different, liberating 'servitude' of eternal freedom by the grace (dedit dona) of the God who first descends to the level of the creature." Eternal freedom is "reciprocal openness," availability, the element of surprise, and creativity which "will always be the offspring of personal." It thrives through the "interplay between presence and distance"; intimacy of union with God within an ever-growing awareness of the infinite mystery of the Holy One. When in the final paragraph of his multi-volume Theo-Drama Balthasar highlights the gifts given to humanity by God and then counterpoises the hypothetical question, "What does God gain from the world?" his answer exemplifies his entire theology of deification: "the world is able to take the divine things it has received from God, together with the gift of being created, and return them to God as a divine gift." Eternal life in God is not simply about contemplating his glory, rather God desires a reciprocal relationship of mutual self-giving with all that He has created. Theosis is a sharing of the grace revealed and granted preeminently in Christ, God's perfect gift. It is through immersion in God's perichoresis that fullness of being and joy are realized, a life Balthasar describes as one of "constant vitality," not a "state of rest," for there is not only an "unceasing becoming" in God himself, who continues to create anew, but also of human persons, who "are to 'become' what God 'is.' <>

From **Oxford Handbook of Catholic Theology** *edited by Lewis Ayres and Medi Ann Volpe* [Oxford University Press, 9780199566273]

The Oxford Handbook of Catholic Theology provides a one-volume introduction to all the major aspects of Catholic theology. Part One considers the nature of theological thinking, and the major topics of Catholic teaching, including the Triune God, the Creation, and the mission of the Incarnate Word. It also covers the character of the Christian sacramental life and the major themes of Catholic moral teaching. The treatments in the first part of the Handbook offer personal syntheses of Catholic teaching, but each offers an account in accord with Catholic theology as it is expressed in the Second Vatican Council and authoritative documentation. Part Two focuses on the historical development of Catholic Theology. An initial section offers essays on some of Catholic theology's most important sources between 200 and 1870, and the final section of the collection considers all the main movements and developments in Catholic theology across the world since 1870.
This comprehensive volume features fifty-six original contributions by some of the best-known names in current Catholic theology from the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa. The chapters are written in an engaging and easily comprehensible style functioning both as a scholarly reference and as a survey of the field. There are no comparable studies available in one volume and the book will be an indispensable reference for students of Catholic theology at all levels and in all contexts.

Review

"**The Oxford Handbook of Catholic Theology** provides an encyclopaedic account of theology, soundly based in the Scriptures and Catholic history. It is a welcome addition to the prestigious series of Oxford Handbooks." -- Gerald O'Collins, *The Tablet*

Essay: Hans Urs von Balthasar by Kevin Mongrain

This essay **Hans Urs von Balthasar by** Kevin Mongrain considers the extensive corpus of Hans Urs von Balthasar by treating two architectonic themes in his thought: remembrance and beauty. In the first instance, Balthasar sees theology in modernity—especially in the form of neo-scholasticism—as marked by a failure to remember appropriately some essential principles of Christian tradition, most importantly the inseparability of theology and spirituality in an anti-Gnostic key. In the second instance, the theme of theological aesthetics is treated, initially by placing Balthasar's conception of a true seeing of natural forms against the background of Goethe's philosophy. The epiphanic nature of all created being, able to reveal to us the glory of God, and yet obscured from us by sin, lies at the heart of Balthasar's theology. Ultimately, this theology is Christocentric: the crucified and risen Christ-form becomes a permanent sacramental vehicle of divine grace, restoring our sight of natural form and divine glory.

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The most intellectually fecund theologians are, to borrow Isaiah Berlin's famous couplet, those who are able to be simultaneously hedgehogs and foxes: thinkers who know both one big thing and many, many little things. These theologians know precisely how to maintain the right proportion between all that they are for and all that they are against, and they always give priority to the former; to speak of God is to laud God first and last, and to lament sinners rarely and only when necessary. These theologians, moreover, know how to speak intelligently in their cultural contexts about God and God's grandeur, and they know how to speak of the many ways that God's creatures receive and reflect that grandeur, as well as the many ways they contrive to shun and revile it. By this measure, the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar must count as one of the most fecund theological projects of the past several centuries. His corpus of writings displays a remarkably ambitious and capacious theological mind. His theological mind is undoubtedly labyrinthine, to the great chagrin of many who have waded unprepared into the ocean of the millions of words flowing over the thousands and thousands of his published pages. But his theological mind is also fundamentally concerned with holism, and with re-presenting what he takes to be the core genius of the Christian theological tradition in its complex glory as an intellectual reflection of the unsurpassable, incomprehensible love of God for creation.

Balthasar was born in Lucerne, Switzerland in 1905. His family was devoutly Catholic, and as a child he was educated at Benedictine and Jesuit schools. A talented student, he went on to post-secondary schooling in Vienna, Berlin, and Zurich. He studied broadly in the humanities, especially literature, and received a doctorate in 1928. His dissertation was a cross-disciplinary exercise in Christian eschatological–apocalyptic theology and modern German literature. He entered the Jesuit novitiate in 1928. For several years he studied scholastic theology and philosophy, from which he learned much, although he eventually soured on its formal and formulaic approach to Christian intellectual life. Balthasar then found his way into the circle of European Catholic intellectuals who were reviving the study of the Church Fathers in the hopes of returning Christian life to its prescholastic roots. The most influential leader in this *ressourcement* movement, Henri de Lubac (1896-1991), became his teacher and

lifelong friend. Balthasar was ordained to the priesthood in 1936. He declined a professorship in Rome and opted instead for pastoral work as a student chaplain in Basel, Switzerland. Nevertheless, he continued to study and write on the Church Fathers, and published groundbreaking works on Gregory of Nyssa, Origen, and Maximus the Confessor. During this time he met and befriended the Reformed theologian Karl Barth (1886-1968), and Adrienne von Speyr (1902-1967), who was in the process of becoming a charismatic mystic and visionary. As yet more evidence of the incredible capaciousness of his theological mind, both figures were to become massively influential in his theological development.

With von Speyr as his close collaborator, Balthasar founded a lay contemplative community called the Community of St John in the early 1940s. Eventually this led to disagreements between Balthasar and the leaders of the Jesuit order, and in 1950 he left the Society of Jesus to work exclusively with von Speyr and on his own writing projects. Throughout the remainder of his life he supported himself by giving public lectures, publishing, and receiving gifts from family and friends (he was hosted for a time by von Speyr and her husband in their home). Without teaching or parish duties, most of the second half of his life was dedicated to ongoing scholarly research and writing. Despite his allegiance to the *ressourcement* vision for theological renewal, he continued his studies of Aquinas and in 1954 Balthasar published a large commentary on the theology of grace in the *Summa Theologica*. In the 1950s he also published works displaying several other dimensions of his rich theological mind: for example, he published books on the Jewish theologian and philosopher Martin Buber (1878-1965), the Reformed theology of Karl Barth, the German writer Reinhold Schneider (1903-1958), and the French author George Bernanos (1888-1948). Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s Balthasar also worked on writing *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics,* the first a trilogy, each leg of which occupied many volumes. In 1965, in recognition of his outstanding work in Orthodox history and theology, and a sign that he was held in high respect in the world of Eastern Christianity,

Balthasar was awarded the *Golden Cross of Mount Athos* from the Metropolitan of the Greek Orthodox Church in Switzerland.

Von Speyr passed away in 1967 and Balthasar began to publish her highly mystical and esoteric biblical commentaries and writings on prayer. That same year he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. Although he had not been a participant at the Second Vatican Council (a consequence of his break with the Society of Jesus), Balthasar was appointed to the International Theological Commission in Rome in 1969, and remained a member until the end of his life. In the 1970s and 1980s Balthasar's reputation as a remarkable Catholic intellectual continued to grow. He completed the second and third parts of his trilogy, *Theo-Drama* and *Theo-Logic,* oversaw the increasingly well-known publishing house of the Community of St John, *Johannes Verlag,* and helped to found and edit the international Catholic journal *Communio*. In 1980 he received an honorary doctorate from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC; in 1984 he received the Vatican's Paul VI Prize in theology; and in 1988 he was appointed to the Cardinalate by John Paul II. After first refusing the appointment he was persuaded by John Paul II to accept the honour. However, on 26 June 1988, two days before receiving the honour officially, Balthasar passed away.

Even this excessively succinct summary of his life nevertheless gives one a sense of the richness of Balthasar's theological mind. However, it is only by reading his works that one comes to appreciate how fantastically vast and ecumenically inclined was his mind. How is it possible to sketch his contribution

without reducing its breadth and depth? The reduction can happen in one or two ways: some read Balthasar as being only a hedgehog (usually the charge is that he is a Hegelian one); others see him as being only fox. In an effort to avoid either reduction, this chapter will attempt to show that Balthasar's entire corpus offers a lengthy, complex, impassioned, and intellectually sophisticated case for an active remembering of that consensus on the necessary unity of prayer and theology which is to be found in the great doctors and saints of the Christian tradition. Such remembering will lead theologians today to understand that theology cannot have its deepest, strongest roots in anything but the life of prayer—prayer that is communal and personal, sacramental and biblical in the fullest ecclesial sense. If Christian theology overcomes its amnesia and returns to these true roots, then Christian theologians will know how to speak intelligently in their cultural contexts about God and God's grandeur, and they will know how to speak of the many diverse ways that God's creatures receive and reflect that grandeur, as well as the many diverse ways they contrive to shun and revile it.

Pleading with Theology to Remember

A fundamental assumption underlying all Balthasar's writings is his belief that organized religion in the West is undergoing a prolonged crisis of authority due to its forgetful disregard of its own traditions of prayer and spiritual discipline. Balthasar believes that atheism and an irreligious life are not natural, and hence not sustainable. Human beings created by God to eat and drink the eternal love of Trinitarian communion, but starved of spiritual guidance by the Christian churches, will seek their nourishment from different tables. The cultural vacuum created by Christianity's forfeiture of its spiritual and mystical heritage is being filled by a vast panoply of religious and quasi-religious discourses. Some offer to guide the spiritually perplexed into long-lost, or long-suppressed, 'secret' paths to 'hidden' mystical wisdom. On the other extreme, many believe in the myth of scientific, material, political 'progress', which its advocates dress up as a post-religious philosophy of life, but which is actually just pseudo-religion fed to those in denial about their state of starvation. Balthasar would argue that both approaches, despite the stories they tell themselves about being 'modern' and 'postmodern', amount to an anachronistic return to pre-biblical natural religion. Moreover, both are decadent, and even in some cases 'gnostic', forms of natural religion because they reject the core substance of revealed religion while in many cases attempting to cling to some of its terminology, images, and values. This is particularly true in regard to revealed religion's language of Spirit and its linear view of history. Those who reject still pillage concepts from revealed religion so easily because of the widespread assumption that Christianity either does not have a spiritual or mystical tradition, or if it does, that tradition is pernicious. Modern Christian theologians have been at best weak in countering this assumption, and at worst have been complicit in its dissemination. Balthasar saw all these trends emerging in mid-twentieth-entury Europe, and he had a profound grasp of the sincere religious seeking behind them. He also anticipated many of the questions Christians ask themselves today about the rise of alternative spiritualities. He understood that it would be suicidal for the churches to simply force a choice between esotericism and traditional Christianity—such a move would only confirm the often-voiced suspicion that institutional religion is the mortal enemy of spirituality. Christianity can survive, and even thrive, in this cultural context if it can persuade not only its cultured despisers, but also its theologians, that institutional Christianity is not the rival of spiritual esotericism but its best friend, patron, and protector. Balthasar's *oeuvre* is a grand effort to make this case.

In one sense this is not a surprise—even a cursory reading of his major texts shows Balthasar is a major proponent of reviving Christianity's classical spiritual and mystical tradition, and he often makes decidedly contrarian, and even quite provocative, theological arguments on behalf of this project. His efforts to bring Origen and Meister Eckhart into mainstream theological respectability are just two cases in point. Yet many have been so impressed by his arguments on behalf of theological aesthetics, they have overlooked the reasons why he makes these arguments, or even what they mean in terms of his larger theological agenda. Balthasar believes that all talk of 'beauty' in theology must lead to a renewed appreciation for the meaning of the biblical terms 'glory' and 'glorify'. Such renewed appreciation could give theology the ability to articulate what can be called a rule-governed Christian gnosis capable of functioning as organized Christianity's spiritual alternative to the alternative spiritualities of contemporary decadent and 'gnostic' revivals of natural religion (on Balthasar's theology as a project of remembering).

Balthasar learned from the *ressourcement* movement that for pre-scholastic tradition religious intellectual reflection must be regulated and guided by the spiritual life. And thus, throughout his corpus Balthasar argued that Christocentric Trinitarian faith must have regulative guidance over all types of rational 'logic', whether cosmology, anthropology, or even theology. The patristic term 'true gnosis' best describes the aim of the Christian tradition for Balthasar (see Borella 2001). Balthasar defines theology as an intellectual discipline oriented towards an opening of the heart to God. Theology, he explains, is:

> a means, an active agency for pouring the infinite riches of divine truth into the finite vessels in which revelation is given to us, so that the believer may be made capable of encountering this infinity in adoration and active obedience

Theology's task is to facilitate a life of worship, adoration, and practical obedience to Christ, who can be known as the truth only insofar as he is known as the gift of personal love and not as an abstraction or theory.

> Theology speaks of an event so unique, so extraordinary that it is never permissible to abstract from it ... There is always a tendency in human thought—and theology is no exception—to bracket the concrete and forget it. We are proven to look on historical revelation as a past event, as presupposed, and not as something that is always happening, to be listened to and obeyed; and it is this that becomes the matter of theological reflection. The saints have always been on guard against such an attitude, and immersed themselves in the actual circumstances of the events of revelation

Theology's *primary* (but not exclusive) dialogue partner must be the Christian contemplative tradition, not the Western philosophical tradition. Balthasar's reason for this is simple: 'Man in his search for truth can never arrive by philosophizing—in however simply or academic a way—at the statement "God is love" ' (Balthasar 1998: 54). This means that true theology is at root governed by the receptivity of prayer, not any purely objective concept or formal abstract method. 'There is no neutral standpoint outside the encounter between bride and Bridegroom', he declares, 'no objective standpoint, that is, from which it is possible to survey and assess the mystery of revelation in which both are involved (the Bridegroom as freely imparting it, the bride as responding). Theology therefore is not identical to dogma, or any form of abstract propositional discourse. While certainly and necessarily theology involves concepts and definitions, these finite realities are valid, Balthasar maintains, only insofar as they are vehicles for the incarnation of God's infinite love in human discourse . Theology is a mystagogical

project whose goal is opening hearts to the reality of divine love, and is therefore best practiced by saints.

Balthasar believes, therefore, that without the mutually correcting and informing guidance of theology and doctrine Christian spirituality will not remain truly Christian. His guiding incarnational principle is that in salvation history the invisible light and love of the Word and Spirit must dwell within the 'flesh', the 'form', and the 'letter'. Balthasar holds to a version of the *corpus triforme*—'threefold body'—tradition; the primary meaning of the phrase 'body of Christ' is the historical body of Jesus. But the 'final form and purpose' of the Word taking flesh is the mystical body, the Church. Through taking as two other forms of his body, the Eucharist and Scripture, Christ draws us into his mystical body. By 'scripture' here, Balthasar speaks of the unity of the two testaments and the gospel, Scripture as God's Word bearing witness to itself. The relationship between Church (and hence, tradition and dogma also) and Scripture must be understood as a relationship *within* the living multiform incarnate Christ (For *corpus triforme* Christology in premodern tradition.

'Body of Christ' is a phrase, then, that may be used in many senses, and in Balthasar's revival of patristic Christocentric religious thought, dogma and theology are just two of Christ's many corporeal, iconic modes of incarnational presence, yet they are uniquely necessary for guiding faith and keeping all the other corporeal forms of ecclesial life true to the spiritual mystery of God's self-offering in love. He makes no pretense to novelty in this thinking—for Balthasar, the Christian tradition insists that just as there is a necessary, symbiotic unity of Word and flesh, Spirit and letter in all of Christian faith, there is an analogous unity between doctrine and spirituality. Moreover, against 'spiritualizing' anti-body thinkers, Balthasar maintains it to be a serious mistake to assume that because theology and dogma involve embodying of the Word in concepts, images, and the 'letter',this necessarily means a reduction of the Word's mystery and meaning. On the contrary, he argues, as an incarnational religion Christianity cannot disdain the expressions of the human intellect. Indeed, understood and applied correctly they can become iconic by leading into and protecting, rather than erasing, the mystery of divine love.

The dogmas of the Incarnation and the Trinity are particularly important because, properly understood, they provide the guidance for all mystagogy in the Church, theological or otherwise (Balthasar 1989a: 197–201). Balthasar's advocacy of not just incarnational and Trinitarian theology, but also of incarnational Trinitarian *faith* is a plea on behalf of a spiritual posture and existential disposition, not an advocacy of a conceptual fixing of God (Balthasar 1998a: 34; Balthasar 1994: 458–459). Faith is intrinsically necessary to reason's own ability to reflect and live the truth of God's being.

This perspective, according to Balthasar's argument in numerous texts, is the essence of 'Marian' spirituality.

> A spirituality centered on the attitude exemplified by Mary is ... not just one spirituality among others. For this reason, although Mary is an individual believer and,as such, the prototype and model of all response in faith, she resolves all particular spiritualities into the one spirituality of the bride of Christ, the Church.

The reason for this is that Marian spirituality, Balthasar believes, is focused on participating in the dynamic, objective reality of the Word incarnating inner-Trinitarian love in the creation. In Marian spirituality, as Balthasar presents it, one 'unselfconsciously' cooperates with God in accepting the Word into one's self and then incarnating it in the world according to one's own unique personhood and capabilities. Marian spirituality is essentially a form of existential-ontological iconography in which one

crafts one's life into a pattern of Christ-like obedience and love. The Marian and Johannine are therefore closely related in Balthasar's theology because both stress the meaning of holiness as intimate mystical unity and bearing fruit in the world. This spirituality is ecclesial in the sense of being not only embodied and communal but also a participation in God's providential work in history. It is also Trinitarian in that it is fundamentally about finding a unique, distinct identity through mystical union with the Triune God. But this is never a purely private affair. Christ bestows each form of spirituality in the Church 'from above' and with the purpose of serving the will of God and the greater good of the Church. Spiritual gifts are not given to individuals or groups for their own sake but only for the sake of the historical mission of the Church as guided by God's providence. The ultimate grounding of all spirituality in the Church, Balthasar maintains, is the work of the Trinity to become embodied in human life as communal difference-in-relation. This is at the core of what Balthasar means by 'genuine esotericism' and the 'true gnosis' of faith expressing itself in words and concepts.

However, Balthasar does not believe this vision of true gnosis has been remembered or widely adhered to in modern Christianity. The ideal is difficult, he contends, because it runs against the sinful tendency of human reason to set up its own 'idols'—even especially 'theological' and doctrinal ones—so as to evade God's love and the difficult task of embodying it in iconic concepts (Balthasar 1998a: 39–40; 1994a: 80–81). This type of evasion is characteristic of much modern theology, he believes. When 'theology at the desk' superseded 'theology at prayer' in the post-Reformation period, Balthasar contends, both theology and spirituality fell into decadence (Balthasar 1989a: 187–194). The result was esotericism without substance and dogmatism without spiritual life. In the former case modern spirituality ceased to be Marian in a genuine sense and instead became too individualistic and focused on personal experience to the detriment of the wider life and mission of the Church. Rather than focusing on the reality of God and the embodying of this reality in iconic forms, modern spirituality became too subjective and interior. Spirituality began to excessively accent the 'psychological laboratory, with its experiments and statistics' instead of accenting the reality of God and the mission of the Church in history (Balthasar 1989a: 192). In the case of modern theology and dogma, the exact opposite happened: all personal spirituality was drained away and the intellect occupied itself with nothing but concepts; abstract propositional truth claims substituted for the living faith of the heart's love for God (Balthasar 1989e). Theology became fascinated by the 'scientific' method and, consciously or not, it set up neutrality and pure objectivity as its ideals (see especially his critique of the 'system' in Balthasar). Generally speaking, Balthasar thinks that the split of spirituality and theology in modern Christianity is especially dangerous because it creates fertile soil for the reemergence of ancient Christian Gnosticism. When spirituality and theology are not integrated in a healthy symbiosis, Gnosticism invades and corrupts both.

The Consequences of Forgetting

All attempts to revive Christianity's spiritual and mystical traditions must take very seriously the contemporary cultural context of the West. Balthasar argues this context includes a resurgent Gnosticism virulently hostile to Christian orthodoxy. Although Balthasar's uses of the terms 'gnosis', 'Gnostic', and 'Gnosticism' are often imprecise and somewhat unfocused, they are not incoherent or conceptually irredeemable. Granting, too, that Balthasar is not as precise as he could be about distinguishing the gnostic spiritual type and the intellectual systems spawned by some who share the type, he does offer a fairly clear spiritual profile. 'False gnosis' refuses to understand faith according to

monotheistic and biblical categories. 'False gnosis' rewrites the Bible so that the divine is identical to—and not simply present within—the depths of the human self and/or the depths of nature. The Creator–creature distinction is lost and respect for creaturely freedom and personal uniqueness vanishes. The mark of 'false gnosis' in practical operation, therefore, will be a chronic neglect of prayer to a personal God of love. This neglect is motivated by a disdain for the very idea of a personal God who knows the secret, hidden recesses of the self but who is beyond the self's manipulative control; this neglect manifests itself as a preference for purely and exclusively meditative forms of spirituality centred on either the self's own concocted self-image or that can distract the self from itself and its freedom and responsibility, thereby instead allowing the self to focus on a void or on some fatalistic and impersonal forces in nature.

Central to Balthasar's case against the spiritual type designated by 'false gnosis,' therefore, are his arguments about its deliberate effort to avoid dealing honestly with the 'provocation' of Christ. He characterizes the 'theodrama' of salvation history in terms of a 'Yes or No to the Incarnation of the Son of the Father'—a Yes or No to the mystery of Christ and what it reveals about the God of love who probes the dark recesses of the heart (Balthasar 1994: 181; see also Balthasar 1984: 417–428). The proponents of false gnosis prefer to redefine Christ in spiritually safer and less challenging ways. The gnostic denies creaturely indebtedness to God as the ground of being, preferring the 'self-absolutizing' of human freedom and avoiding the truth that freedom comes from God as a gift. Balthasar interprets this sinful dynamic as the epitome of evil and sees it through the lens of the serpent's temptation to Eve to 'be like God'. It results in deformation of humanity: the 'very power of self-transcendence' given to humanity by God so that it could freely respond to God's love becomes instead 'bent in upon itself' (*incurvatio in se ipsum*) in a perversion of human nature. Later he describes this dynamic as 'the creature's No, its wanting to be autonomous without acknowledging its origin.

The gnostic, therefore, refuses the humility of being known by God—a spirituality of prayer—and prefers instead to be the only knower who knows God, self, and world from a panoptic perspective (many times Balthasar cites 1 Cor. 8.1–2 to contrast true and false gnosis, e.g. 1994: 463–464). This is what accounts for the 'elitist and arrogant' character of the gnostic type (Balthasar 1990: 448). What follows from this self-righteous arrogance then are elaborate efforts to rationalize this assertion with 'sophisticated short-circuits in reasoning and distorted aspects of truth. In this way the sinner builds a kind of "bulwark" against the real truth; he hides behind its illusion, knowing all the while that the truth he has "wickedly suppressed" (Rom. 1:18) will eventually come to lay siege against his citadel' (Balthasar 1994: 166–167). All quests for absolute knowledge and the perfectly logical religious system, no matter how different in form have this in common: a preference for the 'idols of reason' that allow the heart to avoid facing up to the reality of God's love and enable its headlong flight from it. The versions of 'Christian faith' advocated by the gnostic type, Balthasar argues, are not true faith but instead 'faith ... overtaken or hollowed out by knowledge'. The gnostic type practises any and all types of 'rationalism' to avoid God, all the while pretending to itself that it alone knows the truth about God.

According to Balthasar, this conflict between rival spiritual types led to an 'increasing polarization' between the Church's mission to propagate biblical spirituality and 'the satanic counter-strategy' of its enemies to replace this spirituality with a non-biblical one of their own devising. This conflict eventually became a full 'theodramatic war' between the Christ–Church and the anti-Christ.

Yet remembering in theology cannot only mean remembering past conflicts with past forms of gnosticism. It has also to remember how and why Christian orthodoxy won some battles, but lost others. The tradition has two anti-gnostic voices and Balthasar speaks in both. The first anti-gnostic voice speaks less of gnosticism as system and more of gnostics as a spiritual type. This voice is concerned with motivations, religiosity, and the types of selves who create and maintain gnostic systems. The focus in the first voice is existential and/or psychological experiences and states of mind. The second voice, present in Balthasar but to a lesser extent than the first, is an analytical voice that stands in some tension with the experiential voice. The analytical voice focuses on explaining theoretically and conceptually how gnostic narratives engage in a hostile rewriting of the biblical narrative into 'speculative metanarratives with an emphasis on the generation of the conditions of absolute knowledge and total irrefutability' (O'Regan 2006: 612). This analytical voice relies on philosophical and objective scholarly analysis of gnosticism as an ontotheology of divine development with specific theological agendas, rhetorical strategies, argumentative tactics, and hermeneutic methods. This voice stresses, therefore, the transgressive nature of gnostic narratives, but always in a descriptive rather than an evaluative mode; this voice insists that it is much more intellectually productive to give careful analytical attention to the specifics of the 'rule governed' practices and 'narrative grammar' guiding both the overall pattern and the details of gnosticism's hostile 'metaleptic' reinterpretations of the Judaism and Christianity. This second voice eschews polemics and finds itself at home in the world of academia with its standards of 'testable evidential criterion.'

Occasionally, it is true that Balthasar writes in the first anti-gnostic voice in ways that repeat Irenaeus's vicious slandering tactics, and which might unfortunately give the impression of religious paranoia. Nevertheless, I suggest that Balthasar's use of the second voice softens his use of the first. Balthasar balances his priorities and proportions sufficiently that any anti-gnostic voice he uses is always subservient to his doxological voice. Even though Balthasar shares Irenaeus's overall anti-gnostic mentality, he understands better than Irenaeus and traditional heresiologists the difference between a clean and dirty war! More importantly, like John Henry Newman, Balthasar understands that in the battle for orthodoxy, only holiness, which reflects the glory of God into everyday life, can persuade minds, capture hearts, and forge genuine peace.

Beauty as Therapy for Christian Amnesia

Balthasar's central intellectual proposal that aesthetics ought to be returned to its place of primacy in Christian theology is frequently misunderstood. This proposal strikes some ears as a call for a revival of Christianity's historical practices of patronizing the arts and filling its churches and museums with statues and paintings. Some hear it as a rallying cry for a restoration of the more ornate, poetic, and high-culture liturgical styles of previous eras. Still others think Balthasar is advocating a Pietistic and Romantic assault on the use of reason in theology. Unfortunately these readings do more to distort what is truly at the heart of his proposal about the place of aesthetics in theology than they do to help us understand it.

A better way to approach his project in theological aesthetics would be to begin by noting that he could be quite negative about how sacred art sometimes functioned in Christianity. For example, he expresses sympathy for some of the anti-Nestorian motives behind Byzantine iconoclasm. Moreover, he sometimes reminds his readers that 'beauty' is not a word commonly used in the Bible for God. The Old Testament's 'Suffering Servant' prophecy in Isaiah speaks only of 'beauty' in order to deny that it

could apply to the Servant of Yahweh, and in the New Testament Paul makes a similar argument about Christ. Balthasar also has a strong affinity for those who ask questions about whether it is unseemly in a fallen world saturated with ugliness, pain, and suffering to indulge in abstract intellectual reflection on the meaning of beauty. He greatly respects, too, the concerns of those who, like Luther and Kierkegaard, wonder how a religion centred on the Cross and the difficult ethical commitments of faith can let itself be distracted by merely pretty things and the dissolute way of being in the world they can inspire.

But of course sympathy with such concerns and acquiescence to all the conclusions of those who hold them are not the same. Balthasar insists that as valuable as these questions and concerns may be, they must not prevent us from reintroducing aesthetics into theology. The real issue is not whether beauty and theology should be reunited, but rather what we mean by the words 'theology' and 'beauty' in the first place, and what rules we will follow when reintegrating them. If theology means nothing but abstract propositions about God's truth presented to the intellect, then there is no reason for a theology of God's beauty. For Balthasar, subverting this quasi-rationalist obsession with proving and explaining God is the whole point of reintegrating aesthetics into theology. It would, thus, not help theology much either to speak of beauty in purely theoretical terms.

If, however, theology is properly understood, in its biblical and traditional sense, as reflection directly and deeply rooted in the Church's life of prayer and spirituality, then it is clear that one cannot speak truthfully of the glorious revelation of God's love in salvation history without the aid of a genuine aesthetics. The people who invented and developed the best Christian theology in the patristic and medieval eras knew this well, Balthasar believed. Thus Balthasar argues so forcefully for reintegrating beauty into theology because he believes that failing to do so would mean failing to grasp the existential disposition and spiritual posture required for knowing God in the only way God can possibly be known—as self-giving love. Attaining this understanding requires a love for creation and a willingness to participate in the Incarnation and the Paschal Mystery with the whole of one's being, heart, will, and mind. Balthasar views this understanding as doxology, and he is convinced that it and it alone is the only true path to true theology.

As noted above, Henri de Lubac was one of the most formative influences on Balthasar's understanding of what theology should be. Much of de Lubac's early intellectual career was occupied with arguing that the highly intellectual systems of neo-scholastic theology were insufficiently attuned to the mystery of God's love. For too long, de Lubac complained in 1942, men who 'know their theology' have treated God and the truths of revelation reductively, assuming that God's love could be approached like the truths of any other science. Consequently, de Lubac railed against theologians who indulged in the delusion they were 'specialists' in God in the same way scientists and mathematicians could be specialists in 'chemistry or trigonometry ... as if [revelation] could be reduced to some series of statements!' Balthasar similarly complains of an ecclesiastical rigidity in which:

> not only the faith but the heart, too, is wrapped up in a spiritless, conscientious and ultimately Pharisaical practice, a religion of dogmas and an enthusiasm for dogmas (the more that are defined, the better), a zeal for everything that can be seen, that is limited, calculable, controlled.

Too often Christian theologians are tempted to treat the free God of life as a lofty idea captured in their conceptual systems. In this way they can safely maintain, and unfortunately perpetuate, a closed spiritual posture.

Against such an approach, Balthasar maintains, theology in the classical tradition 'has always been, at its height, a spiritual activity ... '. The 'separation of theology and spirituality' in much of modern theology 'was quite unknown to the great premodern Christian theologians, most of whom were great saints and mystics who saw no dichotomy in their theology between doctrine and spirituality'. They were united in their view that Christian intellectual reflection must start with the beauty of the Word incarnate, crucified, and resurrected. Because this beauty fulfils and surpasses all purely inner-worldly forms of beauty, Balthasar argues, it ought to be designated by the term glory, which he considers the biblical term for signifying that God's beauty exceeds in eminence and grandeur all finite forms of creaturely beauty. Theology begins therefore in doxology, and only from within the posture of worship does it seek to understand the revealed glory of God.

Balthasar finds a close analogy, therefore, between the receptive existential disposition required to perceive worldly beauty and the receptive spiritual posture necessary to encounter God's love. Precisely because he sees this strong similarity, however, he thinks it essential to be precise when treating their relationship. Integration must result in fidelity, not falsification of either worldly or divine beauty. He terms the healthy, traditional integration of aesthetics and theology 'theological aesthetics' but he terms unhealthy modern attempts at integration 'aesthetic theology'. Aesthetic theology presupposes an existential disposition that is fundamentally at odds with Christian spirituality, and hence, too, is at odds with the authentic meaning of the beautiful. Aesthetic theology perverts the meaning of beauty because it fundamentally lacks a genuine Christian spirituality. It operates with an anxious existential disposition that fears the dark, chaotic, and deathly sides of existence. In an effort to persuade itself the world is pretty, safe, and secure, it turns away from biblical revelation to a sterile conceptual understanding of beauty, which it then projects onto its happy, smiling God. In a way analogous to dogmatism's evasion of the mysterious reality of God, such 'aestheticism' yields a closed spiritual posture that has more to do with self-deception than it does with God or real beauty. Balthasar faults this understanding of beauty because it seeks to 'exclude the element of the ugly, of the tragically fragmented, of the demonic' rather than coming to terms with them in a healthy faithful spirituality. He declares, 'Every aesthetic which simply seeks to ignore the nocturnal sides of existence can itself from the outset be ignored as a sort of aestheticism'.

By contrast, theological aesthetics learn what God's beauty truly and fully is from its serenely courageous openness to what revelation shows to be real.

> Christianity encourages us to maintain in the human a 'serene courage' [*gleichen Mut*], which is the root meaning of the word for indifference [*Gleich-mut*], a courage in the face of all that God has disposed, even the most difficult and contrary. And for a Christian this course will consist, not in dulling oneself against such harsh realities, but in enduring and surviving them, acknowledging how real the fear, the disgust, and the wariness are that are inherent in these realities. Things scarcely possible to accomplish now become possible for the Christian.

Theological aesthetics, therefore, is always focused on the Cross and refuses to either deny the ugly its place in a theology of God's beauty or explain the ugly away as an illusion compared with the beauty of God. His point is certainly not that there is a dark side to God, as Carl Jung and other gnostic thinkers

have argued, but that humans cannot understand the revelation of God in Christ unless they face honestly and feel deeply the painful situation of sin and evil that Christ redeems. Quoting Karl Barth, Balthasar writes:

> The beauty of God in the 'beauty of Jesus Christ' appears therefore precisely in the crucified, but the crucified, precisely as such, is the one risen: 'in this self-disclosure, God's beauty embraces death as well as life, fear as well as joy, that which we would call ugly, as well as that which we would call beautiful.

Because 'the beauty of Jesus Christ' embraces life and death, joy and fear, the beautiful and the ugly, a theological aesthetics must embrace them too. Genuine theological aesthetics is committed above all to historical realism and therefore respects the realities of tragedy, ugliness, and death in its reflections. The dark elements of life must be accepted as real and lived with existential seriousness; they must not be rendered mere illusion by speculative theories constructed to hide from ourselves the reality of the world's suffering. Theological aesthetics, therefore, unites an authentic Christian spirituality centred on the Paschal Mystery with an existential disposition of serenely courageous receptivity to the real. For Balthasar, therefore, aesthetics will only be relevant to theology's task of remembering if it is understood as a discourse about the existential disposition and spiritual posture appropriate for responding to those realities in life that show themselves to us as crosses to be carried.

'Every worldly being is epiphanic' Balthasar states. All things in creation can be epiphanic in a two-fold sense: they can reveal the Being of the created world, the beautiful light in which all things show themselves to us as fascinating, mysterious, and worthy of exploration; they can also reveal God the Creator, the glorious Light in which all things show themselves as inherently good, mysterious, and worthy of redemptive love. Ultimately both senses are united in Balthasar's theological aesthetics because, following classic Thomist Catholic thinking, he believes grace presupposes nature and works within it to bring it to its perfection. Let us begin by focusing on the first sense, however, which is the creaturely foundation for the second, more strictly sacramental sense.

For those with the proper existential disposition and spiritual posture, Balthasar argues, all natural realities have an outward form which is the unique expression of both their creaturely essence and their mysterious 'innerness'. The outward form of a thing or person is its unique voice—a voice that can be silent or audible—that reveals the truth of its own reality and its place in reality as a whole. Balthasar's thinking in all this closely follows Wolfgang von Goethe's (1749–1832) theory of natural forms, which Goethe worked out partly in reaction against the calculating, detached, analytical, approach to reality exemplified by Newtonian science and Kantian philosophy. With Goethe, Balthasar believes there is a unity between outward expression and inward spiritual truth in all things and persons, and the task of understanding requires engaged, open receptivity to what is being said by the object. Balthasar gives the example of how spiritually perceptive and receptive persons experience a tree:

> The life principle of a tree, invisible in itself, is essentially shown in the form, growth, and gradual decline in the appearance of the tree. In the variety of its phenomenal forms, the tree radiates its essential unity and thereby indicates the reality appropriate to it within the whole of reality. It has a form, one that changes organically, according to law, not arbitrarily. In other words, it is a form that proves to be a unified form that cannot be transformed into something else. This phenomenal form of the entity is the way it expresses itself; it is a kind of voiceless, yet not inarticulate speech.

In this sense, those with a 'trained eye' see that the tree is 'self-interpreting', just as all things and persons are 'self-interpreting' to those who let them speak. Only those who are attentive and provide a space in themselves for the communicative, self-interpreting message of natural forms will hear and understand what they have to say. Generally the self-interpreting message is a revelation of the form's place in an organic network, its mode of dwelling in a holistic, symbiotic cosmos. Balthasar quotes Goethe's description of this as:

> Letting what is solid dissolve in spirit,
> As it keeps solid what is born of spirit

This is why Goethe found Newton's atomistic analytical eye so objectionable: it silenced the most important messages living forms have to communicate about themselves.

Obviously the Goethean sacramental sensibility is not common. As the references to the 'trained eye', listening, attentiveness, and receptivity suggest, seeing forms with a genuinely spiritual knowledge requires a special aptitude for attunement and discernment. Perceiving the unity of the exoteric and esoteric is a learned skill, but, like language itself, it is a skill humans were created with the capacity to learn. And God designed the creation at all its levels to teach this skill by enabling all its natural forms to be vessels of spiritual light, capable of drawing those with attentive eyes and listening hearts into deeper and deeper engagement with natural beauty. Balthasar speaks of this as 'the mysterious character inherent in the knowable ... '. The mysteriousness of things and human persons lies in the fact that in the dynamic of self-expression they simultaneously reveal and conceal themselves. In showing, saying, and giving themselves, they also communicate that there is a depth that is not shown, said, or given. Balthasar writes:

> The other, whether a human being or some other object in reality, is thus revealed to me as a mystery lying well beyond all grasping concepts precisely when it reveals itself to me without any desire to hold back. By the very fact of appearing, the other is illuminated, but the eye of the spirit knows the light without seeing the sun that shines

Yet in knowing the other—seeing its form—one is made aware of the sun that shines within, and thereby becomes captivated with a desire to see more, know more, and learn more about this sun through the mediation of the form. Balthasar even goes so far as to speak of the knower being 'initiated ... into the mysteries of the object ... [the knower] explicitly lays hold only of a fraction of the object's depth and richness, albeit with the promise of further initiation to come'. Balthasar does not hesitate to call the acceptance of this initiation 'love'. A natural form, therefore, is 'beautiful' insofar as it radiates from within its external pattern—an ever-more alluring spiritual light that inspires ever-greater fascination with both its surface and its depth. This point is so central in Balthasar's thought that it merits underlining: the beauty of things and persons is not only due to the alluringly mysterious spiritual sun within them, but also to the fascinating and unique process by which each particular form, to borrow Goethe's words, dissolves spirit into what is solid while keeping solid what is born of spirit.

There is, Balthasar explains, a 'grace' in experiencing the world in this way, and those who see it have an implicit understanding of the mystery of the Creator God who dwells in all things. In revealing its own particular truth, Balthasar maintains, a natural form simultaneously reveals its participation in the fabric of life as a whole, and hence reveals the Being of the world and its status as a gift. Herein lies the aesthetic reality of all things: in being truly themselves in their naturalness they become numinous

vessels of worldly beauty as it reveals and conceals itself, playfully enticing us into an exploratory relationship with its depths. In being beautiful in this sense, Balthasar believes, things and persons teach those with the desire to learn how to see natural forms as quasi-sacraments, and to hear them telling of God's glory. Natural forms teach us how to love by initiating us into the deep mystery of all things. This initiation thereby creates awareness in us of the spiritual foundations of life itself, and, ultimately, an awareness of the Creator God who bestows it all as gift. Those who have developed an aesthetic eye and a listening heart then know too the fundamental meaning of goodness and truth—not as moral rules to be followed and doctrines to be believed, but as organic, symbiotic ways of living and thinking rooted in and growing out of an aesthetic mode of life. One might say that for Balthasar God created natural forms so that through their mysterious beauty they might write God's law of love on human hearts.

This is particularly true of the natural form presented to us by other human persons. The human intersubjective relationship is central to Balthasar's understanding of the aesthetic, and in many ways conditions his entire metaphysical ontology of natural forms. Nothing teaches more effectively the dynamics of revealing and concealing than loving dialogical relationships with other human persons. One of Balthasar's favourite examples of this truth is the relationship of an infant and its mother. 'The little child awakens to self-consciousness through being addressed by the love of his mother', he writes:

> The [child's] interpretation of the mother's smiling and of her whole gift of self is the answer, awakened by her, of love to love, when the 'I' is addressed by the 'Thou'; and precisely because it is understood in the very origin that the 'Thou' of the mother is not the 'I' of the child, but both centers move in the same ellipse of love, and because it is understood likewise in the very origin that this love is the highest good and is absolutely sufficient and that, a priori, nothing higher can be awaited beyond this, so that the fullness of reality is in principle enclosed in this 'I'–'Thou' (as in paradise) and that everything that may be experienced later as disappointment, deficiency and yearning longing is only descended from this: for this reason, everything—'I' and 'Thou' and the world—is lit up from this lightning flash of the origin with a ray so brilliant and whole that it also includes a disclosure of God. In the beginning was the word with which a loving 'Thou' summons forth the 'I': in the act of hearing lies directly, antecedent to all reflection, the fact that one has been given the gift of the reply; the little child does not 'consider' whether it will reply with love or nonlove to its mother's inviting smile, for just as the sun entices forth green growth, so does love awaken love; it is in the movement toward the 'Thou' that the 'I' becomes aware of itself. By giving itself, it experiences: I give myself. By crossing over from itself into what is other than itself, into the open world that offers it space, it experiences its freedom, its knowledge, its being as spirit.

In this passage Balthasar presents the anthropological connection between his aesthetics of natural forms and his theology. The analogy of the mother's smile and voice lighting up the child's whole world of meaning has the dual function of illuminating the dynamic of aesthetics in the encounter with natural forms in general, and the dynamic of grace in the encounter with the Incarnate Word in which one is born from above.

Nevertheless, despite the central and foundational importance of the human inter-subjective in Balthasar's presentation of worldly aesthetics, it is important to remember that he also insists that the beautiful, the good, and the true are united in the invisible depths of all things, and they make their appearance together to those who are appropriately disposed. Nothing in life can be reduced to being 'just' what analytical science tells about it.

Certainly, Balthasar's spiritual ideal is appealing. However, why is the existential disposition and spiritual posture necessary for a genuinely spiritual knowledge of life so rare among human beings? Why is the aesthetic eye for the goodness and truth of the world so difficult to develop and maintain? And why do decadent forms of natural religion and gnosticism develop at all? As we have seen already, Balthasar's answers to these questions are complex—there are numerous anthropological and historical–cultural reasons why humans fail to dwell in creation spiritually. But aside from the question of why people live in sin, Balthasar's understanding of the basic dynamics of sin itself show us why he believes Christianity today must integrate this aesthetic into its theology.

Balthasar understands humanity's post-Fall sinful rejection of God in terms of his theological aesthetics. As my discussion of the *incurvatio in se ipsum* of false gnosis above indicates, Balthasar believes that sin is fundamentally a refusal to see the natural forms of the world as beautiful epiphanies of mystery. The turning away and turning inward of the sinful soul is based on refusal, even disgust, with that which is not the fascinating theatre of the self. Because goodness and truth are intimately intertwined with the ability to see and love beauty in natural forms, the refusal of aesthetic vision is also the refusal to be human as God created us. This refusal is simultaneously a rejection of God. It can take shape in the scientific effort to dissect a form into its component parts. This approach to things certainly can yield understanding, but if it is coupled with an ontological material-ism—the belief that nature is only matter and not spirit—then it can also seriously impair one's spiritual vision. Even without a drive for scientific understanding and technological control, this approach can result in a practical materialism in which one goes about one's daily life utterly oblivious to the spiritual light radiating in natural forms. Living with a fragmented vision of reality, practical materialism sees things and people as nothing more than what they seem on the surface, and hence is ignorant of the more mysterious depths of reality open to those who see with an aesthetic eye.

The opposite approach, which Balthasar sometimes polemically calls 'Platonism' and 'Idealism', is the belief that forms are illusory and ultimately irrelevant to spiritual truth— one must leave behind the exterior shells of things as one goes beyond them to the pure spirit or soul within. The corollary of this approach is popular spiritualism, which in extreme form becomes the occult. Spiritualism and the occult always mistrust the 'letter' of religion as deception and stupidity, and instead only grant religious seriousness to that which is other-worldly, ghostly, and disincarnated. In both cases, materialist and spiritualist, human hearts grow cold to beauty and eventually learn to simply ignore it. Balthasar writes:

> Every anticipation of truth's self-presentation in the form of innate ideas, schemata, or categories would hinder this pure readiness. It would amount to a precipitous classification of something that, in reality, is manifesting itself in a new and original way to the subject, which would therefore be guilty of a know-it-all attitude that runs directly counter to any attentive listening. At bottom, one would be finished with what the other was going to say before he even had a chance to open his mouth. One would cut him off after his first word, because his self-manifestation would already be classified in one's ready-made framework, schemata, and categories. Innate ideas would prevent any true dialogue, wound courtesy, and make love impossible.

There is another way to live a refusal to see the natural forms of the world as beautiful epiphanies of mystery and hence make love impossible. Confronted with the realities of evil, suffering, and death, this third way of living the refusal denies the inherent beauty, goodness, and truth of the world. This is often

an underlying existential disposition behind the first two, but it can also exist on its own, refusing any effort to either fight or flee humanity's tragic plight on earth. This is the path of the existentially jaded and spiritually cynical. It is prevalent among those sensitive souls who have experienced to some extent an aesthetic receptivity to reality, and who therefore know the promise of beauty, goodness, and truth. Yet for some reason—deception, betrayal, or any number of other instantiations of the power of death and evil in the world—their trust in the promise was broken and they have closed themselves up in a defensive, anxious state of siege. When presented with a Goethean view of reality, the existentially jaded and spiritually cynical ask how one can advocate aesthetic seeing when one knows from painful experience that forms become deformed. Indeed, tragically enough, Balthasar argues, Goethe himself eventually succumbed to this existential cynicism. All three types of refusal simply confirm for Balthasar a basic fact: it is not possible for purely inner-worldly aesthetics to consistently hold a doxological sacramental view of life—worldly aesthetics desperately needs a Christological transfiguration to redeem and preserve it.

Conclusion

We are now in a position to conclude our discussion of why Balthasar believes returning aesthetics to its rightful place of primacy in Christian theology facilitates theology's necessary remembering. Understanding the dynamics of worldly aesthetics, and the sinful refusal to participate in them according to created human nature, is the indispensable key for understanding the unity of creation and redemption in God's self-revelation in Christ. The glory of God comes to us only in natural forms: no one sees pure divine glory and lives. This is why, Balthasar tirelessly asserts, in his self-revelations in history the invisible God made use of the natural forms of the Hebrew people and their religion, and then, in an unsurpassable and unique way, the natural–supernatural form of Jesus Christ. 'God's Incarnation perfects the whole ontology and aesthetics of created Being', he writes. 'The incarnation uses created Being at a new depth as a language and a means of expression for the divine Being and essence. Understanding this clearly, the best theologians in the Christian tradition have always deployed a theological aesthetics in their reflections on the meaning of God's incarnation in Christ (and a succession of such figures is the focus of Balthasar. Following what he takes to be the best of the theological tradition, Balthasar presents Jesus as the 'Christ-form'. For those with a trained eye, the Christ-form interprets itself in the Scriptures and in the Church's liturgical life as the deepest mystery of life and love ever bestowed on humanity. The Christ-form, like other natural forms that have been vehicles of grace in history, undergoes dissolution; the human person Jesus of Nazareth suffers a tragic, unjust death. But unlike all other forms the Christ-form overcomes dissolution through being raised from the dead in a spiritualized yet creaturely body. The Christ-form therefore becomes a permanent, unsurpassable sacramental vehicle of divine grace. The mystery addressing us from the depths of this glorious form—the grace of the Christ-form—is the redemptively alluring truth that, despite the reality of sin of death, the creation is good, and life on earth is a great blessing. Precisely because it is the absolute revelation of the Creator's love for the creation, the Christ-form is the ultimate affirmation of life and license to love courageously and without restraint all worldly beauty, even when it undergoes tragic deformation and death (Balthasar maintains that God's wrath and judgement expressed in the Christ-form must always be understood in the wider context of its expression of God's forgiveness and love).

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Those who truly see the 'Christ-form' therefore know him and worship him as the 'perfection of the form of the world' and the 'super-form' of biblical religion. They become 'mystics' in the sense that they are enraptured by the unity of the Christ-form and the healing light of the Spirit it radiates. The Spirit of the Christ-form bestows an (existential disposition and spiritual posture that enables Christian seers to deepen their contemplation of the Christ-form as the most transparent of all worldly forms radiating both the 'the light of absolute being' and the light of God's Trinitarian mystery. Like infants seeing the face of their mother, they are given selves predisposed to explore a world full of mystery. Yet, unlike infants, those who contemplate the Christ-form must die to an old self and be re-educated in the ways of love. The Christform heals and redeems the aesthetic dynamism of creation by destroying the power of sin and death to turn hearts cold and fill souls with anxiety. For Balthasar, then, the Christ-form not only re-educates humanity in its own nature, but also gives humans the ability to live their nature as creatures who were made to be lovingly attuned to lovely realities. The darkness of a fallen world need no longer cause people to refuse the existential disposition of doxological wonder and the spiritual posture of adventurous love. Contemplation of the 'Christ-form' as it is rooted in the world after Pentecost, implanting its grace deep into the aesthetic structures of created reality, will enable humanity to rediscover the mystery at the heart of the world, and in so doing discover and come to love and share in the deep mystery of Trinitarian love. <>

Essay: Balthasar's Theodramatic Hermeneutics: Trinitarian and Ecclesial Dimensions of Scriptural Interpretation by Jason Bourgeois

Hans Urs von Balthasar developed a unique style of biblical interpretation. This paper will discuss four elements of his scriptural hermeneutics, a topic that offers glimpses of his fundamental theology and his ecclesiology as well. The first element of Balthasar's hermeneutics is *aesthetics*. Balthasar' s aesthetic approach to scriptural interpretation stands in contrast with the commonly employed historical-critical method, which he found to be potentially limiting. The second element is *theodrama*. In Balthasar's notion of theodramatic hermeneutics, the interpreter is already participating in the very salvation history that is being interpreted. The third and fourth elements of Balthasar's hermeneutics involve the Trinitarian and ecclesial dimensions of interpretation; that is, he focuses especially on the role of the Holy Spirit and the church in the life of the interpreter.

Contrast between Aesthetic and Historical-Critical Approaches to Interpreting Scripture

Both Balthasar and Hans-Georg Gadamer share the conviction that if one distances oneself from the object of interpretation, one will not be able to perceive the truth of that object. This is so because there is no such thing as a neutral standpoint for interpretation, and also because the goal of interpretation is the *appropriation* of the truth of a text into one's concrete situation. On this premise, both authors emphasize aesthetics as a proper mode of describing the task of interpretation, for we cannot remain neutral or distanced in the face of beauty. Rather, we are receptive to it and are transformed by it. Balthasar, in particular, will contrast an aesthetic approach to interpreting scripture with the more methodical and distanced approach of historical-critical methods.

He addresses this contrast in the very first pages of *The Glory of the Lord.* For Balthasar,

> . . . since the exact sciences no longer have any time to spare for [beauty] (nor does theology, in so far as it increasingly strives to follow the method of the exact sciences and to envelop itself in their atmosphere), precisely for this reason is it perhaps time to break through *this* kind of exactness, which can only pertain to one particular sector of reality, in order to bring the truth of the whole again into view—truth as a transcendental property of Being, truth which is no abstraction, rather the living bond between God and the world.

Here he expresses a concern that the scientific method does not comprehend the whole of the subject matter that is explored by theology (or indeed by most other disciplines). He also finds that its theory of truth is entirely ineffective in dealing with the subject matter of Being, God, and God's relationship to the world (expressed in revelation). Rather, Truth is discovered through a response to the beautiful that involves the whole person and not merely a detached intellect. For Balthasar, this entails an active receptivity toward the truth of revelation, that is, an attitude of faith.

Balthasar continues by contrasting two ways of understanding and interpreting revelation, namely "seeing the form" and the historical critical method. For Balthasar, an awareness of the whole is necessary for the interpretation of any beautiful form, including that of Christian revelation. This awareness of the whole is often impaired by the analysis of parts that occurs in a historical approach to scriptural texts. Balthasar expresses this succinctly when he says that "if form is broken down into subdivisions and auxiliary parts for the sake of explanation, this is unfortunately a sign that the true form has not been perceived as such at all." For Balthasar, this is often the case in analyses of scripture based on the historical development of texts.

Balthasar expresses his conviction that the fullness of the Christian faith cannot be explained by a layer-based approach to scriptures, given that the earliest layer is the most authentic while each subsequent layer deviates further and further from the historical truth about Jesus. Rather, for him "the fact that research demonstrates that a given redaction belongs to an older layer of composition does not mean that preference should automatically be given [to] that redaction."[4] Furthermore, it is not through historical reconstruction but through faith that the full truth of the gospels can be discerned. For Balthasar, the historicalcritical method leaves one "with the problem of explaining how so slight a kernel could become such a full-powered and seamless form as is the Christ of the Gospels:

Indeed, it takes the "eyes of faith" to discern the full form of Christ, and this is the perspective from which the New Testament writers composed their texts. The historical development of the text is less important because the inspiration of the Spirit continually influenced the text until it reached its final form:

> [O]nly the final result of the historical developments which lie behind a text—a history never to be adequately reconstructed—may be said to be inspired, not the bits and scraps which philological analysis thinks it can tear loose from the finished totality in order, as it were, to steal up to the form from behind in the hope of enticing it to betray its mystery by exposing its development.

In fact, for Balthasar, the form of this revelation of Christ and his relationship to salvation history is more central even than the texts themselves that mediate that revelation. For Balthasar, "Scripture is not the Word itself, but rather the Spirit's testimony concerning the Word." What is most important

for him are the actual events themselves and their significance for human salvation. Scripture itself belongs to the larger totality of the revelation of God to the world expressed through creation, incarnation, and redemption. This larger totality is, in fact, the form of revelation, which is not wholly textbased. As Balthasar says, "[e]ven Scripture is not an isolated book, but rather is embedded in the context of everything created, established and effected by Christ. . . . Only in this context is the form of Scripture perceivable.

Therefore, the interpretation of scripture cannot be carried out in isolation from the full context of the Christian faith, a context that is not merely an idea or set of ideas but involves a lived understanding of God's relationship to human beings and to the world. For Balthasar, this relationship is a totality that can ultimately be understood only by an awareness of the whole, namely, seeing the form, and not by a reduction of the whole to its various parts that represent the layers of historical development that have been combined over time to form the completed texts of scripture.

Theodramatic Hermeneutics: The Participation of the Interpreter in Salvation History

The aesthetic style of hermeneutics involves receptive engagement with the truth being revealed through the text. For Balthasar, hermeneutics has a theodramatic dimension as well; that is, his hermeneutics involves an awareness of the *situatedness of the interpreter of divine revelation* within salvation history. Again, like Gadamer, he rejects the idea that an interpreter can take a viewpoint "over and above history." In Balthasar' s theodramatic approach to hermeneutics, the interpreter of divine revelation is participating in the drama of divine revelation itself, through her place in its history. The interpretation of revelation is thus a dialogue between the human being and God across time, whose subject matter is that selfsame relationship between human beings and God.

For Balthasar,

> All theology is an interpretation of divine revelation. Thus, in its totality, it can only be hermeneutics. But, *in revealing himself in Jesus Christ, God interprets himself—and this must involve his giving an interpretation, in broad outline and in detail, of his plan for the world—and this too is hermeneutics.* [This] hermeneutics, however, cannot seal itself off and ignore man's freedom and his free understanding . . . God does not play the world drama all on his own; he makes room for man to join in the acting

This passage makes it clear that for Balthasar the task of theology is eminently hermeneutical. First, it is the task of understanding revelation. Second, revelation itself is God's *self-interpretative* communication to us in such a way that we can understand it. In other words, God's revelation to us is already "translated" by God, as it were, into a humanly understandable mode. The incarnation is the culmination of this communication, complemented in our present situation by the mediation of the Spirit within the context of the church.

It is also clear that the hermeneutics of theology is a complex dialogue between the free, self-revealing God and the free human interpreter. God has, in a sense, the greater role in this dialogue, being both the initiating partner and also the subject matter of the dialogue. Yet this dialogue is engaged in for the benefit of the human being, who becomes more aware of the necessary role of God in the process of human history, both collectively and for individual human beings. For Balthasar, the encounter with the

infinite freedom of God the revealer does not stifle the finite freedom of the human interpreter but rather brings it to its fulfillment.

It should be apparent that for Balthasar hermeneutics is a discipline that involves an awareness of being situated within a grand historical plan in the relationship between God and the human being. As present-day interpreters of revelation, we are situated in a particular stage of salvation history, what others have termed the "already but not yet" stage. This stage is one in which Christ has already come and reconciled the world to himself. It remains for us to appropriate this salvation within the context of grace and the church. This is the great "theodrama" that reaches its culmination in the "not yet" stage of eschatological fulfillment.

Hence, theodramatic hermeneutics involves discerning, with the help of the Holy Spirit and in the context of the church, who Christ is and what this means for us in terms of salvation. The interpreter of scripture is not distanced but existentially involved in what is being interpreted. For this reason, the interpreter cannot bracket faith or the content of faith. In fact, the very act of interpreting will be described in terms of this faith. Hermeneutics for Balthasar is explicitly Trinitarian and ecclesial; in other words, Balthasar understands the act of interpretation to take place within the context of an interpersonal relationship with the Trinity and within the social setting of the church.

The Trinitarian Dimensions of Interpretation

Balthasar' s hermeneutics acquire a Trinitarian dimension through his understanding of the Word and the Spirit in the process of interpreting revelation. The Word (Christ) is interpreted in light of the Holy Spirit by both the scriptural authors and subsequent scriptural interpreters.

The main goal of the interpretation of the New Testament is the discernment of who Christ is and what he has done for humanity. As discussed above, it is Balthasar' s view that a merely historical-critical analysis of the identity of Christ cannot do justice to the full aesthetic and religious dimensions that came to light through the reflections of the apostles and evangelists (and which have not yet been exhausted, even after several christological councils and centuries of theological debate). An analysis of the New Testament will not truly have "perceived the form" for Balthasar without an awareness of the Trinitarian dimensions of Christ's own life. In particular, Christ's role as the Word of God and his link with the role of the Holy Spirit are crucial to Balthasar' s interpretation of the New Testament. The action of the Spirit is necessary in order to aid the interpreter herself to see the form. This is based on the idea, as mentioned above, that God already "interprets himself" for us in his self-revelation.

Thus, for Balthasar the Word is contained in history and reveals itself progressively through history. The entire Old Testament is a proleptic, historical movement toward the incarnation. For this reason, Balthasar is sympathetic to a typological, neo-patristic style of interpreting the Old Testament. Furthermore, the Word incarnate in Christ is not revealed in the New Testament as a static entity, such that one need only consult the fixed meaning of the text in order to discern who Christ is. For Balthasar,

> According to this view of things, hermeneutics would limit itself to establishing as securely as possible the meaning found in the document; it would then go on to confront the meaning, thus attained, with the contemporary understanding of existence and critically assess the former by the latter or vice versa.

Rather than this fixed view of the meaning of the New Testament, Balthasar views the Word as *always acting* in history, such that there is a continual unfolding of the interpretation of who Christ is. In this sense revelation was not "closed" with the completion of the New Testament, but rather "the meaning of Scripture *(where* it is in process of development) journeys *along with* history." Scripture is not simply an objective and dispassionate account of what happened but is rather "part of the drama itself, moving along with it.

In addition, the continual, developing presence of the Word is, as it were, mediated throughout history through the Holy Spirit." This assertion requires an awareness that Jesus (the Word of God) and the Holy Spirit have always been intimately linked. For Balthasar, the Holy Spirit enabled the disciples to perceive the full form of Christ and continues to enable Christians to "see the form" today. Thus, based on the Trinitarian link between Word (Jesus) and Spirit, the presence of the Holy Spirit enables one to perceive the full identity of Jesus in the New Testament. In a short article titled "God Is His Own Exegete," Balthasar explicates the link between the Holy Spirit and the interpreter of scripture, saying that human beings cannot "understand [God's] self-interpretation [in Christ] . . . before the Holy Spirit has been sent to them and has settled in their hearts." The Spirit is the necessary link between God and human beings in understanding his self-revelation, for

> Were God not his own interpreter, man, who certainly knows that he is a creature and that there is a Lord who is his origin and end . . . would never ascertain what "the inner life of God" is. Only the Spirit of God is able to fathom that. But precisely this Spirit is given to us "to teach us to understand the gifts that he has given us.

For Balthasar, the Holy Spirit is necessary to perceive this self-revelation rightly. Thus, any correct interpretation of the New Testament will require the actual grace of the Holy Spirit in the life of the interpreter. In this way, scriptural hermeneutics and theodramatic participation are interdependent.

The Ecclesial Dimension of the Interpretation of Revelation

Finally, the fourth dimension of Balthasar' s hermeneutics is the ecclesial dimension: interpretation is conducted within the life of the church. This touches upon the question of temporal development in the interpretation of revelation. How do we discern what is permanent and what is time-bound (and changeable) within divine revelation? When dealing with this question, Balthasar places the emphasis on faith. The faith that comes from the Holy Spirit is seen as necessary in order to discern which elements of revelation are permanent and which are time-bound in such a way as to be dispensable. When there is a lack of faith-based perception, "*there* will be a tendency to concentrate on the secondary, time-bound elements within a particular horizon of understanding and to elevate them into primary ones; thus they will seem to be *untranslatable* and will have to be abandoned.

Balthasar's primary example of this tendency is the project of demythologization, which finds such doctrines as the Virgin Birth as "untranslatable" into a contemporary mindset and so abandons such doctrines in favor of a more palatable explanation. As can be expected from his aesthetic emphasis on the uniqueness of the Christian form (the concrete universal), Balthasar rejects the idea that these particulars of Christian revelation are secondary and thus able to be discarded. Rather "God was able to express a uniquely divine element of this unique drama [through such doctrines], something that cannot be replaced by the categories of the universally human and the existential.

Balthasar sees two possible solutions to the problem of demythologization, which results from the conflict between a contemporary mindset and some of the traditional doctrines of faith. The first solution is to regard the doctrine in question as not "outdated" but rather an integral aspect of the faith, without which the faith would not hold the same meaning in its totality. Such is the case with Balthasar's own evaluation of the Virgin Birth, which he regards as essential to the incarnation. The second solution is to regard the doctrine in question as having been "expressed in an obsolete terminology or conceptual world," with the understanding that the doctrine was "intending to express *greater and different things than* can be contained in the limited concepts of the period." Balthasar's example of this is the imminent expectation of the end of the world expressed in the synoptic gospels or the Pauline epistles.

Balthasar counsels extreme caution when placing doctrines in the second category and attempting to explain what the doctrine "really meant." In attempting such an explanation, one must be careful to make judgments in light of the whole Christian form of revelation, perceived with the help of the Holy Spirit. In Balthasar's words: "this spiritual judgment has regard to a *totality* or *fullness* which the believer can discern through the Holy Spirit, at least to the extent that, while he can never attain an overview of it; he can detect every *substantial omission* from it as a violation of the law as the whole."

For Balthasar, the principle remains that if a "re-interpretation" results in the omission of an integral doctrine of the faith (such as, for example, the resurrection of Christ), then it has not been done in light of the form. One final question remains: namely, how to mediate the decision of what is and is not an integral doctrine within a faith community. This is where, for Balthasar, the teaching office of the church enters the hermeneutical debate.

Balthasar believes that the teaching office of the church is an essential element in theological hermeneutics. He claims that although "the individual endowed with faith is . . . given a faculty enabling him to discern this totality [of the form of revelation]," there is the possibility of a great divergence of opinion among individuals on various issues (some of which are essential to the faith and some of which are not). In light of this possibility, it is "necessary for the entire community of the Church to be equipped with a special organ to serve as a regulatory principle for maintaining the integrity of revelation; its function is to indicate any serious interference with the *balance* of the Church's organism, any loss of substance or weight.

The role of the teaching office is to weigh the individual judgments of those engaged in the task of re-interpreting revelation from a contemporary standpoint and to make decisions about whether or not such judgments damage the integrity of revelation as a whole. The tension that this role can create between theologians and the magisterium is well known, but for Balthasar this is a necessary component of any attempt to mediate between contemporary and traditional understandings of the faith. The magisterium has the function of deciding which doctrines themselves are essential to the faith (such as Balthasar's example of the Virgin Birth) and also of deciding whether a theological "translation" from one cultural language to another has left out something significant.

Conclusion

Balthasar's style of interpreting scripture is much broader than that of the historical-critical methods. It presupposes aesthetic engagement and existential participation in the truths being interpreted. The

interpreter is in dialogue with God about God's self-revelation, and such a dialogue requires receptivity in faith. Balthasar's style has Trinitarian and ecclesial dimensions: it presupposes that the grace of the Holy Spirit is necessary for correct interpretation, and it requires a relationship with the church, whose teaching office judges what elements of revelation are essential to the faith, such that the faith is altered if they are omitted or interpreted in another way. Balthasar' s style of scriptural interpretation rests on a phenomenology of the interpreter as a person of faith and a participant in salvation history, in communion with the Trinity and the church. <>

THE ETHICAL THOUGHT OF HANS URS VON BALTHASAR by Christopher Steck (Herder & Herder, 9780824519155)

College Theology Society Book of the Year. 2002

In this remarkable study, the first of its kind in any language, Christopher Steck uncovers the ethical dimension of von Balthasar's thought, showing its relation to other key issues in his works, and to key figures such as Ignatius Loyola, Karl Barth, and especially Karl Rahner. Steck shows both the importance of ethics in von Balthasar's thinking and how it exposes limitations of current ethical reflection. This clear, authoritative introduction is indispensable for von Balthasar scholars and students of contemporary Catholic theology, as well as all interested in major trends about religious ethics.

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This is one of the best secondary sources I have encountered on the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar and the only treatment of his ethics currently in print. Steck does an excellent job of explicating the ethics of von Balthasar through a thorough study of his major writings. Steck deals at length with both 'The Glory of the Lord' and 'Theo-Drama', showing how von Balthasar's ethics emerge from his distinctive aesthetic and theo-drama orientation.

Garth Hallet correctly observes that a moral theory "need not be useful to be valid." The moral theory proposed by Balthasar is not primarily a method for ascertaining the good, but rather a description and explanation of the nature of Christian conduct. And so it is not a mortal blow to Balthasar's theory to acknowledge that it does not easily produce clear answers to the perplexing ethical situations that confront the human agent. Indeed, that could be its strength. The temptation might be to simplify Balthasar's ethics by pruning the vertical and focusing one's discernment energies entirely on the horizontal (interpreted, perhaps, through biblical themes and imagery), but that is not von Balthasar's path.

Here Steck argues we can make a helpful parallel between von Balthasar's approach to Scripture and contemporary scholarship on the topic, on the one hand, and his approach to the moral life and the different philosophical and theological reflections on it, on the other. Von Balthasar's advocacy for a contemplative approach to Scripture applies as well to the ethical encounter and for a similar reason. The issue at stake in both the ethical encounter and scriptural mediation is the covenantal approach of

God, which cannot be frozen into any earthly form. Our contemplation of God, both in Scripture and in the moral horizon before us, will always include a receptive "hearing," because "what is beheld is the free and infinite Person who, from the depths of his freedom, can give himself in a way that is ever new, unsusceptible and unpredictable." Further, Balthasar's ambivalence toward biblical scholarship can be extended to the field of ethics. Balthasar believed contemporary biblical scholarship contributes to our knowledge of revelation, but its use must be subordinated to its ultimate purpose: to help us see the whole organic form of Scripture. Similarly in regard to ethics, we can say that good, practical insight can be gained from breaking down and studying the various component elements of the particular moral situation. We should gather and clarify the facts, figure out what values and goods are at stake, look to the consequences of the action, weigh different possibilities, and so on. Balthasar can initially allow a wide expanse of methological pluralism in ethics as well as in Scripture, Steck argues. The many forms of ethical decision making available to us (consequentialism, utilitarianism, natural law, adherence to biblical injunctions, etc.) can all assist the Christian's discernment. Yet these remain assistants in any discernment process; they yield only "signposts" on the way to the final answer. The ultimate object of discernment is not simply the collection of all these considerations but the form of Christ that does, or can be allowed to appear in the contingent circumstances of the ethical situation. What Balthasar, following Newman, says about the perception of the Christ-form can be gently applied to ethical perception: in order that we "see" what God wishes to reveal to us, God provides a "convergence of the indicators". We might call discernment so directed an aesthetic "rationalism"; it is a creative and imaginative process drawing together in moral insight the various (theological, empirical, affective, experiential) elements composing the situation. This discernment takes as its object a world whose meaning is transformed in light of the divine economy and the laboring presence of the Spirit. Like the discernment proposed by narrative ethicists, it will not have "the 'firmness' of some sciences, but it can exhibit the rationality of a good story." We will be able to look into the thicket of relative goods and values and perceive God's path open before us in a way that is both a seeing and a hearing, an understanding and a trust.

The Christian moral life for Balthasar is first a matter of holiness, not heroism; of contemplation, not self-sacrifice. Some might question Balthasar's ethics on account of the fact that it presumes (and not just commends) a level of spiritual intensity rarely found in the church. That is, the prayerfulness, divine intimacy, and spiritual wisdom typically associated with the saints are not merely ideals of the Christian life. In Balthasar's ethics, they act as operating principles without which his ethics will not "work." While we might wish for more, Balthasar has some sympathy for the difficulty facing the typical Christian in hearing God's call.

All our petty excuses—we simply can't do that kind of listening; we have no interest in it; we are not suited to it on account of our particular character, talents, occupation, or the multiplicity of our activities; our religious interests tend in a different direction; repeated attempts have failed to produce any result—all these little objections, however correct they may be in their limited way, do not affect the great fundamental fact that God, in giving us faith, has also given us the ability to hear.

He also suggests that there is a pastoral danger for the church in holding the general body of believers accountable to the same moral expectations appropriate to fully committed members. But Balthasar, faithful to his theological aesthetics, begins not with the actual state of Christian practice, but with the fullness of the Christ-form itself and the possibility of human response illuminated by it. It is in this

center of glory that our moral lives find their full meaning. And that meaning is given in nothing less than the fact that God wants us to share in divine glory by entering into the self-surrendering love of the triune Godhead. The moral lives of all Christians, saints and sinners, are viewed through this focal point; the "imperfect (the ethic for sinners) derives its inner form from the perfect". For most of us, the fullness is "distantly" eschatological, experienced in privileged moments of grace only to be lost once again in the din of the world's voices. But blessed by the Spirit's presence, those fleeting encounters can be enough to enkindle Christian hope for the day of unwavering vision.

Steck argues that because God uses the forms of the world to address us and does so in a way meaningful to us, Balthasar does have room for moral reasoning and tentative moral norms. Nonetheless, Balthasar should allow more room for reason and could do so without undermining his project. Balthasar rarely, if ever, reflects at any length on difficult, concrete ethical situations." One can wonder if Balthasar's reluctance to ponder particular ethical dilemmas contributes not only to the ambivalent status of moral reasoning but also to the high and possibly excessive rhetoric with which he describes Christian love. We can easily fail to notice the important role that moral reasoning plays in helping us discern the good if we avoid perplexing and "messy" ethical situations. Balthasar complains that as the Christian draws away from the ideal, the command to love "disintegrates into a multiplicity of individual commandments that function separately according to the situation we find ourselves in." And at another point, he tells us:

> The finite limits of human existence seem to be a permanent justification for the finite limits of love—and since life as a whole cannot be explained in terms of love, love withdraws into little islands of mutual sympathy: of eros, of friendship, of patriotism, even a certain universal love based on the nature common to all men . . .

Oddly, Balthasar states this as a criticism of one view of Christian love and seems to ignore the truth of the position: Christian love will always be a "compromised" love, not sinful or un-Christlike, but qual¬ified by the finite limits of human existence and our incapacity to respond to all the needs before us. Our responses will sometimes lead to someone getting hurt—someone we want to help, who "deserves" our help, and who in an ideal world would receive our help. As Stanley Hauerwas states, "Our moral lives are not made up of situations where asking the question of love always makes ethical sense. . . . For the question is not 'to hurt or not to hurt,' but when to hurt with justice." Choices have to be made, and sometimes at least, perhaps more often than Balthasar's thought implies, Christians make those choices primarily, even solely, on a reasoned consideration of the situation before them.

Balthasar's ethics, Steck argues, has resources to respond to this chal¬lenge without undermining its systematic commitments. Steck indicates some of those resources in this study. For example, we can say that Balthasar advances an aesthetic "rationalism"—not so much discursive reasoning about the options at hand as a creative imagining of the sit¬uation in light of the considered goods and values at stake. In addition, there is a reasoning that takes place within the Christian community, united through the ministry of the church's leadership, as together the community discerns the Spirit's guidance. There is room in Bal¬thasar for moral reasoning, but because of the almost total lack of dis¬cussion in Balthasar's works of concrete issues, it is difficult to know exactly how Balthasar might understand moral reasoning or how great a role he would allow it.

Perhaps this is the complaint of one whose vision is too earthbound. Yet Steck argues Balthasar's thought is committed to the idea that God approaches and seeks a response even from those (many) whose eyes still see dimly. They (we!) too are invited up to the stage, and their imperfect moral reasoning will help them know how to play their parts. Balthasar's eschatology emphasizes the "already" and not so much the "not yet," and perhaps this leads him to highlight the non-discursive (mystical) element of the Christian moral knowing.

This imbalance, if indeed it is an imbalance, does not strike a serious blow against Balthasar's ethical framework or his fundamental interpretation of the moral life. His ethics is a profound and inspiring reading of the ethical life in the context of the Christian surrender of faith. It also offers, I have tried to argue, a decidedly Catholic approach to themes traditionally associated with other Christian communities, and thus can contribute to the complex ecumenical discus¬sion of the nature of the Christian life.

The theory of the Christian life that emerges in the above lacks the ordered tidiness associated with good theories. There is no formula which draws the vertical and horizontal together into a systematic relationship and which would then allow us to progress straightforwardly from the intrahorizontal claims of our finite existence to a claim about what the personal God of Jesus Christ is calling us to do in this moment. But Balthasar's theological aesthetics proscribes just such a move. There can be no human anticipation of God's appearing glory; nor can there be a neat closure to our grasp of it. The principle applies to all the theological sciences. If we are right to inscribe the moral life within the faith response, then the principle must likewise govern our ethical reflections. The deeper justification, then, of the indeterminacy of the moral life is not anthropological (i.e., the ethical uniqueness of the person) but theological. Christian perception does not bring the God who irradiates our moral horizon into sharp "focus." Like the rest of the theological sciences, ethics too must put aside the goal of gaining a mastery of God's glory and approach the revealed mystery humbly and on bended knee.

Steck explores particularly well how von Balthasar's dynamic Trinitarianism shapes his account of human action and ethics. He also does a good job of showing how von Balthasar's theo-dramatic ethics is distinctly Christological and ecclesial, specific and yet also has implications for the wider world that avoid the problems of some versions of natural law theory and the like.

I am convinced that von Balthasar is becoming one of the most important figures in contemporary theology, though true attention to his work has come far later than it deserved. Steck provides an excellent guide to von Balthasar's ethical thought. The only possible weakness is that Steck does not engage with the third volume of von Balthasar's trilogy, the Theo-Logic in any sustained manner. This volume has only recently been translated, which may account for this. I highly recommend this book for anyone interested in ethics, and particularly those interested in the theology of von Balthasar. <>

THE SYSTEMATIC THOUGHT OF VON BALTHASAR: AN IRENAEAN RETRIEVAL by Kevin Mongrain [Herder & Herder, 9780824519278]

Is there a single driving force unifying the diverse writings of Hans Urs von Balthasar? Kevin Mongrain points to von Balthasar's retrieval of Irenaeus of Lyons. In Irenaeus, von Balthasar found inspiration for a genuinely Christian theology that resists the recurring danger of gnosticism while honoring the Mystery of God.

Review

"This comprehensive, erudite, and sophisticated study is one of the best published works on the subject in any language." -- *Cyril J. O'Regan, Univ. of Notre Dame*

"This important study is, as far as I know, the best comprehensive account of von Balthasar's thought in any language." -- *George Lindbeck, Professor Emeritus, Yale University*

***

In 1984 John Paul II bestowed on Balthasar the prestigious International Paul VI Prize, and then, in 1988, named him a cardinal. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s he received numerous awards and honorary degrees from several Catholic universities in Europe and America. Nevertheless, the mainstream theological academy has been slow to engage his works in serious study. As David Tracy observed over twenty-five years ago, Balthasar's proposals received a "stunningly silent response" from his theological contemporaries. It is remarkably difficult to interpret the exact motives for this "stunningly silent response." As Tracy's point suggests, theologians did not write about Balthasar, not even to fault or chastise him. Hence we can only guess at the reasons why he was ignored. There are several possibilities. First of all, his central proposals were not widely known in the English-speaking theological academy because most of his books were not translated.

At the time of his death only about a quarter of his trilogy had been translated into English. Several of his shorter books and essays were available in translation, but they gave only a fragmentary picture of his complex theology. Second, he wrote too much to be assimilated during his lifetime. He produced an absurdly massive body of writings—he published tens of thousands of pages of text—which displays such a vast range of scholarly interests that the central point often becomes submerged. His vertigo-inducing level of erudition does not easily yield anything as straightforward as a core thesis or a self-evident thread of logic. De Lubac praised him as "perhaps the most cultivated man of his time." This was certainly meant as a compliment, but it was precisely his highly cultivated, omnivorous intellect that prevented him from communicating his best theological ideas clearly and directly. Moreover, because he was an independent scholar who never earned a doctorate in theology or held a university professorship, Balthasar did not have a cadre of graduate students to explain and defend his theological system in the theological academy. During his life only a small number of Catholic theologians took on the challenging task of working through his dauntingly immense works.

Third, although it is impossible to make certain claims on this matter, it seems reasonable to assume that, given the general unpopularity within the theological academy of the positions Balthasar took on

certain controversial issues, there might have been an unspoken consensus among some Catholic academic theologians that he had betrayed the reformist cause which he had espoused before Vatican II, and that he was now too "conservative" to bother reading. In addition to his apparently "traditionalist" interest in retrieving premodern theologians, after the Council he began writing books and essays stridently opposing many "progressive" causes in the church. For example, he suggested there were anti-Catholic ideological motives behind such popular causes as liberation theology and ecumenism among world religions. Moreover, he sided with the Vatican in opposition to women's ordination, artificial contraception, and optional clerical celibacy. In arguing his positions on all these issues he sometimes demonstrated self-righteous contempt for theological opinions different from his own; when his intellectual advice was not heeded, he could be a nasty and bitter polemicist. Suspicion of his ideas only grew as self-styled "conservatives" nostalgic for Tridentine Catholicism appropriated Balthasar as an intellectual champion of their causes. His image as a reactionary was also fostered by the fact that most of the English translations of his books were published by a company whose catalogue is filled with books written by theologically, politically, and culturally conservative Catholics.

In the fifteen years since Balthasar's death, most of his trilogy was translated into English, and several fine expository studies of his work have appeared. These studies tend to be primarily exegetical and descriptive overviews of his work. Nevertheless they represent an important step forward in Balthasar studies. These studies make it obvious that his thought is far too intellectually complex and theologically sophisticated to classify simplistically according to the partisan labels of postconciliar Catholicism. The virtue of these expository studies, however, is also their vice. They limit their scholarly usefulness by either presenting a pastiche of themes from Balthasar's work or by simply describing sequentially the contents of his trilogy. Their failure to rank themes according to a hierarchy of importance and then to systematically analyze the whole in light of this hierarchy is a major flaw. Failure to identify the dominant themes in his theology that conceptually regulate the entire system make it impossible to raise critical questions about its overall coherence, internal consistency, and rhetorical balance.

Fortunately a new, critical phase of Balthasar studies is underway. This new phase is analytical in the sense that it attempts to make decisions about Balthasar's conceptual priorities, regulative themes, and privileged theological, philosophical, and literary sources. These decisions allow for the possibility of an internal critique that evaluates Balthasar's thought on its own terms. Several Balthasar scholars are already moving Catholic theology in this direction with impressive results. Of course, not all attempts at internal critique are equally successful. Success in such an endeavor depends on the degree to which one's analysis of the whole is accurate. Many attempts at internal critique fail to persuade because their analyses either overlook or misunderstand the core theological commitments animating Balthasar's intellectual project. At the risk of overgeneralization, Mongrain classifies the erroneous interpretations into two basic sets.

The first set of erroneous interpretations claims that Balthasar's theological system is monistic, and the second set claims that it is dualistic. Those who assert the former tend to read his theology as being primarily committed either to the totalizing circle of Plotinus's exitus reditus metaphysics, or to the monological system of Hegel's pan-theistic-trinitarian theory of history. In either case this type of interpretation can only maintain its claim that Balthasar's theology is monistic by explaining away a large amount of textual data. As Mongrain argues throughout this book, there are many passages in which he contrasts his theology with Plotinian and Hegelian systems and asserts an irreducible difference between

God and world, eternity and time, infinity and finitude, the trinitarian persons, human persons and human communities, Christian and non-Christian, male and female, and so on. For the monistic interpreters, doing an internal critique means systematically reading all of Balthasar's claims for difference either as signifying only that difference has a provisional status before the eschaton or as the presence of a dissembling rhetoric that must be expunged from his theology before it can make sense.

Those who assert that Balthasar's theology is primarily committed to dualism tend not to expunge data from his writings to frame their argument for internal coherence. But like the monistic interpreters, their starting point is the assumption that Balthasar's theology is mired in Neoplatonic assumptions. In this case, however, "Neoplatonic" means not speculative monism but static Gnostic dichotomies between matter and spirit, time and eternity, body and soul, individual and community, reason and faith, earth and heaven, and so on. In this interpretation internal critique means the process of demonstrating how consistently Balthasar's dualism leads him into asserting difference and then reneging on his assertion by collapsing one pole into the other. Hence these interpreters frequently assert that his thought "minimizes" or "fails to do justice to" some essential theological theme. In some cases those who argue this case grant that Balthasar's intentions are profoundly antidualistic. They might even acknowledge that he intends to affirm the sacramental potential of matter, the spiritual aspects of bodily existence, the centrality of faith to human reason, the inescapably dramatic nature of salvation history, the inevitably political mission of the church, the indispensability of community in the development of the self, the real autonomy of earth in its interrelation to heaven, and the complementarity of the different genders. Yet when these interpreters grant these points, they usually then add that that there is a dichotomous logic driving his system that is incongruent with his good intentions. Balthasar subverts his own intellectual goals, the argument goes, because he is simply too fascinated by Gnostic mysticism, too obsessed with the apolitical piety of private, individual souls, too fixated on the interior life of the eternal Trinity, and too concerned with the timeless life of heaven above the temporal earth. Some authors soften the critique by avoiding the claim that his theology actually is dualistic, and instead assert only that his theology "risks" or is in "danger" of falling into some kind of dualism. Analyses that assert dualism yield internal critiques that present his theology as a confused, crypto-Jansenism. It can only be salvaged by radically rewriting it to inject the balanced perspective it cannot generate internally.

The aim of this book is to offer a different analysis of von Balthasar, that, in turn, yields a different internal critique. In other words, the aim is to understand how von Balthasar's mind works, and thereby create the possibility of evaluating his theological claims by his own standards. The working assumption of Mongrain’s analysis is that de Lubac's theology is the general source of the internal logic in von Balthasar's theology in the sense that it determines his conceptual priorities, regulative themes, and privileged theological, philosophical, and literary sources. His assimilation of de Lubac's belief that the pedagogical mission of the church in history is to train humanity in the monotheistic-sacramental paradox accounts for both the wide-frame perspective noticed by the monistic interpretation and the binary tendency noticed by the dualistic interpretation. Mongrain thesis is that Balthasar came to see Irenaeus of Lyons's theology of the mutual glorification of God and humanity in Christ as the best articulation of the theological vision presented by de Lubac. Irenaeus, read through de Lubac's lens, therefore became von Balthasar's primary critical resource from the patristic archive for reforming contemporary Catholic theology and challenging various modern intellectual movements in theology, culture, and politics.

Mongrain thesis is limited in two ways. First, he is not attempting to demonstrate that Balthasar's theology is in fact Irenaean. That claim would require a comparative analysis of Balthasar and Irenaeus's texts. Rather, Mongrain is arguing that Balthasar thinks his theology is Irenaean. In other words, he consciously identifies Irenaeus's thought as the purest expression of the patristic consensus and builds the theology of his trilogy around it. Mongrain is not concerned with the question of whether his reading of Irenaeus is accurate or idiosyncratic. Mongrain's method will be to examine what Balthasar explicitly claims about Irenaeus's theology in several of his texts, and then, focusing primarily on his trilogy, analyze how these claims closely match what he argues in his own voice about theological norms and the criteria for measuring theological deviance from them. Second, my thesis is limited by my distinction between the internal logic of Balthasar's theology, on one hand, and his philosophical theology of logic, on the other hand. Focus on the latter would involve a close study of the three volumes that constitute the third part of his trilogy, Theologik. My interest in the internal logic of his theology, however, is broader and more general than the philosophical theology of logic presented in Theologik. I contend that Balthasar advocates something that can be referred to as "doxa-logic," which is for him a normative theological discourse that can function as a corrective for some trends in contemporary theology. In making this argument, however, my point is that Balthasar advocates a distinctive theological style with certain definite conceptual priorities, regulative themes, and privileged sources from the Christian tradition.

Reading Balthasar's theology as an attempted retrieval of Irenaeus and an advocacy of a particular set of theological norms can provide an extremely useful hermeneutic resource for identifying the elements of incoherence, inconsistency, and, possibly, heterodox rhetoric in his thought. Several commentators have noticed Balthasar's interest in Irenaeus, but few treat this interest as anything more than an expres¬sion of his interest in patristic theology in general, and none treats it as a resource for internal critique. This is unfortunate because an Irenaeus reading of Balthasar can redeem the most salient aspects of many of the various criticisms of his work that have been offered, particularly those that detect Gnosticism in some of his ideas. Mongrain's goal is to open the possibility of internal critique, and in the concluding chapter Mongrain suggests a few lines it might take.

The method of Mongrain's analysis differs from the general practice used by the expository scholars. Most of these studies read the trilogy sequentially, arguing that his theological aesthetics (beauty), theodramatics (goodness), and theologic (truth) ought to be read as a linear progression. Balthasar chose this ordering of the transcendentals as a conscious challenge to the ordering of Kant's trilogy (reason, ethics, aesthetics), and therefore it ought to be respected. This is a valid point, but its merit is limited. First, the three parts of the trilogy are not pure discussions of beauty, goodness, or truth. Each part does accent one of the transcendentals, but each covers the others in great detail as well. Second, von Balthasar himself insisted that he was not presenting a rigidly systematic account of the transcendentals. In volume one of Theologic he writes,

> The circumincession of the transcendentals suggests the necessity of, and therefore excuses, a new discussion of issues that, at least in part, we have treated in the previous panels of our triptych. After all, there is simply no way to do theology except by repeatedly circling around what is, in fact, always the same totality looked at from different angles. To parcel up theology into isolated tracts is by definition to destroy it.

Mongrain takes him at his word on this point. There is a great deal of repetition, with various nuances, throughout the trilogy. Therefore Mongrain ranges around the trilogy to discuss a series of interconnected theological themes. Mongrain's argument that Balthasar understood his project primarily as a retrieval of Irenaeus determines the structure of Mongrain's analysis. Mongrain makes a detailed argument that Irenaeus--or Balthasar's reading of Irenaeus--should to be considered a major influence upon Balthasar, giving a basic theological structure to Balthasar's thought.

Mongrain argues that Balthasar reads all other theologians, for or against, according to the measure he derives from Irenaeus. One could also argue that it is John the Evangelist, not Irenaeus, who gives the basic vision to Balthasar's thought. Still, I admit that Mongrain has a strong point in showing the ways that Balthasar follows Irenaeus' anti-Maricion and anti-Gnostic thought (Mongrain, like Balthasar and Irenaeus himself, tends to conflate them in unhelpful ways). It is possible to still assert Johannine priority and account for the very important anti-Marcionist and anti-Gnostic aspects of Balthasar's thought. In any case, Mongrain's argument is certainly worth taking seriously and should not be dismissed.

This book is highly recommended both for those beginning their explorations of Balthasar and for those who have already been reading him. It will inform the new-comers and challenge those who already read Balthasar to read him in a new light. <>

METHOD AND MYSTICISM: COSMOS, NATURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISLAMIC MYSTICISM by Seyyed Shahabeddin Mesbahi [Fons Vitae, 9781891785863]

In this pioneering work, Seyyed Shahabeddin Mesbahi offers a new methodology for approaching Islamic mystical concepts by examining the importance, place, and manifestation of the concepts of cosmos, nature, and environment in Islamic mysticism. The study presents a framework for understanding the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of these concepts, within selected stations (maqamat of the mystical path tariqa), and how, in a reciprocal interaction, they weave a "symbiotic whole." This work also reexamines the concept of "mystical experience" with regards to the Islamic mystics' approach toward the concepts of cosmos, nature, and environment, especially in the thoughts of great masters, such as Hallaj, Bayazid Bastami, Ghazali, Ruzbihan Baqli Shirazi, Ibn 'Arabi, Rumi, and Mulla Sadra.

Review

"Islamic mysticism, most of which is crystallized in Sufism, possesses both an active and a passive aspect, both a preparing oneself to 'wait upon God' and a journey with one's whole being to Him. Therefore, in its totality it involves a method—in both a philosophical and a practical sense—a method that is, in fact, central to Sufism and gnosis or 'irfān. It is this nexus between method and mysticism . . . that constitutes the theme of this short but important work." —Seyyed Hossein Nasr, University Professor of Islamic Studies, George Washington University
"This book presents a new paradigm and creative approach to the study of Islamic spirituality. . . . This very important book . . . is an original and welcome addition to the contemporary scholarship on Islamic mysticism." —Mohammad H. Faghfoory, department of religion, George Washington University

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Towards a Methodology in Approaching Islamic Mysticism

The issues of nature, the environment and the cosmos as a whole are of increasing concern not only to environmentalists, but to the general public, and to scholars, policy-makers, and theologians alike. In this regard, Islamic scholars have not remained aloof from discussions or debates over these issues. In fact, within the Islamic mystical tradition, these concepts are repeatedly alluded to and form part of the core of the mystical experience. Their elevation in the Islamic mystical tradition fosters an attitude that surpasses respect for the concepts in and of themselves, and views them as manifestations of the Absolute.

The work at hand intends to elaborate on the concepts of cosmos, nature and environment in Islamic mysticism. Despite the extensive studies on cosmos, nature and the environment, there is an evident gap in the literature dealing with these concepts from a mystical perspective. While the manuscript will utilize these and other existing scholarly works, it will rely primarily on original sources, namely the Qur'an and the works of Islamic mystics.

In addition to a dearth of scholarship, we also face methodological problems and limitations in that conventional and prevailing methodology prevents an in depth study of religious "experiences" in general, and mystical experiences in particular. Here, we should address shortly a general misapplication of the concept of "experience" among some contemporary scholars of religious studies.

This misapplication, in my view, is the general result of employing the Hobbesian approach to "experience," in the field of religious studies. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) wrote in *The Elements of Law:*

> The remembrance of the succession of one thing to another, that is, of what *antecedent,* and what *consequent,* and what *concomitant* is called an experi-ment...To have had many experiments, is that we call *experience,* which is nothing else but remembrance of what antecedents have been followed with what consequents...Experience concludeth nothing universally.'

Although a "Hobbesian definition of experience" (which I have termed the Hobbesian triangle) [Figure 1], could be a useful tool in its related social/political aspects, because of its mechanical nature (antecedent, consequent and concomitant), it may not be applied successfully and effectively as an approach to the religious, and especially mystical experience. An example of implementing this mechanical method of understanding can be found in Ninian Smart's approach to "religion and ideology" as world view analysis by applying the idea of *epoche*'. According to Smart,

> The *most important idea* in modern social science was that of *epoche*' or suspension of judgment. In other words, you suspend your own beliefs about others (whether that be culture, or group, or person) in order to make your description more realistic.

Smart then concludes,

> The study of *religions and ideologies* can be called world view analysis. In this way we try to depict the history and nature of the symbols and beliefs that have helped form the structure of human consciousness and society. *This is the heart of the modern study of religion.*'

The main paradox in Smart's observation springs from his dependence on *epoche*' as an essential accessory to construct a world view through observation of "religions and ideologies." Observation of "religions and ideologies" in the same container of dialectical inquiry, by itself contradicts the *epoche*'. In other words, despite all their differences such as roots, realms and doctrines, observation of these two in a homogenous position, shows that Smart did not apply the rule of *epoche*', i.e., the suspension of judgment, in order to reach a more realistic description of the subject.

Although, Smart does not point to the exact same origin for both "ideology and religion," his mechanical method in observing "religions and ideologies" both simultaneously *and* in the same category to reach a world view as if they were the product of the same origin, leads to the *desacralization* of religious traditions/experiences. As a result, a large expanse of religious experiences will be sliced into separate and disconnected *performances;* performances that are not recognized and dignified with respect to the characteristics and identity of the religious/mystical experiences. Suffice it to say that such experiences forfeit their organic religious/ mystical identity.

In contemporary scholarship on Islamic mysticism, one can recognize a lack of awareness of an organic identity *(huwiyah)* which is embedded in each mystical concept. This identity consists of numerous elements which cannot be elaborated in a one-dimensional approach. Each term, metaphor, or recorded saying of Sufi masters carries within itself affinities with different elements in the long tradition of Islamic

mysticism. Underestimating the coherent connections of these affinities and simply translating a mystical term would not shed light upon the organic identity of Islamic mystical concepts.

Mysticism utilizes its own language, terminologies and tenets to examine the place of cosmos, nature and the environment and provides us with a more comprehensive understanding of these concepts. Islamic mysticism *(`ilfetn)* provides us with the opportunity to observe and discover the presence of mystical metaphors and allegories and to unveil the very essence of the intermeshed physical and spiritual characteristics of nature, environment and cosmos. The concept of "experience" in Islamic mysticism, has an "organic" rather than a mechanical "identity." This identity needs to be elaborated with respect to its organic affinities and interconnectedness with its own concepts of "tradition" and "sanctity" as the main domain of Islamic mystical experience. This elaboration will be applied by introducing a new and organic approach which I have termed a "methodological triangle." <>

PIETY AND REBELLION: ESSAYS IN HASIDISM by Shaul Magid [New Perspectives in Post-Rabbinic Judaism, Academic Studies Press, 9781618117519]

PIETY AND REBELLION examines the span of the Hasidic textual tradition from its earliest phases to the 20th century. The essays collected in this volume focus on the tension between Hasidic fidelity to tradition and its rebellious attempt to push the devotional life beyond the borders of conventional religious practice. Many of the essays exhibit a comparative perspective deployed to better articulate the innovative spirit, and traditional challenges, Hasidism presents to the traditional Jewish world. **PIETY AND REBELLION** is an attempt to present Hasidism as one case whereby maximalist religion can yield a rebellious challenge to conventional conceptions of religious thought and practice.

Review

“One distinguishing element of the essays contained in this volume, and of Magid’s work more generally, is a willingness to engage in interpretive play at the intersections where Kabbalah and Hasidism converge. In addition to its eclectic quality, another feature that distinguishes **PIETY AND REBELLION** is the book’s bold autobiographical introduction. Here, Magid recounts his own captivating journey. It is the story of a restless intellectual, who, fashioning himself both an insider and an outsider, has sustained his soul on everything from macrobiotics and LSD to the yeshivas of Jerusalem, from the rabbinate to the Ivy League. … I find **PIETY AND REBELLION** to be a stimulating addition to the scholarship on Hasidism by one of its most energetic, creative, and politically engaged interpreters. There is much to praise in these studies, which are as varied as the variegated corpus of Hasidism itself.” —Jeremy Phillip Brown, McGill University, H-Judaic

“**PIETY AND REBELLION** is a superb collection of ten essays on Hasidism by Shaul Magid, one of the more daring and innovative interpreters of Jewish thought and cultural studies. The two parts of the book, early and later Hasidism, demonstrate the impressive range of the author’s command of primary and secondary material. Magid’s studies enrich our understanding of both the historical and the phenomenological contours of the pietism that emerged in Eastern Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and its repercussions in forms of American Jewish fundamentalism that evolved in

the twentieth century. Each of the essays is well documented, providing a myriad of avenues of research for future generations. In addition to the ten chapters, the author has provided a moving introduction in which he charts his way to neo-Hasidism, framed particularly in terms of the struggle with the matter of alterity, determining one's sense of identity in relation to the other and envisioning the possibility of living otherwise. I do not think it an exaggeration to say that the struggle with alterity informs many of the essays included in this volume. The charting of Magid's personal odyssey will surely be of great interest to potential readers and only adds luster to a very fine anthology of critical essays that shed light on the pious nature of rebellion and the rebellious nature of piety." —Elliot R. Wolfson, Marsha and Jay Glazer Endowed Chair in Jewish Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

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Alterity

Excerpt: For me, as a young secular Jew from the flesh-pots of the New York suburbs, from Jewish Workman Circle summer camp and a mixed-race public school where popular culture was all that was sacred, that is what Ilasidism and Hasidic life represented: the promise of alterity. Of course, I had never even heard the word "Hasidism" until I was at least ten or eleven and, even then, only in books. The word was never uttered at home. Perhaps It is more accurate to say, then, that as long as I can remember, alterity more generally was something that intrigued me, the notion of living or being "otherwise, as Levinas taught me many years later. I saw myself as different, hut not different enough to feel alienated, just different enough to feel like he suburban life I was experiencing was not all there was, and also was not enough. But being alienated was part of the counterculture I was reared in, so that alienation was itself that which produced cohesiveness.

It was in my teens when I first read Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and came to realize alterity was something people actually embodied. It was a short time between that first reading of Kerouac and when I drove off in my 1972 Volkswagen minibus on New Year's Eve 1977 that took me literally "on the road" to the mountains of New Mexico with no purpose other than to experience the feeling of being unbound, what I later came to know as the notion of "*lishma*": that wonderful experience where there is no place of arrival other than where you happen to stop at the end of the day. Of course, such freedom, even the possibility of such experiential liberation, is a privilege of a middle-class life with a safety net that was not fool-proof but strong enough so that you needn't worry that you would end up homeless and destitute with no one to call—the way Neal Cassidy ends up in flop houses on the Bowery or on the streets of Denver in On *the Road.* I did not have the courage to take it to that extreme but I played around the edges. Not exactly a hitchhiker with a credit card (there were plenty of those too) but certainly one with a phone number where people who loved you would likely answer, scold you, and then wire the necessary money to get you out of a jam. I remember some of those calls with both trepidation and gratitude. For some reason when I left home all my father gave me was a gas credit card, hoping, I assume, I would not run out of gas on some abandoned road on the fruited plain.

But the road to Jewish alterity for me began even earlier in my childhood, if only in my imagination. My paternal grandmother, an immigrant from the Pale of Settlement, used to take me on annual trips to places outside the bubble of New York. One year we visited what was then called "Amish country" in Pennsylvania. What struck me a child of the gilded suburbs was the simplicity—what the Amish call "plainness"—of their lives. It was perhaps my first real experience that it was possible to live "otherwise:' The smell of hay, the rural rolling green hills, shoofly pie (an Amish delicacy made of molasses and pie crust), and the horse-drawn carts offered a world I hadn't known existed. The second memory was during trips to visit relatives in Brooklyn. We would often take the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway which runs right under the hasidic enclave of Williamsburg. As a child I recall getting glimpses of h*asidim* stroll on the overpass as we sped by underneath wondering who they were and how they lived. I knew I was a Jew and they were Jews but I could not understand what tied us together. The connection between h*asidim* and the Amish, and Christianity, remained strong throughout my childhood and even into adulthood, when I discovered Thomas Merton and became enthralled with monastic Christianity, or when I published an essay on the Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder.

The door to Jewish alterity may have first appeared to me explicitly as a child of about ten or eleven when I read Chaim Potok's *My Name is Asher* Lev at the behest of my mother, whose suggestion was based on artistic talents that I exhibited as a burgeoning adolescent. At that time, and perhps until about 16, if I seriously thought about my future it was likely as a painter. Inadvertently, *Asher Lev* also introduced me to the strange **and** compelling world of Hasidism. But also, Hasidism as rebellion, not against the world but against itself. The final scene in the book, the ultimate moment of hasidic rebellion, was when Asher Lev, having already left his Hasidic world for the art world in Greenwich Village, paints a large crucifixm. And the man hanging on the cross is none other than his Hasidic father. Many years later I would publish a book, *Hasidism Incarnate,* and use Marc Chagall's "Yellow Crucifix" as the cover, having no recollection of that final scene in *Asher Lev* that was so arresting to me as a young boy.

This sense of Hasidism as alterity occurred to me, decades later, soon after I moved to Boro Park, Brooklyn, to study in *yeshivah* and begin my life us **a h***aredi* Jew. I was walking down a side street one evening in autumn and happened upon one of the many hasidic synagogues in the neighborhood. **On** the

outside wall there was a sign announcing a *shi'ur* (Torah class) by a well-known rabbi. In English and Yiddish the sign read: "Come hear this great sage, Mozei Shabbos, parshat Noah:' What struck me was not the rabbi, who I had never heard of, or even "Mozei Shabbos" which in Boro l'ark is simply Saturday night. What struck me was there was no date given except "parshat Noah:' I realized that in this world, time was marked not by t he English calendar and not even by the Jewish calendar but by the Torah reading that will be read in synagogue that week. All the Jews in Boro Park knew the date by the *parashah* of the week. A non-Jew passing by, or even a secular Jew from the outside, would not know the date of this lecture. There was an experience of alterity in that moment that was exhilarating. Time marked only by Torah—in the middle of New York City.

Macrobiotic New Mexico, the Holy Land, and the Holy

After a brief stint living in Albuquerque after dropping out of college in 1977, I moved north near Santa Fe, and I found myself living in a macrobiotic impromptu commune of sorts in the small hamlet called Galisteo, populated mostly by Native Americans, Mexicans, a few old timers, and hippies. It was in Santa Fe where I came to know Bill Rosenberg, a New York Jew who was a practicing acupuncturist and macrobiotic healer who had lived for a short time in Denver, where he came across Rahhi Shlonio Twersky, an iconoclastic hasidic rabbi who had attracted many *bablei teshuvah* to his small circle. The Twersky family rose to notoriety in Chernobyl in the late eighteenth century with a hasidic master Menahem Nahum Twersky. The dynasty then migrated to Tolne, Skvere, and other locales before set-tling in America and Palestine/Israel. In America one branch of the family settled in Milwaukee and then moved to cities like Pittsburgh and Boston. Rosenberg had touched Judaism lightly in those days, and being the only two Jews in our small circle we bonded and remain in touch to this day. Bill is now Ze'ev Rosenberg, an Orthodox Jew who teaches Eastern medicine at the Pacific College of Oriental Medicine in San Diego. Rosenberg played an important role for me because he gave me what was perhaps my first Jewish book in about 1977, a copy of the recently published *Fragments of a Future Scroll* by a rabbi named Zalman Schachter (later Schachter-Shalomi). A meandering hodgepodge of reflections, translations, and inspirational writing, *Fragments* was my first entry into the literary world of Hasidism , admittedly through a neo-hasidic lens. Studying macrobiotics and oriental medicine had primed me for what was to come, but it was *Fragments* that made me decide to take my minibus back east and make some money to visit the strange country called Israel that I knew nothing about.

I returned to Manhattan some time that spring. Working as a street messenger by day and a dishwasher in a macrobiotic restaurant by night and sleeping on a futon on the floor in my parents' modest Manhattan apartment, I soon saved enough to buy a one-way ticket to Israel with no definite plan to return. As a child I knew nothing about Israel. My family were Workman Circle people and much of what I knew about being Jewish came from attending the Workman Circle Camp Kinder Ring on Sylvan Lake, near Hopewell Junction, NY. We rarely if ever spoke about Israel, learned Yiddish and not Hebrew, and knew more about socialism than Zionism. So when I boarded the plane to Israel I carried no ideological baggage at all, something friends later have attributed to the ease with which I was able to adopt a leftist political stand on matters of Israeli politics and policies.

Over the course of a few months travelling alone and with some people I met on the way, I came upon a small group of young *yeshivah* students very much like myself, who happened to also be macrobiotic. On their prodding I attended a few classes in a run-down yet charming building that housed the Beit Joseph Novordok *yeshivah* on Shmuel ha-Navi Street in Jerusalem. The *yeshivah* where I was attending—

known as "Brovinders," led by an American rabbi, Chaim Brovinder—was renting space from the Novordok *yeshivah* which consisted of a few do/en seemingly ill adjusted pale-skinned students who seemed to conic straight out of a Roman Vishniac photograph. 'I he founder of this group was an ascetic man in Russia named R. Yosef Yuzel of Novordok (1847-1919), a by-product of the Mussar movement of R. Israel Salanter. Known for their ascetic practices and introverted piety, Novordokers were strange birds even in a fairly strange world. My most vivid memory of them was that fifteen minutes before *minkth* (the afternoon prayer recited at 1pm in many *yeshivot* before lunch) they would close their *gemaras* (talmudic tractates), gather in the front of the cavernous sanctuary, and engage in an act of collective crying. It was actually quite startling to witness a group of young men crying together, bemoaning their unworthiness and blemished selves, imperfect servants of God trying to stay away from the temptations that swarmed all around them. Many of us Americans smirked at such overt piety but I secretly admired it.

I began to attend classes in the *yeshivah* more frequently until I enrolled in time and moved in with the group of friends living in a small apartment in new H*aredi* neighborhood, Sanhedria Murkhevet, about a 20-minute walk from the *yeshivah.* Without realizing it I had become a *yeshivah* student, cut my hair, removed my earring, and delved into the bizarre and fascinating world of the Mishnah and Talmud. I came with no background in Hebrew and thus struggled massively during that period, but those around me were kind, helpful, and compassionate. In particular, Rabbi Brovinder become a mentor for me; his intellectual rigor and biting sense of humor kept us sane in a world that otherwise appeared like a parallel universe to many of us. He taught us how to "learn," how to think inside a talmudic *sugya,* and also how to not take ourselves too seriously, the last being the most challenging for many of us. In those years (the late 1970s) *the ba'al teshuvah* movement was still in its heyday, Jerusalem was an open city (walking through east Jerusalem at night was not something we worried about), Israel was cheap (it had not yet moved from the Lira to the Shekel), and private telephones were rare. We had no televisions, and radio was useless since we were not yet fluent in modern Hebrew. We felt blessedly cut off from our American roots and lived a kind of reflexive orientalist existence in a world that resembled that of our great-grandparents and not our parents. I smelled the fragrance of alterity in the multi-ethnic Jerusalem neighborhood of Bukharim where we hung around after classes ended, a neighborhood that housed both the austere Novordok *yeshivah* and the hedonistic Turkish baths. The four or five people I lived with became close friends. They were all students of some enigmatic and mysterious hasidic rabbi who lived in America named Dovid Din. They spoke with a rare combination of intimacy and reverence, telling stories about his intense pious behaviors, such as praying the morning service for three hours or his long daily immersions on the mikveh, and about his bad teeth. Tales of his brilliant Torah discourses that spanned the spectrum from the sixteenth-century kabbalistic teaching of Isaac Luria to the poetry of William Blake or the Sufi poet Rumi. He was also a strict macrobiotic. He had sent his "boys" (as he called them) to Jerusalem to become literate in Talmud and codes. Intrigued by these stories I became a kind of vicarious student to this unknown teacher, and after some time I realized I needed to meet him.

There were a variety of reasons I first left Jerusalem that spring but meeting Dovid was certainly one of them. Returning to Manhattan I had no immediate plans and spent some time studying shiatsu massage at the Shiatsu Center in Manhattan. I was also able to get the address of a place where Dovid was teaching in Brooklyn and made my way there to meet what for me had already become a mythic figure. My first memory of him is a bit vague. He was giving a class in an unaesthetic study house in Flatbush with oil-

cloth tablecloths and fluorescent lights. He was indeed an ethereal figure, almost transparent, dressed in Satmar-style hasidic garb (including stockings and knee-length pants) and wearing a scarf in the early summer. After the class I went to introduce myself. He seemed to recognize my name as my Jerusalem friends must have mentioned me, but he made no indication of any interest in who I was. Just another traveler passing through, he assumed. "Ah yes, I heard about you," he almost whispered. "*Shalom aleikhem,*" he said, and put out his white, bony, and very feminine hand.

I was resolute to make myself known to him and began attending meetings more frequently, befriending some of the misfits and vagabonds who often frequented his classes. It was a hasidic underworld of sorts, lost souls wandering the streets of lower Manhattan looking for some Jewish satori. Then there were a few middle-aged female university professors who saw something in Dovid that we didn't. A few of them became his benefactors. There were also some "normal" hasidic Jews who came as well, but they showed little interest in us and we had nothing really to say to them. In their world we were interlopers, Dovid serving as the bridge that each crossed with caution to meet the other. Even then those hasidic enclaves had an underbelly, those who occupied the margins, looking for something more than what their communities could offer…

The Hasidic Underground and Yeshivah Life

Life in Boro Park, Brooklyn, was a macabre experience of living in an alternative universe that was a subway ride away from a city that offered everything. I lived in a dilapidated house in a mixed hasidic and Hispanic neighborhood on the outskirts of Boro Park that Dovid had one lived in with his family before moving to the other side of Boro Park. They may have been evicted. One was never quite sure who was actually living in that house. Some of those I knew from Jerusalem had returned and then a variety of other stragglers, vagrants, hangers-on, or those simply travelling through inhabited that house at various times. If there was space on the floor we could accommodate one more. Both the hasidic and Hispanic neighbors were equally baffled as to who we were and what we were doing there. We were robbed many times, but the intruders eventually gave up because we had nothing worth stealing. One of the most memorable robberies happened while we were eating the third meal on Shabbat, singing hasidic *niggunim* together as the sky darkened. Little did we know that as we were singing, burglars had broken into a back room and stolen the backpack of someone who had just arrived from Jerusalem. The only thing of value, or that which we most lamented, were some tabs of LSD that were lost forever. I hope our Hispanic brothers and sisters had a nice trip.

I first began studying in a small study house in Crown Heights with a young Lubavitcheh*asid* named Baruch Wertzburger. I was contemplating moving to Crown Heights to attend Yeshivat Hadar Torah Chlabad seemed liked a logical choice as it was much more structured than the more diffuse world of Boro Park, mirroring the more disciplined and conformist world of CHabad and the more free-flowing world of Polish Hasidism. I even packed all my things in my small Mazda to move into the dorms in Crown Heights. I arrived late at night, parked my car on Eastern Parkway and spent the night in the *yeshivah* without unpacking. In the morning I walked around and decided it wasn't for me. So instead of unpacking my car I just pulled away and drove back to Boro Park. Habad Hasidism was compelling and uplifting, but there was something about the rebbe worship in Habad that turned me off. I attended numerous Farbrengens with the Lubavitcher rebbe and the intensity was enormous as he carried the room with his charisma, but day-to-day Crown Heights just seemed too cultish for me. Boro Park was more eclectic and more dysfunctional. I liked that. I continued coming to Crown Heights daily to

Wertzburger's small classes in Habad Hasidism, beginning with *Sefer ha-Tanya* and then reading through some of the present rebbe's *sibot.* My Hebrew was getting much better and I began to get the map of the terrain of Hasidic texts.

Eventually I needed a bigger *yeshivah* with more subjects of study. I stumbled upon a new *yeshivah* in Flatbush run by two *roshei yeshivah,* one a Lakewood-trained *rosh yeshivah* named R. Chaim Friedman, proficient in the Lithuanian style of learning, and the second a Satmar *basid* named R. Yizhak Ashkenazi. Here I spent a little more than two years really honing my skills in Gemara and *halakhah* and continued studying Hasidism and Kabbalah with Dovid and his circle (of which I had become by that time an inside member). Learning the Lithuanian method of Talmud by Rabbi Friedman and the broader rather than deep method popular among *hasi-dim* was illuminating. Rabbi Ashkenazi was perhaps the first person I met who really knew the entire Talmud by heart. He was from the Aleksander Hasidic dynasty—people referred to him as the Alekser Rebbe—and he set up a small Hasidic shul in the basement of his house. The Alekser dynasty was founded by R. Shraga Feivel of Gritsa, who was student of R. Yizhak Worka, a contemporary of R. Menahem Mendel of Kotzk. R. Ashkenazi's family had drifted to Satmar in America, but he retained the stature of Hasidic aristocracy and was viewed by others with reverence. *Hasidim* often wandering in the *yeshivah* to ask him questions or ask for money. He took a special liking to a few of us, especially me, perhaps because he knew Dovid and also saw I was heading in thehasidic direction, whereas most of my classmates were not. My clothing had become more and more Hasidic in style, I wore a black hat and suit and white shirt all the time, and unlike many others in the *yeshivah* I was interested in Hasidism. I was appointed his driver, mostly because I was the one who had a car and had the proper dress for the occasion. We spent many evenings traveling around Brooklyn and sometimes to New Jersey and Monsey, New York, a religious town in Rockland Country, to raise money (what is called *schnorring).* R. Ashkenazi was a master. On one occasion we sat at an ornate dining room table of a rich Jew in Monsey. Conversation ensued but the topic of money was never mentioned. Then at one point, the man took out a checkbook.... Without a break in the conversation R. Ashkenazi looked at the check and with no expression, slid it back to the gentlemen. The conversation continued. 'Ibis went on two or three times until R. Ashkenazi put the check with the "right" amount into his pocket. often we got up, shook hands, and left. That is how it is done.

One other person worth mentioning from that *yeshivah* was a rabbi named Yona Frankel, probably in his thirties, a modern Orthodox rabbi who lived in Long Beach, Long Island, but traveled every day to Boro Park lo teach *ba'alei teshuvah.* He viewed it as something wondrous, and I felt it was his kind of *pro Bono* for the cause of Torah. I studied Mishnah and 'la !mud with him for about a year, and his patience still remains with me. My most vivid memory of him was the time he asked me to drive him to deliver a *hespid* (eulogy) for an elderly woman who had died. We entered the chapel in the funeral home and I took a seat in the front and began psalms, which is the custom. R. Frankel began delivering a long and impassioned eulogy for this woman. At some point I turned my head to I lie audience behind me. There was only one woman sitting there, the dead woman's caretaker. The rest of the chapel was empty. R. Frankel had been delivering this passionate eulogy for this one woman, or maybe not even. I had never encountered such a person growing up.

At this time, my relationship with Dovid was deepening and I become one of his close disciples. I use the term "disciple" carefully, as that is what we were. He served as a rebbe and spiritual guide and we treated him as. We did constitute a "family" of sorts and, in retrospect, we probably would have met the

bar of being considered a cult, but we were so integrated into the h*aredi* community around us no one really noticed. Except one person.

In those days (the late 1970s) Aryeh Kaplan, who was already well known an Orthodox writer, lived on the outskirts of Boro Park. His books in Kabbalah had been published by Samuel Weiser, who owned a New Age press from Maine. This bothered some of the more conformist *haredim* in Boro Park, and thus I think Kaplan's decision to live on the margins of Boro Park was more than symbolic. An ultra-Orthodox Jew of Sephardic descent, who was a *ba'al teshuvah* himself, and once served as a rabbi in u Conservative synagogue (which in Boro Park is basically the same as a church), Kaplan decided to stay on the margins of that world. A deeply pious man, he would have an open house after Friday night dinner, and we sometimes walked there to listen to him. The neighborhood was not safe at night, and thus going to Kaplan's home itself required a modicum of *emunah* (faith). His dining room was adorned with a series of bizarre oil paintings. At some point, with no training as an artist, Kaplan decided to refrain from study for a year and devote himself to painting. After the year he stopped and never painted again. Those paintings were the product of his experiment.

He would gesture to someone to ask him a question about the weekly Torah portion and then he would just spin off of that for what seemed like hours (it probably wasn't). In any event, Kaplan emphatically did not like Dovid. It was a kind of fissure in the scene because there was a lot of overlap in those years between Dovid and Kaplan. Kaplan saw something in Dovid he didn't trust, but he didn't know what. We just never mentioned Dovid in Kaplan's presence. Many years later Kaplan's intuitions about Dovid turned out to be right. He was hiding something.

During this time, I began to integrate more into the *haredi* world even as we were always looked upon as different. But we were "walking the walk" so intensely, and seeing us at the mikveh at 5:30am on a freezing January morning before *davenning* made them respect us even as they probably would not allow us to marry their daughters. The quasi-monastic life we led was very conducive to me, and I began to feel like I was living like those Amish in Pennsylvania and the *hasidim* walking over the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway I had seen as a child. I felt like I had found some alterity. I was living "otherwise' I once got a phone call from a high school girlfriend. It happened to be Thanksgiving and she asked where I was eating Thanksgiving dinner. "Thanksgiving?" I responded. "Oh, I didn't know that:' I smiled at that remark. I had found a way off the grid. She later told me she thought I was living in a crack house in south Brooklyn. Who in America doesn't know it's Thanksgiving? Welcome to hasidic Boro Park

Hasidism opened itself to me as a textual tradition and a lived life simultaneously. I studied the texts and tried to live the life they professed, or expected. In the classic Augustinian sense, I took my return too far. I did not have the slight cynical edge many have who grow up in that world. Texts became an appendage: we carried them around (one always had a *sefer* with them in case they had a few minutes to open it), we read them on the subway, we spoke of them to friends in the street, at airports, on lines in supermarkets, at Shabbos tables. In those years I felt that studying Torah wasn't something we did, it was part of who we were. The line separating work from leisure did not exist. That itself was a kind of alterity. And yet we also lived it in subversive, countercultural ways. We allowed our past "hippie" lives a place at the table, as long as it played by the new rules. In that sense we had a secret from those around us. They had a right not to trust us. We were also interlopers, perhaps the worst kind, because we were offering different rendering of their world, which seemed like a previous render straight-looking

Orthodox Jews who had chosen the wrong kosher restaurant, a table of Hari Krishna folks, and next to them, black jazz musicians on a break from a gig a few blocks away talking Coltrane. The I. (under of the restaurant was Moshe Schlass, an ex-biker hippie who had Income a Lubavitcher *hasid,* who was a kind of master of ceremonies of the bizarre syncretism he loved. He eventually moved to the Old City of Jerusalem, where he lives today, and left the restaurant to his first wife, who ran it for another decade until she had a child late in life and sold it. The Caldron was the main hangout for many of us in those years. We would sit there drinking bancha tea for hours and talk, learn, just breathe in the vibe of the East Village. We felt part of the counterculture and we secretly liked that. It was there I first met Yossi Klein Halevi, who was a nrw-time member of Meir Kahane's Jewish Defense League and also part or the wider circle of Dovid's "boys:' who had started a hip newspaper ailed *The New Jewish Times.* The front page of the inaugural edition in the late 1970s had a split screen photo of people at a raucous punk rock show and Friday night *davenning* at the Bobov hasidic synagogue in Boro park—a study in comparative contrast. We felt like we were making a mark.

When I think about my exposure to hasidic texts, I realize the very notion of critical study of these texts was so foreign, so utterly odd in those days, that I never thought much about it. I suppose we had the typical insider's critique that those "scholars" could not really understand these texts, because a full understanding would require living the life, being "on the path," as they say. Decades later, as I have spent a good part of my academic career doing just that, I can still sense the difference, and there is still some small voice in me that says, "If you hadn't been *there* in some fashion, something would be missed here." I don't know if I believe it, and I also think those *there* miss something precisely because of that "thereness." In any case, I can, and do, study these texts in a variety of often contradictory ways. My own academic approach does not eschew the traditional approach in principle. In fact, in my work on Hasidism I try to show that, in many cases, the texts lend themselves to the undoing of the traditional ways of reading them. This is not to suggest I have unearthed any esoteric meaning or have disclosed any essential nature of Hasidism. Rather, it is to suggest that the texts themselves contain multivalent layers and the lens one chooses to use as a reader can yield a variety of results that the texts themselves can sustain, even though in some cases those readings may stand in contradiction to one another. Here deconstruction has served me as a useful tool. My own allergy to normative readings of these texts comes in part because at a certain time in my life I was convinced that was the only way to read them. In that sense, my readings are products of my own internal battle with normativity and innovation.

Even during my years in Boro Park and *haredi* Jerusalem these texts we studied often seemed to some of us to rub against the grain of the world that used them as a template for life and practice. Perhaps that is because some of our teachers, like Dovid and Aryeh Kaplan, were teaching these texts in quite iconoclastic ways, not necessary by choice but by design. Neither had received the tradition from the inside alone, each came to it from the outside and then, gaining literacy in the tradition, began to teach themselves. Kaplan was much more adept textually and also more conservative, albeit not as pious, as Dovid. But in general, what was happening among the sub-cultural Boro Park *ba'alei teshvah hasidim* was a syncretistic exercise under the auspices of haredism. We were living the life, in many ways more fully than our hasidic neighbors, and we were spending the thousands of hours in study required to get our credentials. But we were a subculture. And although we would have denied it then, we were forming a new kind of neo-Hasidism.

This "movement" was being fed by Zalman Schachter, Shlomo Carlebach, the Diaspora Yeshiva Band, Habad, Bratslav, and the orientalist veneration of Eastern Europe. We knew about Buber, Heschel, Gershom Scholem, and even Joseph Soloveitchik—but they didn't interest us that much. We felt we were in the belly of the beast, and their writings were for outsiders: they were modern, they were not countercultural enough. We would rather just study the hasidic texts they were studying and skip the scholars as intermediaries. We had no idea that they had value as more than interpreters of wisdom. Years later, I learned how wrong I was.

The Enigma of Over-Belief

Life with Dovid was hard. Besides being obstinate and stubborn, he moved **very** slowly and deliberately, and he demanded others do so as well. Thus being with him meant slowing down your body clock. He also had a bizarre lack of fear. I recall walking or driving with him on Houston Street in Manhattan late at night after classes he gave at the Charles Street Synagogue in the West Village in the early 1980s. Dovid would often ask me to pull over and wait for him as he got out of the car to give a wino or a junkie on the street all the money he had. Or being stopped at a red light by a panhandler and Dovid rolling down the window and handing him a $20 hill he got for his class as a donation. In those downtown neighborhoods, where we would go late at night to vegetable stands in Little Italy, Dovid was known by the winos and junkies as the "The Rabbi" because he would always give them money. Dovid was always on welfare, food stamps, etc.; he was real mendicant Jew, claiming his work was serving God. He wore black stockings and a long coat in the style of some hasidic Jews, and once when waiting on line at the Welfare Office, two black women on line ahead of him saw him, and one said to the other, "Girl, let that dude ahead of you in line. Look, the dude is so poor he ain't even got no pants!"

Davenning with Dovid could be uplifting and it could be maddening. He had a monastic cadence and took hours. Literally. And we all recited every-

thing together in a kind of Tibetan or maybe closer to a Gregorian chant. Dovid had an amazing capacity for concentration and focus. Maybe more than I have ever witnessed. If you were able to tune into that wavelength it was exhilarating. If you were in a hurry, you felt like jumping out of the window.

We were once travelling together back from Israel to New York. We had an early morning flight and thus had to *daven* at Ben Gurion airport. Dovid refused to quicken his pace at all. It turned out the flight had almost comleted boarding and he was still ending his *davenning*. I urged him to take off his tefillin and finish on the plane. He refused. By the time we arrived at the gate the attendant told us the gate was closed. I pleaded, and the woman finally agreed and let us go to the tarmac. A bus came to pick us up to bring us to the plane. When we arrived, security was standing in front of the steps to the plane and directed the driver not to open the door. On our way down I heard the woman upstairs complain to security that two hasidic Jews refused to finish their prayers and thus held up the flight. The plane door closed and we were driven back to the gate. I was furious. Dovid had no emotion whatsoever. He looked incredulous when I began to complain to him. "For something like this you are losing your temper?" Either the world conformed to his dictates or he gladly suffered the consequences.

We were redirected to a flight through Paris. When we arrived in Paris we found out there was an airport strike and no planes were departing. We had little money. We spent two days and two nights in the Paris airport drinking only water and eating only the peanuts that we had with us. Dovid refused to

eat anything else because of *kashrut.* I was his disciple and I went along with his requests. But I was not happy about it. In those moments I felt like I had entered into the hasidic tales we read. Texts and life merged into one annoying mix. I learned that alterity has another side, that the extremism I romanticized often didn't take others into account, that piety too often trumped others who got in the way. It was an important lesson.

Learning with Dovid was both arduous and exhilarating. And here I think my initial understanding of Hasidism becomes apparent. The texts were not to be read, but one had to *make* Hasidism out of the Hasidism (and here I think Dovid was a master, even as he often read the texts wrong). That is, the texts were portals of ideas that one could read and explain and then do to them what they have just done to the tradition. I think Buber understood that better than Scholem. Scholem wanted to know what the texts said; Buber was interested in how they provide a template for how to think about serving God. Buber was not compelling for me at this early stage, because he was so intent on finding the essence he let external acts of piety through devotion dissipate. Buber wanted to create something really new. We were deeply enmeshed in the romanticism of the old. It was only years later that I began to see how deeply Buber understood this material. But secretly we too did not accept the old readings, and Dovid was offering something new—except his resistance to the tradition didn't go left but right. It was not that traditional norms demanded too much; it was that they did not demand enough. The kind of antinomianism of Buber became for Dovid a hypernomianism. *Halakhah* was just the beginning. He essentially became a Jewish monk (he was married and had a family but his devotional life was monastic). He answered Buber's move outward by a move inward to achieve a similar cod, in my view. Buber would have understood Dovid more than Scholem would have.

Povid didn't know Hebrew nearly as well as he thought he did. He knew it well enough; he could read Hebrew texts and explain them (often hIs pronouncing words but getting the meaning right). Many people who not from a traditional upbringing used to complain about Dovid's misprounciations but were compelled enough by the content of what he said returned again and again. In any case, what the text was, or what the text and, took on more meaning once he began to expound on them. At that time the text became superfluous. In retrospect, some of it was second-rate New Ageism, but Dovid was really a poet by nature, and his use of language rind imagery and his general education in the Humanities (he dropped out of college his senior year but had a Dylanesque ear for the poetic) enabled him to bring Nahman of Bratslav to life as if he was in conversation with Walt Whitman. Or Isaac Luria as if he were sitting with Rumi or Ibn Arabi. It was an interesting exercise. It's not that he actually quoted any of these non-Jewish sources very often. It is, rather, that his rendering of the texts we were reading were given a universal spiritualist appeal that spoke beyond the confines of their world. It was this unspoken synthesis that I think drew many of us to him; it enabled us to retain a part of the world we came from and not become swallowed up into a h*aredi* world that was often not very pious. And not very interesting, and certainly did not have the aesthetic ear many of us thought, or hoped, Judaism possessed. Most of the h*asidim we* lived amongst were just ordinary people who happen to be born into a particular community. Some of them were indeed true gems of piety and devotion but they were the exceptions. And we knew that.

We envisioned Dovid as a leader of a kind of New Age hasidic syncretistic Judaism that could be both ultra-Orthodox and spiritually open. Ray Abraham Isaac ha-Kohen Kook coined the phrase "behaviorally constricted and thoughtfully expansive." We never studied Kook, because Kook was a Zionist and

Dovid identified more with the anti-Zionist Neturei Karta or Satmar types. Had Dovid read Ray Kook, stripped of his Zionism, he would have liked him.

Dovid attended many ecumenical retreats and spoke as easily with a Buddhist monk as with a Trappist novice. His justification was always that it is "*kiruv,*" finding wayward Jews to bring them back to Judaism. But in retrospect, I think he needed to get out of the h*aredi* world he inhabited. He was far more critical of that world than he let us believe, but because they were largely clueless of what he was up to, and they provided a perfect place to hide, he remained part of that community. Looking back, I think my interest in comparative readings of hasidic texts with Christianity probably came from Dovid's spiritual ecumenicism that he got, in part, from Zalman Schachter years before. Dovid had worked for Zalman as a personal secretary when Zalman taught at the university in Winnipeg in the mid-1960s. After many of us left him in the mid-1980s Dovid began studying Christian theology with Ewert Cousins at Fordham University. Many years after Dovid died I inherited a few boxes of books on early Christianity and Gnosticism from the Fordham University library that were decades overdue. I still have some of them.

In those years a group of about eight of us lived in either Boro Park or Jerusalem. We usually had apartments in both places, and different combinations lived in either place. We were constantly going back and forth. One of the Boro Park houses was an old decrepit house on 42nd street off 10th avenue, on the outskirts of Boro Park in a mostly Latino neighborhood. Besides those of us who were permanent residents, that is, our names were on the lease, the house was consistently inhabited by a variety of vagrants, misfits, and all manner of h*aredi* and *quasi-haredi* riffraff One guy who looked a like one of Fagan's boys from *Oliver Twist* always rode around in a wheelchair (that he did not need), wearing fingerless gloves, terrorizing hasidic locals. Another was so OCD that we found him late at night one Friday night in the middle of a side street in Boro Park. He would not move because he noticed a piece of lint of his coat and, since one is not permitted to carry on Shabbat (Boro Park has no *eruv* that would permit carrying), he thought he could not continue walking without "carrying" the piece of lint. And he could not brush it off because it was "*muksa*" (something that one cannot touch on Shabbat because it has no use). He was determined to stand there until Shabbat ended twenty hours later! It took us a full 30 minutes to convince him he was permitted to walk home with the lint on his coat. There are many other such bizarre incidents, but this suffices to give you a sense of the world I'd entered into.

Aliyah and Kabbalah

I finally moved to Jerusalem permanently in 1981. In part it was to break from Dovid and in part to settle into a more conventional *baredi* life in the Holy Land. I had no Zionist affiliations or aspirations whatsoever. I lived in a small apartment in the Old City of Jerusalem with a close friend without any electricity or hot water. We didn't pay the bill and they shut off the utiliiies, and we realized we didn't really need **t**hem. We went to sleep when it and dark and awoke around 4 am to go to the mikveh and then *daven* with a sunrise *(vatikin)* at the kotel every morning. We lived downstairs from a kabbalist named R. Mordecai Sheinberger who had a kabbalistic *yeshivah, Kul* Yehuda, in the Old City. R. Sheinberger was from the Ashlag school of ibalah. Yehuda Ashlag (1885-1954) was a Polish kabbalist who moved Jerusalem in 1922. He was somewhat of an iconoclast and is mostly well known for his commentary to the Zohar entitled *Ha-Sulam* (The Ladder). I le also published a popular book called *Talmud Eser Sefirot (On the len Sefirot)* that became popular among Phillip Berg and The Kabbalah Centre people (Berg was a student of R. Yehuda Zvi Brandwein, a student Ashlag). Dovid often used that book in some of his classes. We used to eat Shabbat dinner at the Sheinberger's every Shabbat, a beautiful but

very poor family with many children. My roommate Baruch Gartner, now a well-known teacher of Hasidism in Jerusalem, and I asked R. Sheinberger to teach us. He said his schedule was very busy but if we woke him up at lam he would study with us until it was time for the morning *davenning*. So about four nights a week we would walk up one flight of stairs and lightly knock on his door at 2am and he would answer in a bathrobe and we would sit and study Zohar and Ashlag for a few hours. We did this through one entire winter.

I later studied Lurianic Kabbalah with R. Mordecai Attiah, a Syrian kabbalist from the Shalom Sharabi tradition who was very antagonistic toward Sheinberger and the Ashlag school. The original Sharabi (1720-1777) was **a** Yemenite kabbalist who immigrated to Palestine, where he founded the Beit El *yeshivah* in the Old City. The *yeshivah* building still stands, but the *yeshivah* moved to the Zikhron Moshe neighborhood at some point. He was one of the most celebrated kabbalists of the Lurianic school and composed the first comprehensive *siddur* with mystical intentions according to teaching. His tradition lives on today in Nahar Shalom *yeshivah* in the Nahla'ot neighborhood on Jerusalem that was led, when I was there in the 1980s, by R. Mordecai Sharabi (no relation to Shalom Sharabi). R Attiah's grandfather, also named Mordecai Attiah, who was a study-partner with Rav Kook, came from the Sharabi tradition, and so the younger R. Mordecai Attiah who I studied with was a part of that tradition. They did not look kindly upon the Ashlageans, thinking them a diluted and mistaken interpretation of Luria. When I began studying with R. Attiah my relationship with R. Sheinberger ended. They often sparred over publishing rights to various editions of kabbalistic texts and could barely hear the other's name mentioned.

I studied with R. Attiah for about three years. I entered the *yeshivah* wanting to study Lurianic Kabbalah. I asked him if I could enter his closed *shi'ur* every afternoon from 4pm to 6pm. He assigned me texts to prepare for the *shi'ur* with his father R. Eliyahu Attiah, a sweet and learned man who knew the entire *Tanakh* by heart. Recite the first words of any verse and he could finish it without a mistake. We sat for a few hours and prepared the material. I recall we were studying a book called *Da'at Tevunot* of the Ben Ish Hai, R. Yosef Hayyim (1835-1909), a late nineteenth-century Baghdadi kabbalist. At 3pm I dutifully entered the room, which consisted of tables set up in a big square, each person taking his appointed seat. It was a mix of people from the *yeshivah* and various students of the grandfather for years, who worked in menial jobs. One was a bank clerk, and one was an old Jew with a long white beard named Yehezkel who was an exterminator. He arrived every afternoon with this grey exterminating uniform and equipment. When there was a particularly difficult question in the text R. Attiah always deferred to Yehezkel, who had studied for many years with R. Attiah's grandfather and was a master of this material, but always very humble. I felt it was a slice of old Jerusalem that few outsiders witnessed.

R. Attiah entered the room, shut the door, sat down, opened his book, looked at me and pointed toward the door. "Please leave," he said. Confused, and disappointed, I took my book and left. I told his father, who never attended the *shi'ur,* what had happened. He said, "Don't worry, we'll try again tomorrow" I repeated the same thing for over a week. I sat in my seat; he entered the room and summarily told me to leave. I was frustrated, but I really wanted to be part of the group. After about ten days or so, same story, he came in, sat down, opened the book, and looked at me. This time he smiled, stroked his beard, and then asked someone to read. I was in.

My time with R. Attiah was quite intense. I became very close with him and he rewarded my diligence with attention. He was not particularly enamored by Hasidism in general, and over time I began to alter

my dress to be less hasidic. I retained my long *payot* but began to wear short coats and a more modern hat. I had become more immersed in Lurianic Kabbalah than Hasidism. Even after I left the *yeshivah* and then the Orthodox world, I still periodically go to visit him. On one visit I gave him a copy of my book on Lurianic Kabbalah, *From Metaphysics to Midrash.* He smiled and hugged me when I gave it to him, but I am quite certain he never read it. His spoken English was fine, but I cannot imagine he would have made the effort to read it. I hope it is still sitting somewhere on a shelf in his library. My understanding of hasidic texts was greatly enhanced by the years I studied him. Since much of hasidic literature is based on the Lurianic systematic knowing it as intimately as 1 did though his tutelage made me better prepared when hasidic literature became an academic profession.

During some of those years I would divide my time between Yeshivat ha-Mivtar, also known as "Brovinders," and R. Attiah's Yeshivat ha-Hayyim ye ha-Shalom. I would study Gemara in the morning at Brovinders and abbalah in the afternoon with R. Attiah. R. Brovinder had a profound impact on me. In those years I was deeply invested in the *liaredi* life. And yet there was something about me that still felt outside. R. Brovinder was born and raised in Brooklyn in the heart of postwar Modern Orthodoxy. I Ic studied with Rav Soloveitchik at Yeshiva University and immigrated to Israel with many from his world in the years following the Six-Day War. A brilliant talmudist and gifted teacher, he also received his PhD in Semitic languages at the Hebrew University, studying with the philologist Moshe Ioshen-Gottstein. Although modern in every sense, he was a deep believer lit the *yeshivah* as an institution and the world of the *yeshivah* as a place where true innovative scholarship could take place. He knew Dovid Din from those of us who attended his *yeshivah* and, while skeptical, he enjoyed the quirkiness and also the diligence that many of us exhibited inside the walls of his institution. If you studied hard and asked good questions, you won his respect.

At a certain point, intrigued by those of us who were devotees of hasidic lexts, R. Brovinder decided to try his hand at it. Friday mornings in *yeshivah* are usually left for individual or elective study, as life turned to Shabbat by early afternoon. R. Brovinder established a Friday morning class in Nahman of Bratslav's *Likkutei MoHaRan,* one of the classic texts of early Hasidism. We thought it was a victory of sorts, getting this Litvak *rosh yeshivah* to study *Likkutei MoHaRan* with us. The *shi'ur* continued for a few years, and, looking back, it was pivotal for me as a student of Hasidism. It was the first time I had studied hasidic literature with someone who was outside the world of Hasidism. R. Brovinder read it as he would read any Jewish text, and one saw the joy he felt at realizing the interpretive genius of Nahman. While we felt we had some impact on him, it was really his approach that had a big impact on me. I learned what it was like to read a text outside its context, and not as a purely devotional act but as a critic as well. He later tried the same thing with Luria's *Ei; tlayylm,* but it was not successful. *Ei; Hayyim* requires a different set of skills and knowledge base than Hasidism. A *yeshivah-trained rosh yeshivah* with no real kabbalistic training could not easily crack the Lurianic in it. That itself was an interesting lesson for me as I moved forward.

For three years, from 1986-1989 we lived on Moshav Mebr Modi'im, a small communal town *(moshav)* near Lod founded in the late 1970s by disciples of Shlomo Carlebach. I think of it as there where I really began to understand how Carlebach's countercultural reading of hasidic texts served as the foundation for a certain kind of religiosity. And in some way I felt I had a window into seeing how hasidic communities are born years before they began to take shape. At that time, most of the members of the *moshav* were connected in some way Carlebach, who also had a house there and spent most of his

summers using the *moshav* as his base of operations. There is much to write about life there and the people we lived with in close proximity, many of whom were and remain wonderful souls. But for my limited purpose here I learned to see how Hasidism in a "neo" register actually "worked" outside the normative framework of hasidic communities elsewhere.

It was there I experienced a different kind of hasidic focus on experience *(deveikut),* on camaraderie, on the shared sense of purpose that evolves from intense focus on one individual's view of the world, then the one I experienced in Boro Park or Me'ah She'arim. It was more close-knit, more countercultural, more confused in many ways, than traditional hasidic communities, and yet it contained an energy that was palpable and fructifying. Modi'im was also far less misogynist and paranoid than conventional hasidic communities. And I also experienced the way the focus on one charismatic leader creates all kinds of destructive elements and internal dissent. Yet at that time I remember thinking that in some way, that is the price, that the intensity and focus simply could not be generated and certainly not sustained without charisma. I learned many years later from Zalman Schachter-Shalomi that such charisma could transfer among various individuals within a community, that is, that the rebbe could be a function and not a person, what he called "rebbitude."

Modi'im differed from hasidic communities in other ways I found refreshing. Established hasidic courts read hasidic literature devotionally and try to emulate its values, but they are also very entrenched in habits and traditions developed long ago, and the communal structure is very invested in keeping them intact. This is part of what one could call hasidic conservatism. Neo-hasidic life at Modi'im in the mid- to late-1980s did not have the trappings or the weight of a tradition to maintain. Its members were creating their devotional life on the fly, as it were, many coming from the American counterculture with progressive values that were then recalibrated to conform to some manlier of traditional hasidic life and contemporary Israeli society. 'this resulted in a variety of apparently contradictory values, for example, a broad and sincere openness to the world and a strident right-wing political stance on the question of Palestinians. A belief in the holiness of the land that often easily elided to the holiness of the state by some who in the U.S. protested the state, patriotism, and its warring policies. As one friend from Modi'im, who tragically died quite young, wrote on her Facebook profile regarding her political views, "Right on Israel, left on everything else." Modi'im was a study in contrasts, with Carlebach's vision of Hasidism its driving engine.

Jewish Renewal, Neo-Hasidism, and American Post-Judaism

The essay I submitted on Jewish Renewal was far too long for a publication like *Tikkun.* Jo Ellen asked if I would be willing to divide and publish it literally, to which I agreed. It was published in three installments in 2005 and 2006. Only after delving into the thought of Renewal and its founder Zalman Schachter-Shalomi did I think about writing a book-length study the topic. But I still felt the issue needed a broader frame. From this came
American Post-Judaism. But more than that, through this project I became reacquainted with Schachter-Shalomi, whom I had met in the late 1970s at t wild Renewal Shabbat at the Freedom Farm outside Philadelphia. I am quite sure he did not recall meeting me, but we crossed paths numerous limes after that when he used to visit his daughter and her family in Moshav Modi'im, where I had lived from 1986 to 1989.

During my research and writing of *American Post-Judaism,* which was not a book about Hasidism but was certainly a book that, in part, attempted to reimagine neo-Hasidism in a cultural and not only a religious register, I became quite close to Schachter-Shalomi and in some way again found the erity I was seeking. This project also brought me back to where things began for me. Dovid Din had been Schachter-Shalomi's secretary when I w was the Hillel director at the University of Winnipeg in the mid-1960s, when Dovid showed up in a converted school bus with a group of hippies looking to buy land for their commune. The others went on their way and Dovid stayed behind to work for Schachter-Shalomi. Dovid's Jewish journey thus began with Schachter-Shalomi, and even as he went deep into the *haredi* world while Schachter-Shalomi took haredism and crafted it in his own image, there was something about Dovid, and the things I learned from him, that remained quite close to Schachter-Shalomi. And there was something about Dovid, a kind of wayward son, that Schachter-Shalomi never gave up on. Years after Dovid died tragically of complications from anorexia at the age of 46 in 1987, Schachter-Shalomi would ask me about his wife and children when we spoke on the phone. It seemed to me a combination of genuine care combined with a small dose of guilt.

As close as I felt to Schachter-Shalomi, I could not enter the Renewal world he created. I always remained on the margins, both because that is where I felt most comfortable and because many in that community did not quite trust my "academic" and "critical" assessment of their rebbe. Externally I had moved further away in terms of religious practice, and yet my *haredi* past was too embedded in my psyche to allow me to take the New Age as seriously as is required in order to enter that world fully.

In any case, after *American Post-Judaism* I returned to the study of Hasidism with new energy. I now felt free to look at these texts I loved with new eyes. Having moved to the Department of Religious Studies at Indiana University in 2004 I was now surrounded by other scholars of religion the way I had not been at JTS. And living in Indiana made me feel for the first time I was living in the kind of America that did not exist in New York City. *American Post-Judaism* was fully a product of that "American" experience, and my subsequent book, *Hasidism Incarnate: Hasidism, Christianity, and the Making of Modern Judaism,* was also a product of living in a multidimensional and multivalent academic community. I felt a kind of ownership of those texts in ways I had not before, a confidence that I had something to contribute to their continued relevance. Rather than viewing them solely within the orbit of Jewish life and practice, I argued that given the focus on the experience and proximity of God to the h*asid,* and given the notion of the hasidic *zaddik* as *axis mundi* (to borrow a locution form Art Green's popular and important essay) the parallels to Christianity were more than occasional, and worth tracing. The point was not to make direct connections, something that would be difficult if not impossible to do. Rather, I offered a phenomenological claim of similitude as a response to similar spiritual orientations and concerns coupled with the Zohar's polemic against Christianity by adopting Christian motifs that Hasidism absorbed without knowing of their polemical roots.

Coming Back to Hasidism Once Again

The present volume collects a series of reflections on Hasidism that spans about twenty years. Most of the essays appeared elsewhere in scholarly journals or volumes; a few are new. They illustrate my struggle with hasidic texts, my closeness to them, and my distance from them. In retrospect perhaps they reflect more about me than about them, but all scholarship is, or should be, autobiographical. Academics in the humanities have the blessed opportunity to contemplate the world through a particular lens that both reflects and teaches them about the texts they read and the worlds they come

from, and about themselves and why they find these texts so compelling, even, or precisely, when they disagree with them.

In any case, I hope to convey in these essays how the texts were a product of their time and remain alive, at least for me, not as exemplars of any lifestyle or practice, although they are certainly also that for some, but as exempla of the pursuits of consciousness and meaning, often through the creative misappropriation of traditional motifs to serve a different end. In this way, I suppose I return to Buber, albeit with a different focus. Unlike others, I am not looking for a hasidic essence. that was for a different time. In these essays I am looking, perhaps, for an alterity that could open the texts to the world and shine light on the possible global implications at work in the recesses of a highly parochial tradition. In this sense I am taking Dovid Din's transnational monastic piety and Schachter-Shalomi's rendering of Renewal as the "fourth turning of Hasidism" to a new place. While Jewish collective existence remains important to me as a Jew, as a scholar of Hasiidism and as one who hopes my work extends beyond those parochial parametersI do not place Jewish "continuity" at the center of my intellectual and spiritual project. Although, as Hannah Arendt replied when asked about her being a Jew, "I can't quite think of being anything else:'

Over the course of the years when these essays were written, I explored Ii variety of other subjects in my academic work and in topical writing. A book on Lurianic Kabbalah, on American Judaism, on the little-known Elijah Zvi Soloveitchik's Hebrew commentary to the New Testament, and many essays on modern Jewish thought, Mussar, Judaism and Christianity, kind Zionism. A friend once noted laconically that I had "left Jewish mysticism behind:' But that is not quite true. My interests have always been eclectic as far back as my adolescence, and my training at the Hebrew University mitigated *against* the American academic doctrine of focused expertise. Eliezer Schweid wrote on everything from the Hebrew Bible to globalization; my doctoral advisor at Brandeis, Marvin Fox, wrote on everything from rabbinic literature to Kant, even though he was primarily Maimonides scholar.

But wherever my restless mind and heart may have led me, I always seem to come back to Hasidism. There is something in its mix of metaphysical speculation and its messy depiction of the human condition that never grows old for me. To me, hasidic literature feels like an old friend who knows you well and who has been with you on a long journey, and in and with whom you always find something new. Like an old friend, it is in relation, what Buber liked to call the "in-between" where real insight occurs. These essays are an example of that "in-between:' Not always loving, not always joyous, not always satisfying. I am not sure the hasidic texts I examine here are, as one scholar described Hasidism, "words of fire:' But they are certainly words that breathe life into this Jew trying to find his way in the world. Thus far I have come. *Ashreinu mah tov helkeynu* ("oh to be happy with one's lot"). <>

HAKOL KOL YAAKOV: THE JOEL ROTH JUBILEE VOLUME edited by Robert A. Harris and Jonathan S. Milgram [The Brill Reference Library of Judaism, Brill, Hardback: 9789004420458, E-Book (PDF): 9789004420465] Open Access

HAKOL KOL YAAKOV: THE JOEL ROTH JUBILEE VOLUME contains twenty articles dedicated to Rabbi Joel Roth, written by colleagues and students. Some are academic articles in the general area of Talmud and Rabbinics, while others are rabbinic responsa that treat an issue of contemporary Jewish law. In his career, Joel Roth has been known as a scholar and teacher of Talmud par excellence, and, without question, as the preeminent decisor of Jewish law for the Conservative movement of his generation. In the meticulous style and approach of the Talmud scholarship of his generation, Roth painstakingly and precisely assayed the vast array of rabbinic legal sources, and proceeded to apply these in pedagogy, in scholarship and particularly in the production of contemporary legal responsa. The articles in this volume reflect the unique and integrated voice and vision that Joel Roth has brought to the American Jewish community.

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Chapter 20 Rabbi Moshe Yehuda Abbas: A sage whose experiences and writings have not yet been published by Shmuel Glick

In the ancient redactor's epilogue to the biblical book of Koheleth, the anonymous sage, perhaps feeling challenged or weary by Koheleth's heterodox views, observes: ויתר מהמה בני הזהר עשות ספרים הרבה אין קץ ולהג הרבה יגעת בשר "A further word: Against them, my son, be warned! The making of many books is without limit, And much study is a wearying of the flesh" (Koheleth 12:12). Reading this text, the 19th century exegete Rabbi Samuel David Luzatto comments, עשות ספרים הרבה אין קץ: וגם על הקורא תכבד העבודה, "The making of many books is without limit: and also upon the reader the work is heavy." Far be it from the editors of this volume to rebel against such a well-known biblical dictum, but that is precisely what we would like to state. The work of producing this volume for our teacher and colleague, Rabbi Professor Joel Roth, הרב יעקב בן צבי רוט, has been a *simhah shel mitzvah*, a joy akin to performing the Torah's commandments. And it is our fervent expectation that the contents of the present volume, far from being a burden to its many intended readers, will likewise bring them the joy of consuming the wisdom of so many of Rabbi Roth's students and colleagues. We write on behalf of all of this volume's contributors that the debt we owe to Rabbi Roth for his years of scholarship, teaching and dedicated service far outweigh the relatively small token of thanks this volume represents.

In his career, Joel Roth has been known as a תלמיד חכמים, a scholar and teacher of Talmud par excellence, and as a master פוסק הלכה, without question the preeminent decisor of Jewish law for the Conservative movement of his generation. His primary works of talmudic scholarship and Jewish law include his studies and critical edition of the *Sefer ha-Mordechai* to tractate Kiddushin (R. Mordechai ben Hillel, a thirteenth century Ashkenazi scholar, composed a compendium to the earlier, authoritative legal code of R. Yitzhak Alfasi, *Halakhot Rabbati*). In the meticulous style and approach of the Talmud scholarship of his generation, Roth painstakingly and precisely documented all of the textual variants in the medieval manuscripts of R. Mordechai ben Hillel's halakhic compendium, and added important notes

along the way regarding the medieval scholar's own approach to a number of issues of law and in light of the vast literature of the *rishonim* (the earliest rabbinic scholars following the Babylonian *geonim*).

Rabbi Roth also published *The Halachic Process: A Systemic Analysis*. This outstanding work, unique in both its breadth and depth, is an assessment and analysis of the principles and premises of Jewish legal decision-making through the ages and the practical application of his findings for contemporary Jewish legal decision-making. In addition to his learned survey pertaining to judicial discretion, Roth also discusses factors in legal decision-making such as the role of custom, new medical knowledge and the qualifications of authorities. Among other topics, Roth discusses two areas that are not often systemically addressed by contemporary halakhic authorities and are worthy of highlighting here. In a chapter entitled "Extralegal Sources within Halakhah," Roth examines the impact of social and economic change on decision-making; in another chapter, "On New Legal Sources within Halakhah," he considers the significance of developments in the academic field of Talmud—especially the discovery of alternate readings of texts in medieval manuscripts and source critical analyses. In light of Roth's training and subsequent teaching at The Jewish Theological Seminary, it should come as no surprise that his methodology for deciding halakha would integrate academic methods. Indeed, two academic fields—medieval halakhic historiography and Talmud criticism—witnessed tremendous expansion during the last third of the twentieth century and some of the prime movers, at least in the field of Talmud, were affiliated with the Seminary. During Roth's formative years, some of the most important studies in medieval halakhic historiography fleshed out the degree to which 'external' social and economic factors impacted Jewish legal decision-making at the expense of 'internal' processes. At the same time the field of Talmud scholarship began to mature and significant studies on the manuscript traditions of the Talmud and the how the Talmud's sources were reworked over the ages began to appear. While it is true that Roth doesn't make extensive use of the works of these scholars in his own scholarly *oeuvre*, it is nonetheless significant that his own approaches developed in tandem with the scholarly developments identified. It is particularly important to point out Roth's contributions against the backdrop of the regnant academic approaches since he integrates both social change and new textual developments from the perspective of a jurist. In this regard he stands out among many of his colleagues who preferred primarily to integrate the current impact of social change, as imperative on moral and ethical grounds. Regarding Roth's use of Talmud criticism, his suggestions for judicious use of new textual evidence follows in a long line halakhists—some cited by Roth himself—who implemented legal change on the basis of textual emendations and variants with great caution. While the current context does not allow for an extensive evaluation of Joel Roth's theory of halakhic development—a desideratum for some future study—certainly the academic study of Jewish law's development is all the richer due to Roth's meticulous treatment, and his seminal study should be required reading for students of Jewish law.

It has been as a contemporary interpreter and decisor of Jewish Law that Joel Roth has achieved his most significant renown. Author of dozens of legal decisions and articles about the role of Jewish law, particularly in institutions associated with Conservative Judaism, Rabbi Roth has helped all who sought his Torah to navigate the problems of integrating the demands of halacha with the opportunities and conflicts associated with living in liberal society. A lifetime of dedication to teaching Talmud and Halacha at the Jewish Theological Seminary; longtime chairmanship of the Rabbinical Assembly's Committee on Jewish Law and Standards; and devoted service as Professor-in-Residence at the Seminary's Camp Ramah in the Berkshires are only the main features of his storied career. Joel Roth is exemplified by

what the rabbis call מסירות נפש, literally "the conveying of the soul," an expression marking the utter devotion to the principles of rabbinic Judaism. One cannot footnote the contribution that Joel Roth has made to untold numbers of correspondents—both in person, and by mail and telephone—who sought his wisdom about Talmud and Jewish Law, a devotion that continues to this very day.

In the fabled encounter between Isaac and his son Jacob (Genesis 27:22), the aged patriarch, who has become blind, recognizes his son by means of the latter's voice: הקל קול יעקב, "the voice is the voice of Jacob." While it must be admitted that within the context of the biblical narrative, it is a most deceitful moment, the ancient rabbinic Sages saw in this declaration an opportunity for midrashic insight: Isaac recognized Jacob, despite his disguise, on account of the wisdom that his voice typically professed (הא קול דקל חכים, "behold, this is the voice of a wise man").[1] The book that you are holding, *Ha-Kol Kol Yaakov*, is the product of dozens of admirers of Rabbi Joel Roth, colleagues and students, family and friends. Among these, some have written academic articles, while others have contributed rabbinic responsa. The volume's unique list of articles, including both Talmud scholarship and essays on the practical application of Jewish law, reflects the unique and integrated voice and vision that Joel Roth has brought to the American Jewish community. And let us not forget those whose generosity made the publication of this book possible. All of these people recognize Rabbi Roth as a wise man, and have viewed the project of this volume's production as recognition of the wisdom with which he has touched the lives of countless students and colleagues. It is with the greatest of honors that we devote this volume to him. — *Robert A. Harris*

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Appreciation

It's an honor for me as the Chancellor of The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS)—and a personal pleasure as someone who had been learning from Joel Roth's work for many years—to add these words of congratulation on the publication of this festschrift in his honor.

Scholars and rabbis most likely know Joel for his thoughtful and meticulous work on halakha and the philosophy of halakha. I myself have had occasion to teach chapters from *The Halakhic Process*, and selections from Joel's many essays and responses, in classes on the history of Conservative Judaism. My selection of his writings for that purpose was due not only to the tremendous influence that Joel's work has had inside and beyond the world of Conservative Judaism, but to the crystal-clear quality of the prose and the forceful and cogent quality of the argument. Even when one disagrees with Joel Roth, one cannot but respect the enormous learning that goes into every page, and the commitment to God and Torah that underlies and drives the work. The work, like the man, commands attention by virtue of its integrity and gravitas.

Inside JTS, Joel is better known as a superb, dedicated and passionate teacher. His commitment to his students, as well as to the material he teaches them, is legendary. That commitment extends far beyond the walls of 3080 Broadway; beyond the many decades of teaching Talmud, codes, and Hebrew at JTS; and beyond the years that students spend in his classroom. Many thousands of individuals have learned from Joel at the Conservative Yeshiva and Schechter Institute in Jerusalem, at USY events and Camp Ramah, and at synagogues throughout North America and in Israel. Many rabbis have benefited from his learning during his years of service on the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards, including several

years as the group's chair. Joel's long friendship with our late colleague Rabbi Neil Gillman of blessed memory, despite differences in belief and worldview, speaks volumes about his character; I myself have turned to him for guidance more than once during my tenure as Chancellor, and have always found him both courteous and wise. Again and again I am told by alumni, unsolicited, that "Rabbi Roth was the best teacher I had at JTS," "Rabbi Roth was a model of what it is to be a teacher," "Rabbi Roth will always be my teacher."

I join all our colleagues at JTS in kvelling at Joel's achievement and wishing him many more years of teaching and learning Torah. — *Arnold Eisen,* Chancellor, The Jewish Theological Seminary

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We who were privileged to be students of Rabbi Joel Roth view his classes to have been highlights of our Seminary Rabbinic studies. Many of us came to JTS with limited *girsa d'yankuta*, without extensive early-life Talmudic education. Joel's considerable pedagogic skills enabled us to penetrate the pages of Talmud, opening for us a world that otherwise would have been obscure and intimidating. His reverence for his teachers, many of the giants of twentieth-century rabbinic scholarship, combined with his contemporary approach to education taught us that it was not only possible but also essential that old and new be bridged as we, his students, in our own careers, would seek to draw from the past in order to help shape a stronger spiritual future.

It was not by accident that Rabbi Roth, for so many of us, would be our turn-to authority when we would face a *halakhic* challenge, when we would be asked a question that we, on our own, could not answer. We would call Joel not only because, invariably, he would know the answer, but also because he was so welcoming of our questions, so gracious with his time when we needed him. Our professional staff, our leadership, and our members at large often sought his views on matters of policy and practice, which, again, he would offer willingly and in his ever helpful and generous fashion.

The Rabbinical Assembly was enriched by Joel's regular participation in our conventions, in our *Yimei Iyyun*, where his sessions were well-attended and enthusiastically received. Our rabbis appreciated not only his command of the sources, but the many *eytzot tovot*, the pearls of advice he would offer, grounded in a deep understanding of the diverse rabbinic environments in which we serve.

Rabbi Joel Roth, for decades, was a pillar of the *Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement*, both as its chair and as a key participant. He would argue strenuously for his positions, never hesitating to take a strong stand even when his view would not be popular, for his positions were grounded in consistency and the solid halakhic process to which he was so deeply committed.

Always a deeply proud Conservative Jew, Joel Roth, by word and example, has reminded us that the center of the Jewish religious world, even though not always easy to inhabit, is the place where we, as rabbis, as educators, as committed servants of the Jewish people need to be.

We, the students, the colleagues of Rabbi Joel Roth, forever will be grateful for his teaching, his guidance, his friendship, and his love of Torah, tradition and the Jewish people. — *Rabbi Philip Scheim,* Immediate Past-President, The Rabbinical Assembly

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Rabbi Joel Roth has served as JTS's halachic advisor to the National Ramah Commission and Ramah camps for decades. He began his Ramah career as a camper and staff member at Camp Ramah in Wisconsin in the 1950s and 1960s. He served as professor in residence first at Camp Ramah in the Poconos, and then at Camp Ramah in the Berkshires for more than twenty years.

As a new lawyer working in a New York City firm in 1985, I had a desire to study more Jewish text and consider a career as a rabbi. Rabbi Roth's kindness and flexibility were key to my decision to leave my legal practice and enroll full time at JTS; I know many other colleagues with similar stories. Joel's warmth, combined with his fervent desire to have more young men and women study to become rabbis, no doubt contributed to a much stronger generation of passionate and well-educated Conservative rabbinic leadership.

Learning with Joel was challenging and rewarding. His amazing ability to clearly explain a text or a concept helped so many of us not only succeed, but also to develop a deep love for Talmud, Midrash, and halachic literature. And his honesty about the challenges facing those of us who took halacha seriously was heartfelt and real. For hundreds of us who call him Rav, Joel has spent decades answering our questions about Jewish law, Jewish life, and Jewish thought, up to this day.

At Camp Ramah in Canada in the 1990's, Joel supported our camp community whenever a difficult question arose. No matter where Joel was in the world, he provided timely and sensitive answers to questions about the reliability of a hechsher, the construction of an eruv, or the consequences of a kashrut mistake in our busy camp kitchen.

And Joel's mentoring and guidance for Ramah continues to this day, even beyond the basic questions and concerns. He has been creative and thoughtful at helping Ramah directors think through more difficult and unique challenges, such as whether we could allow children to swim on Tisha B'Av when temperatures rose above 100 degrees, whether a young person with verbal disabilities could lead us in prayer, or the limits of *pikuach nefesh* when responding to a medical emergency on Shabbat.

Joel has been a trusted colleague and friend to the professionals at the National Ramah Commission, making it easier for us to help every Ramah camp face challenges in Jewish law. No question is too mundane, and no challenge is too difficult. Truly, with Joel on our side, we not only know we will get a clear and timely response to all our inquiries, but we can also be assured that Ramah continues to be a place where halacha is observed and respected.

Despite his long time association with Camp Ramah in the Berkshires, Joel's love of and support for Ramah has known no geographical boundaries. Only recently, I heard from Rabbi Eliav Bock, executive director of Ramah in the Rockies, who wrote:

> From the founding of Ramah in the Rockies in 2010, Rabbi Roth has been a resource, teacher, and cheerleader for all that we are doing in Colorado. The first issue Rabbi Roth helped us with was figuring out how to create an eruv on a ranch with nearly two miles of fence line in rugged terrain. As we have grown, he has helped us think through the type of supervision needed in our mainly vegetarian kitchen and issues stemming from washing so many leafy vegetables, and how to create an appropriate and safe atmosphere at 8,000 feet on Tisha B'Av when many campers have not yet acclimatized to the elevation. Rabbi Roth is always only an email or phone call away.

Rabbi Ethan Linden, executive director of Camp Ramah in the Berkshires, echoed those expressions, and has added the following memories:

> I remember sitting in a Hebrew class with Rabbi Roth at JTS in the summer of 2000. He told a story about being asked a question about a fire that broke out on Shabbat in the woods at a Ramah camp. I remember very distinctly thinking, "Why would a summer camp need a posek to answer halachic questions? How many could possible come up?" Not for the last time, my assumption about Ramah camping was completely wrong. I have been the asker now in more situations that I can count, both as a pulpit rabbi and now as a Ramah director. Rabbi Roth is unfailingly thoughtful, direct, and helpful. He never judges the question or the questioner. He is the ne plus ultra of a posek: wise, careful, bold when needed, and always, always compassionate. As a student and a Ramah director, I am deeply indebted to him.

The sentiments these two directors have shared speak for all of the Camp Ramah family whose lives have been touched by Joel's service to the entire Ramah movement, and the Torah that he has taught us all. Joel continues to be one of great rabbinic leaders of our generation. On behalf of generations of Ramah directors, staff and campers, I take great pleasure in thanking him for his deep love for and dedicated service to Camp Ramah. — *Rabbi Mitchell Cohen,* Director of the National Ramah Commission <>

TIME AND DIFFERENCE IN RABBINIC JUDAISM by Sarit Kattan Gribetz [Princeton University Press, 978-0691192857]

How the rabbis of late antiquity used time to define the boundaries of Jewish identity.

The rabbinic corpus begins with a question— "when?"—and is brimming with discussions about time and the relationship between people, God, and the hour. *Time and Difference in Rabbinic Judaism* explores the rhythms of time that animated the rabbinic world of late antiquity, revealing how rabbis conceptualized time as a way of constructing difference between themselves and imperial Rome, Jews and Christians, men and women, and human and divine.

In each chapter, Sarit Kattan Gribetz explores a unique aspect of rabbinic discourse on time. She shows how the ancient rabbinic texts artfully subvert Roman imperialism by offering "rabbinic time" as an alternative to "Roman time." She examines rabbinic discourse about the Sabbath, demonstrating how the weekly day of rest marked "Jewish time" from "Christian time." Gribetz looks at gendered daily rituals, showing how rabbis created "men's time" and "women's time" by mandating certain rituals for men and others for women. She delves into rabbinic writings that reflect on how God spends time and how God's use of time relates to human beings, merging "divine time" with "human time." Finally, she traces the legacies of rabbinic constructions of time in the medieval and modern periods.

TIME AND DIFFERENCE IN RABBINIC JUDAISM sheds new light on the central role that time played in the construction of Jewish identity, subjectivity, and theology during this transformative period in the history of Judaism.

"Winner of the National Jewish Book Award in Scholarship, Jewish Book Council"

Review

"Through a meticulously researched in-depth analysis of early rabbinic texts, Sarit Kattan Gribetz explores the critical role time plays in forging distinct social identities. **TIME AND DIFFERENCE IN RABBINIC JUDAISM** demonstrates how schedules and calendars accentuate major cultural contrasts between rabbinic and Roman, Jewish and Christian, man and woman, and human and divine. A spectacular, tour de force contribution to the sociohistorical study of time!"**—Eviatar Zerubavel, author of *Time Maps*, *Hidden Rhythms*, *The Seven Day Circle*, *Ancestors and Relatives*, and *The Clockwork Muse***

"This compelling and marvelously readable book draws scholarly attention to the importance of time as an analytic rubric for understanding rabbinic culture. The breadth of scholarship is so wide-ranging that at times it took my breath away."**—Elizabeth Shanks Alexander, author of *Gender and Timebound Commandments in Judaism***

"**TIME AND DIFFERENCE IN RABBINIC JUDAISM** undertakes to reveal as constructed something we are encouraged to experience as natural: the relationship of humans and their world to time. With wondrous learning, Sarit Kattan Gribetz shows how the rabbis of the Mishnah and in late antiquity employed the construction of time to distinguish, but also often to bind, Jews, Romans, and Christians; women and men; and God and his children. Following the Jews spatially into Iran, and historically until the modern world, *Time and Difference in Rabbinic Judaism* is an exemplary and exhilarating work of history."**—Clifford Ando, author of *Law, Language, and Empire in the Roman Tradition***

"Sarit Kattan Gribetz's beautifully written book uses rabbinic texts to uncover how cultural and communal perceptions of time were constructed in late antiquity. She reveals the multiplicity and complexity of rabbinic 'timescapes' while opening up larger questions about our modern conceptions of time and our day-to-day commitments to use it well."**—Laura Salah Nasrallah, author of *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul***

"Presenting a rich case study in late-antique rabbinic timescapes, Gribetz systematically maps the differentiating function of time across an array of social categories, from empire to the gendered body. This cutting-edge book has made me think anew about time in both the ancient world and social discourse more generally."**—James Ker, University of Pennsylvania**

"**TIME AND DIFFERENCE IN RABBINIC JUDAISM** is a thoughtful, meaningful, and beautifully written work of scholarship."**—Beth A. Berkowitz, author of *Defining Jewish Difference***

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Excerpt: The foundational document of rabbinic Judaism, the Mishnah, opens with a question about time: "from what time?" A person must declare devotion to God each morning and evening; the question is: *when?* Rabbinic literature is replete with concerns about time and the triangular relationship between people, God, and the hour.

These concerns about time were timely in the early centuries CE, when rabbinic Judaism emerged and flourished. In a period of Jewish theological creativity and ritual innovation, in the context of the Roman Empire and its imperial calendar, and in competition with developing Christian times, how did the rabbis of late antiquity conceive of the temporal rhythms of Jewish life? This book examines how, in this complex cultural context, rabbinic texts from the first six centuries CE constructed imperial, communal, individual, and divine rhythms of time through the practices that they mandated and the stories that they told.

Though time may appear to be natural and universal, based on elements such as the rising sun, the phases of the moon, or the seasons, time is, in fact, culturally constructed and communally specific. Temporal institutions can cultivate shared notions of time along with shared communal identities, but they can also differentiate those who mark their time in certain ways from those who mark their time differently. Time—as it is constructed, interpreted, and enacted—thus creates both shared worlds and different worlds, and through measurements and manners of conceptualizing and organizing time, different groups intertwine with each other in multiple ways. Mapping rabbinic timescapes, as this book does, demonstrates the central role that time played in how rabbis attempted to construct Jewish identity, subjectivity, and theology—indeed, how they constructed their worlds—during this formative period in the history of Judaism.

The overarching argument of this book is that the rabbis used time-keeping and discourses about time to construct crucial social, political, and theological difference. The book demonstrates, through close analysis of rabbinic texts, that as the rabbis fashioned Jewish life and theology in the Roman and Sasanian worlds, they articulated conceptions and structures of time that promoted and reinforced new configurations of difference in multiple realms. It explores four such realms: imperial, communal, gender, and theological cosmology.

Rabbinic texts constructed imperial difference by distinguishing rabbinic time from Roman time; communal difference by separating Jewish time from Christian time; gendered difference by dividing men's time from women's time; and theological difference by contrasting the time of those who dwelled on earth from the time of those in the heavenly sphere, including God and the angels. The four chapters that constitute this book analyze rabbinic texts that employ time to negotiate difference in each of these realms.

The book further contends that the processes through which various forms of difference are constructed in rabbinic sources, be they, for example, differences between men and women or between

Jews and Christians, cannot fully be understood without also considering the constructions, discourses, and practices of time that undergird them. That is because time—its conception and its organization—serves as a powerful mechanism through which to enact difference and forge identity. Uncovering the specific ways in which conceptions of time and practices of time-keeping were used practically and discursively by rabbinic authorities actively to forge multiple types of inter- and intracommunal difference reveals the central role that constructions of time play in processes of differentiation within rabbinic texts. The book's primary intervention in the fields of rabbinics, ancient Judaism, and the study of religion in late antiquity is to identify the temporal dimensions that facilitated the construction of difference in the rabbinic corpus. The history of difference and the processes through which difference is forged, in rabbinic sources as in other corpora and cultures, are more fully comprehended when the role of time is both acknowledged and investigated. That conceptions of time and practices of time-keeping are often assumed to be natural or self-evident (or indeed to be objective) because they so frequently rely on natural or bodily phenomena (whether the rotation of the sun or the aging of a body) masks the fact that conceptions of time and practices of time-keeping are just as constructed as difference itself. It is the task of this book to investigate how time was used in rabbinic sources to construct the differences—between rabbis and Romans, Jews and Christians, men and women, humans and the divine—that the texts, and often their readers, take for granted.

This introductory chapter is structured in three parts. Part I introduces the underlying theoretical framework of the book by reflecting upon the categories of "time" and "difference" and the interrelationship between the two. Both time and difference are examined conceptually, informed by previous scholarship as well as the peculiarities of rabbinic sources, with an eye toward distilling what is particularly illuminating about probing the intersection of the two. Part II seeks to transport the reader back in time to the first and early second centuries CE, in order temporally to situate the rabbinic texts analyzed in the subsequent chapters. Three interrelated cultural and political dimensions of the rabbis' late antique world are discussed. Rather than set within a conventional historical contextualization, however, the story is told as a history of time, highlighting specifically temporal aspects of the Jewish, Greco-Roman, **and** Christian contexts in which the rabbinic movement emerged and developed. Part III outlines the book's organizational structure, methodological orientation, and indebtedness to previous scholarship. The chapter concludes with a note about the terminology used in the book. Just as we cannot experience the world outside of time, so too we cannot escape the limits of language—leaving us to seek words that make adequate sense of the world and of time.

What is Time?

The question "What is time?" has preoccupied history's most sophisticated minds. More than two millennia of effort, however, has failed to yield a clear answer to this seemingly simple problem. Consider Augustine's iconic puzzlement as he groped for the proper language to articulate ideas about time: "What, then, is time? There can be no quick and easy answer, for it is no simple matter even to understand what it is, let alone find words to explain it." Maimonides expressed similar exasperation about the notion of time, explaining that "the analysis of the concept of time has presented difficulties to most thinkers, so much so that they became bewildered as to whether it had any real existence or not." Virginia Woolf, too, thematized the mysteriousness of time when she wrote, in 1928, that "time, unfortunately, though it makes animals and vegetables bloom and fade with amazing punctuality, has no such simple effect upon the mind of man. The mind of man, moreover, works with equal strangeness

upon the body of time. An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of the human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length; on the other hand, an hour may be accurately represented on the timepiece of the mind by one second. This extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind is less known than it should be and deserves fuller investigation."

Despite difficulties articulating notions of time, this vexing topic has endlessly fascinated scholars from antiquity to the present. Naturally, each scholar's approach is informed by her particular methodological and disciplinary angle of inquiry: physical, metaphysical, phenomenological, biological, sociological, historical, religious, narrative, psychoanalytic. Philosophers, theologians, and scientists have contemplated whether time actually *is* (is time real? is it an illusion?), *what* time is (is it a precondition of being? a part of experience? a sense?), and *how* time functions (does it flow? is it relative?).[5] Such questions have generated an extensive debate the outcome of which remains (necessarily, perhaps) inconclusive.

Sociologists, anthropologists, historians, and scholars of religion have largely set aside questions about the absolute nature of time, instead choosing to interrogate time as it is conceived and comprehended, and how it functions, within particular societies. Such scholars have sought to understand how cultures and religious traditions conceptualize time, how these conceptions manifest themselves in the ways communities' structure and narrate their times (rhythms of daily life, calendars, the recording of history and chronology, and so on), and what they reveal about the values and views of these cultures. Precisely because assumptions about time seem so natural and intuitive, it is easy to forget that these, too, are cultural products that merit contextual and historical investigation. Asking fundamental questions about how people in periods and places far removed from ours made sense of time can lead to surprising insights about their lives.

This book follows the latter approach, aiming to understand how a particular group of people (the ancient rabbis), as their ideas were preserved in a particular set of texts (rabbinic literature), conceptualized time and coped with the need to organize and signify it, and how their structuring of time constructed new identities, subjectivities, and forms of difference. Rabbinic sources devote much interpretive energy to outlining the precise timing of daily, weekly, and annual practices; many rabbinic texts can be regarded as elaborate deliberations about how a member of the rabbinic community might best organize and use their time in accordance with rabbinic values. Speculation about cosmic origins, memories of mythical pasts, constructions of chronologies and histories, and anticipation of a redemptive future also feature on the rabbis' agenda, alongside the nitty-gritty details of determining hours and setting calendars.? Such concerns animated the rabbis and provide a broader temporal and historical context for understanding rabbinic attitudes to daily time. The study that follows therefore navigates between the conceptual and the practical, the symbolic and the quotidian, weaving together the history of daily life, social history, cultural studies, religious studies, and rabbinics.

Not long ago, some scholars of the Hebrew Bible and ancient Israel held that the limited temporal range of biblical Hebrew grammar and its tenses and the absence, in biblical texts, of philosophical discourses on the nature of time similar to those found in Greek and Roman philosophy signal that biblical sources—and thus ancient Israelites and later Jews—lacked chronological and temporal sophistication. In response to this claim, the historian Arnaldo Momigliano passionately insisted on the opposite: ancient Jewish texts indicate that ancient Jews conceived of time and temporality in ways no less

complex and compelling than their Greek counterparts. Biblical sources, he acknowledged, are often more concerned with structuring quotidian time than in philosophizing about time in the abstract. "Biblical writers speak about time in the concrete way which would have been understandable to the ordinary Greek man, for whom there was a time of day in which the agora was full," he quipped.[11] Meditations about the abstract category of time might not have been central features of rabbinic texts either, but their absence does not mean that rabbis did not hold sophisticated opinions about time. Indeed, they did.

This book is most interested precisely in the fashioning and conceptualization of time for Momigliano's "ordinary Greek man" on his way to the agora as **well as** the Roman woman going to the forum or the nearby church, her Jewish neighbour making his way to synagogue for evening prayers before the time for the recitation of the Shema has passed, and this neighbor's wife who, at the same time, walks in a similar direction to immerse herself in the ritual bath. How did their conceptions and experiences of time shape their respective identities and senses of self? When did the temporal rhythms of the daily lives of Jews and non-Jews and of men and women overlap? When did they diverge? And how did time play a role in the differentiation and synchronization of these people and their communities?

Rabbinic sources, written by a limited number of elite men in intellectual and scholastic contexts, do not provide decisive answers to these questions. Scholarship has emphasized just how little is known about how authoritative the rabbis were in the early centuries of the Common Era, how many Jews actually followed rabbinic laws, and how closely those who did complied with the many details outlined in rabbinic sources. The rabbinic corpus, however, does constitute a fascinating set of texts—an elaborate discourse—that reveals how these rabbis imagined, and hoped to shape, the times and identities of these subjects in relation to one another. This book, therefore, examines how the late antique rabbis whose ideas were preserved within the rabbinic corpus conceived of and constructed the rhythms of daily time, irrespective of whether their compositions describe a social "reality." The book focuses on the timescapes that emerge in rabbinic texts and the possible social effects that this rabbinic system might have had on those who read their texts, heard their sermons, or abided by their prescriptions, either in late antiquity or in subsequent periods, when rabbinic tradition proved more authoritative and more widely studied, scrutinized, and observed.

This book draws from these earlier studies while homing in on the regular-everyday time as it is conceived and mandated in rabbinic texts. It illustrates the central role that rabbinic ritual, narrative, and conceptual configurations of time played in facilitating the development of rabbinic notion of imperial, communal, gendered, and theological difference. The focus officially on time as a mechanism for the creation of varieties of difference his to contribute both to the study of rabbinic literature and to the fields of our studies, Jewish studies, and time studies more broadly defined.

The analysis in this book assumes that the rabbinic corpus contains polyphonic ideas about time and timing rather than a unified and singular "conception of time," an idea emphatically articulated as well by Sylvie Anne Goldberg in *La Clepsydre.* It mines ancient sources for the temporal complexities and contradictions that rabbinic discussions bring forth, within each rabbinic composition as well as between sources from various periods of rabbinic histo**ry. It** also argues, though, that among this multiplicity, some general trends **about** time and difference emerge, however messily, from these rabbinic compositions.

The chapters of this book are structured around units of time, social realms, discourses of difference, and rabbinic genres. The first chapter addresses rabbinic-Roman difference through examining annual time in the context of Roman imperialism; the second chapter focuses on Jewish-Christian difference through analyzing weekly time in the context of intercommunal relations; **the** third chapter centers on gendered difference through a study of daily time within communal boundaries; and the fourth chapter dwells on divine-human difference through a consideration of hourly time within theological discourse. Thus, the chapters shift from annual to weekly, daily, and hourly cycles, and they turn to increasingly constricted social domains, proceeding from the broadest context of the Roman Empire, to intercommunal relations between Jews and Christians (members of parallel yet competing communities within a broader imperial context), to gendered time within rabbinic communities, and then, expanding outward again, to the intersection of human and divine spheres. The choice to devote each chapter to a particular temporal cycle—annual, weekly, daily, hourly—is not meant to suggest that rabbis only constructed imperial difference on an annual basis, Christian difference on a weekly basis, gendered difference on a daily basis, and theological difference on an hourly basis. Rather, this editorial choice is intended to spotlight the variety and diversity of strategies used within rabbinic texts to order a wide range of different temporal durations, each chapter demonstrating a unique time frame.

Nevertheless, the unit of the day remains central throughout this study: the first chapter examines discourses about the significance of certain days of the year; the second chapter studies the status of certain days of the week; the third chapter investigates practices that mark the beginnings and ends of each day; and the fourth chapter analyzes the subdivision of days into hours and other units. The first two chapters deal with special or sacred types of days, those differentiated from other times; the second two chapters address quotidian time and more regular, seemingly mundane temporal rhythms of the day, on earth as well as in heaven. At its core, then, the book is about the construction of difference in daily life, through various scales of time-keeping from the annual to the hourly.

Each chapter begins with an examination of rabbinic sources from the second and third centuries (known as "tannaitic" literature) and then proceeds, in its second half, to an analysis of narrative materials from later rabbinic compositions from the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries (known as "amoraic" and "post-amoraic" literature). The chapters engage with texts from both Palestine and Babylonia, though the focus remains largely on Palestinian sources. The rabbinic material from the Babylonian Talmud is essential to the book's argument even though it was composed and redacted beyond the borders of the Roman Empire and indeed in a different historical, cultural, and political context than rabbinic texts composed in the region of Palestine. Juxtaposing the Palestinian and Babylonian sources often brings into sharper relief what is distinctive about the Palestinian materials and how they approach time in ways that are different from how Babylonian sources approach the same or similar questions about time. At times, highlighting how the Babylonian Talmud interprets earlier traditions also proves generative. Moreover, following how ideas from Palestinian sources were received and adapted in Babylonia demonstrates how Palestinian ideas changed when they were applied and appropriated in new contexts.

Chapter Outline

The first chapter explores the differentiation and synchronization of rabbinic and Roman time by examining rabbinic attitudes toward the Roman calendar and its annual festivals. Mishnah *Avodah Zarah* begins with a list of Roman festivals and prohibitions against participating even in the non-cultic

commercial activities that surrounded them. Ironically, by trying so deliberately not to observe the Roman calendar and by formulating laws intended to limit interactions between Romans and Jews on certain calendar days, the rabbis of the Mishnah actually integrated the rhythms of the Roman calendar into their own daily lives, embedding Roman temporal sensibilities into the Jewish calendar. However, the Roman calendar became integrated into the Jewish cal**endar** not only through the formulation of rabbinic laws intended to limit interactions between Romans and Jews on certain calendar days but also **through** the Judaization of the Roman calendar in the rabbinic imagination. **The** rabbis explicitly ban economic interaction and deride social engagement **between** gentiles and Jews. Yet, in the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds, **the** origin and history of Roman festivals are presented as Jewish or biblical at **their** core. In one story, about the festival Kratesis, the geological, mythical, **and** historical origins of the city of Rome are traced to the idolatrous sins committed by a series of Israelite kings. In another story about this same festival, **the** Romans are said to draw on the power of the Torah and their alliance with **the** Jews in order to defeat their Greek rivals. Similarly, both Talmuds attribute the festival of the Kalends of January to the biblical Adam. In the Babylonian Talmud, Adam establishes this festival "for the sake of heaven" but the passage concludes that the festival was later corrupted by the Romans and made into an idolatrous celebration. Through these later rabbinic eyes, the Roman year was punctuated with days that had Jewish stories—and indeed a long Jewish past—attached to them, even as they maintained a cautious distance from them. As Fritz Graf has argued, the Roman calendar mapped Roman history onto an annual cycle.[153] Rabbinic prohibitions against and stories about Roman festivals had a similar function, mapping a rabbinic antiimperial narrative of Jewish history onto the Roman imperial year. These sources illuminate just how integral past and present Roman time was for the rabbis—a grave threat from which the rabbis sought to protect and distance their community, and so pervasive in the rabbis' environment that they sought to Judaize the Roman calendar.

Chapter **2** turns to rabbinic discussions of the Sabbath in light of Roman pagan critiques of and competing Christian claims to a weekly sacred day and other weekly worship practices. The first half of the chapter analyzes a section of Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael that contains an extended exegetical discussion about the Sabbath. This midrash offers passionate engagement with ideas that were popular in Second Temple and early Christian debates about Sabbath observance. The second half of the chapter analyzes a series of rabbinic stories that explore the sanctity of the Sabbath, found in fifth-century rabbinic sources compiled after Sunday became an imperially sanctioned day of rest and worship. It appears that rabbis proactively promoted the Sabbath as a day with distinct qualities that were inherent to it and persuaded Jews of this dimension of the Sabbath precisely because they worried that Jews might be drawn to other weekly temporal rhythms or that they could be susceptible to Roman Christian and non-Christian disparagement of the Sabbath and might therefore stop observing the Sabbath altogether. In each narrative, rabbinic outsiders confirm the constitutional singularity of the Sabbath day. In one story, an emperor visits a rabbi for a Sabbath meal and concludes that food on the Sabbath is more delicious than dishes prepared on any other day of the week. The narrative explains that the food is delectable thanks to the Sabbath's special qualities, which cannot be accessed by those who do not observe the day properly. In another story, a governor questions a rabbi about the qualities of the Sabbath, and the two figures engage in a long discussion that culminates in the official conjuring up his dead Roman father to verify the sanctity of the day. Although these stories are quite humorous, they are not told for purposes of entertainment. They appear in the later stratum of Palestinian rabbinic literature composed at the height of the Christianization of the Roman Empire, during the period when

Sunday was added to the imperial calendar in an official legal capacity. The narratives address specific critiques of the Jewish Sabbath that are known to us from non-Christian Greek and Latin polemics as well as contemporaneous Christian polemics against Jews and Judaism, all of which were prevalent within the lands of the Roman Empire. They can be understood as rabbinic attempts to make the Jewish Sabbath more attractive to other Jews, who may have been inclined to view the Sabbath as a temporal burden and even an embarrassment. Here, again, rabbinic insistence on the Sabbath's essential sanctity and therefore the importance of its proper observance asserted Jewish difference vis-à-vis not only alternative Roman pagan time but also Christian rhythms of weekly time in a period in which these Christian times were becoming more deeply embedded into a Roman imperial framework and had become increasingly dominant.

Chapter 3 tracks the construction of a gendered temporality by examining a set of daily rituals mandated in rabbinic sources, some of which applied to men and others that were only required of women. The chapter begins with the first ritual discussed in rabbinic sources, the recitation of the Shema prayer. Timing became an essential component of the Shema's recitation (in contradistinction to the biblical passage on which this rabbinic practice is based), and thus the tractate includes numerous debates about ritual time. One's time, it is suggested, ought to be marked first and foremost by this regularized declaration of devotion to God each morning and evening. Another feature of the rabbinic Shema is that only men became obligated in its recitation. According to the Mishnah, women are exempt from the fulfillment of this particular ritual as well as from the entire category of rituals that are labeled "positive timebound commandments." Women, in other words, are kept apart from the central devotional prayer that marks important moments of temporal transition during each rabbinic day, as well as from other rituals that similarly construct time for the individual and the community. Rabbinic texts do not regard women as completely disconnected from time-boundedness, however. While women are excluded from positive time-bound commandments, an entire set of rituals related to the laws of menstrual purity applies *only* to women and constructs a woman's time in ways that were markedly different from the time of men. The second half of this chapter follows the development of the laws of bodily purity from biblical texts, which provide extensive instructions concerning both men and women, to rabbinic texts, which focus far greater attention on laws related to the menstruant woman. By the end of the classical rabbinic period, the web of menstrual purity laws functioned in ways that are remarkably different from the laws of purity that pertain to men, especially with regard to time. One of the defining features of women's time, in contrast to men's time, is the alternation between times of purity and impurity. This feature emerges already in tannaitic sources but is especially striking in the Babylonian Talmud. These alternating times were dictated by the state of a woman's body as well as the associated daily practices of bodily examination, which women were required to perform at the same times at which men were required to recite the Shema. It is not incidental that positive time-bound commandments are based on external time-markers such as the celestial bodies and are designed to orient men's time toward God while the menstrual purity laws, in contrast, rely on the internal rhythms of a woman's body and orient women's times toward their bodies, their husbands, and other objects that could be contaminated at times of impurity. When men and women are mandated to perform different rituals that structure their days in unique ways, their conceptions of time can radically differ as well. What it meant to be a halakhically observant rabbinic man or woman, then, was defined by distinct embodied rituals and experiences of time.

Chapter 4 explores the day and its hourly subdivisions as rabbinic sources imagine God and humans to operate within the same units of time. The first three chapters detail annual, weekly, and daily rhythms of time in human realms and analyze the various ways in which people were instructed to use their time to worship God and observe God's commandments. The fourth chapter, in contrast, concentrates on rabbinic sources that wonder whether God keeps time, and if so, whether God keeps the same time as humans and how God's time is used in service of them. In texts from across the rabbinic corpus, God's divinity is contingent, in part, on time. As this chapter demonstrates, the unit of the hour became especially associated with God's time. God keeps to an hourly schedule during the day, has an active nightlife, and engages in tasks that sustain earthly life. Often, in these texts, God spends time performing activities in which humans engage as well, for example studying Torah, wearing phylacteries, and matchmaking, but God also performs tasks that are exclusively divine, such as judging the world's creatures and worshipping with the angels. These aspects of God's temporality thus simultaneously differentiate God in the heavenly sphere from those in the earthly realm and draw similarities between the time of those in heaven and on earth. The end of the chapter returns to the historical events that frame the beginning of this book. In the Babylonian Talmud, one of the most surprising aspects of God's time is how much of it God spends mourning the temple's destruction. Just as Ezra, in 4 Ezra, suffers from insomnia as he struggles to comprehend the tragedy of the destruction, God, as portrayed in the Babylonian Talmud, awakens to mark the nightly watches with pained cries of despair that the temple no longer stands. The fall of Jerusalem thus not only radically alters the human time frames that rabbinic sources attempt to reconfigure through revised rituals and laws. The destruction is also understood, in these later rabbinic sources, to cause a crisis of time for God, whose subsequent (post-destruction) times, too, needed readjustment. These sources about God's time highlight what the rabbis regarded as unique to human and divine time as well as how they imagined these two timescapes to intersect. They reinforce how important conceptualizing and dividing time was for the rabbinic enterprise not only in distinguishing men from women, Jews from Christians, and rabbis from Romans but also in distinguishing people from God and articulating what it meant, temporally and existentially, to be human or divine.

These processes of definition and differentiation did not end with the redaction of the Talmuds or the composition of later midrashim. Even as these temporal developments in classical rabbinic sources were tentative and gradual—and some of their social effects unintentional—many of the temporal practices became normative in the medieval period, establishing rhythms of time for later Jewish communities. Rabbinic discussions might have begun as legal and exegetical debates among the intellectual elites of the tannaitic and amoraic periods. Once the Babylonian Talmud gained semicanonical status and dictated Jewish life more broadly in the subsequent centuries, however, its laws were often more widely mandated, enforced, and practiced even as they continued to evolve in new historical and cultural settings. Medieval and modern legal literature and treatises devote much hermeneutical energy to interpreting prohibitions against participating in the forbidden times of those among whom Jews lived, marking the Sabbath, determining times for prayer, explicating the category of time-bound commandments, and further detailing the rhythms and rituals of bodily impurity and of God's time. In other words, the *conceptions* of daily time in the classical rabbinic sources that are at the heart of this study did, sooner or later, directly impact many aspects of Jewish *experiences* of time and influence the rhythm of daily life—to this day. The conclusion outlines how select groups of later Jews adopted and adapted (and, at times, ignored) these rabbinic concerns about time to their present circumstances and

the lasting legacy of these time frames and the differences they constructed on the history of Judaism and Jewish life in the *longue durée*. <>

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AND SPIRITUAL EXERCISES: THE MAKING OF THE MATTHEAN SELF by George Branch-Trevathan [Supplements to Novum Testamentum, Brill, 9789004424449]

What, in Matthew's view, should a human being become and how does one attain that ideal? In **THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AND SPIRITUAL EXERCISES: THE MAKING OF THE MATTHEAN SELF**, George Branch-Trevathan presents a new account of Matthew's ethics and argues that the evangelist presents the Sermon on the Mount as functioning like many other ancient sayings collections, that is, as facilitating transformative work on oneself, or "spiritual exercises," that enable one to realize the evangelist's ideals. The conclusion suggests some implications for our understanding of ethical formation in antiquity and the study of ethics more generally. This will be an essential volume for scholars studying the Gospel of Matthew, early Christian ethics, the relationships between early Christian and ancient philosophical writings, or ethical formation in antiquity.

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The Question and the Starting Point

How do people attain rigorous moral ideals? How do communities, especially those that resist or reject conventional ways of thinking and living and espouse perfectionist goals, expect their adherents to achieve those goals? One could ask these questions of any number of ancient groups, including ancient Jewish communities like the one that produced much of the literature in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Hellenistic and Roman philosophers, and early Christians. Indeed, a comparative study might reveal intriguing continuities as well as meaningful differences among groups that the modern historiography of antiquity often deems disparate. What sort of existence did each group idealize and how distinct in form or meaning were their means of achieving that existence? In this study, however, I ask these questions of only one early Christian text: the Gospel of Matthew. What type of existence does the First Gospel portray as normative and, according to this writing, how does one realize such a life? What, in Matthew's view, should the human being become and how does he or she transform into that ideal? This work takes up these questions. It is a descriptive study of Matthean ethics, with ethics in this case meaning both an ideal form of human existence and the means of realizing it. The description of Matthew consumes the study and I intend it as a contribution to scholarship on the First Gospel. The conclusion suggests though some implications for our understanding of self-transformation in antiquity and the study of self-transformation more generally.

It is a commonplace in antiquity that natural ability, relevant knowledge, and/or practice determine one's ability to make progress in any area, ethics included.' Philo of Alexandria, for example, portrays nature, learning, and exercise as three paths to virtue and takes the biblical patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to represent each respectively. One could therefore begin a study of Matthew's ethics with any one of these areas. Provisionally, with respect to nature, one might start by examining the passages in which the Matthean Jesus labels the Jewish leaders "offspring of vipers" (3:7; 12:34; 23:33) and the parable of the weeds, in which he refers to the "sons of the evil one" (13:38), because these designations imply, ostensibly at least, that the people in view are intrinsically and immutably evil. With respect to knowledge, one might start with Matthew's abundant references to knowing4 and understandings or to seeing° and hearing' or with the fact that the gospel features a prodigious amount of systematically organized teaching material, which, more than any other feature, has prompted numerous interpreters to conclude that the writing as a whole has a didactic purpose, meaning that it compiles the knowledge necessary for catechesis broadly defined8 and/or offers practical instructions For church leaders specifically.9 With respect to practice, one might begin by examining Jesus' insistence that his followers fast (6:16-18; 9:14-15), pray (5:44; 6:5 14; 7:7 -11; cf. 8:25, 26:41; et al.), sing hymns (26:3o), forgive (6:14-15; 18:21-2, 35; cr. 9:2), and suffer persecution (5:10-12; 10:16-23; 16:24-6; 24..9-13), or with particular literary forms within the gospel (e.g., formula quotations) and the practices their existence implies (e.g., "study and instruction"). Because I believe that Pierre Hadot's studies of the fundamental role of practices, or, as he calls them, "spiritual exercises," in ethical formation enable us to describe the role of practices in Matthew's ethical vision with greater specificity than current scholarship typically does and thereby shed new light on the evangelist's ethics as a whole, this study takes practices as its

starting point. To study practices in Matthew's gospel, I will focus on one specific literary form—the gnomic collection in chs. 5-7--and the exercises that form often facilitates. Relevant matters of nature and knowledge will be covered in due course.

Prior Research: The Justification for This Study

Modern scholarship makes Matthew seem an ideal early Christian text to query about practices and the realization of moral ideals because it typically portrays Matthew as reflecting or facilitating, resulting from or making possible morally formative practices. Ernst von Dobschutz, for instance, deems Matthew's repetitiveness and use of stock formulas evidence that the evangelist was a converted rabbi who employed the catechetical conventions of rabbinic Judaism to train followers of Jesus. Krister Stendahl argues that the literary form of the gospel—in his view, a manual for church teaching and administration—implies the existence of a school that cultivated ecclesial leaders. Thanks in part to these and similar claims, it is now common for biblical scholars to say that Matthew aimed and/or his gospel served to train disciples in some sense. And yet it is equally common to remain vague about the details of that training. For instance, Richard Hays, in a chapter of his Moral Vision of the New Testament entitled "The Gospel of Matthew: Training for the Kingdom of Heaven," states that "[t]he formation and discipling of the church occurs through the instruction offered by this Gospel." But he says very little about how Matthew imagines such instruction forms one, apart from mandating membership in an intentional and disciplined community. Warren Carter stresses that Matthew has a "formational rather than informational function" and, in what is perhaps the most detailed account available of how this gospel is formative, shows how the specific discourses about Jesus, his followers, their opponents, and the world that the gospel deploys as well as the rituals and organizational structures it sanctions shape and sustain a novel group identity. Although he sketches a vivid portrait of how the First Gospel "shape[s] and legitimate[s] the marginal identity and lifestyle of a community of disciples," Carter nonetheless leaves room for a thicker description of how that lifestyle forms individuals, how the practices authorized by the text render one consistently capable of the resistance to Roman imperial structures that, on his account, characterizes the Matthean way of life. From the perspective of one who wants to know how according to Matthew's gospel someone attains the ethical ideal, by what processes one becomes moral, the existing scholarship remains vague. The shortcoming of the myriad accounts of how Matthew results from, records, or facilitates formative practices is their generality.

Theological commitments may help explain why some scholars have not explored formation in Matthew with greater specificity. Protestants have often seen right actions and moral selves as the results not of formative practices but of divine grace.18 The Matthean ideal, on this view, would be formed not by striving, not by askesis, but by divine reformation apart from human action. Some Protestants have thus reversed Augustine's and others' understanding of the role of religious practice, seeing practices as resulting from moral change, not producing it. This theological starting point would explain why these Protestants have had little need or desire to ask how—through what processes—the ideal Matthean self arises. It does not address why others have not pursued the question in greater detail.

Regardless of why scholarship on this topic currently lacks specificity, a more specific account of Matthew's understanding of moral formation seems possible or, at minimum, the possibility of offering one merits investigation, given the abundant evidence for and the recent detailed studies of moral formation in Matthew's historical contexts, that is, in the ancient Mediterranean world. The scholar

whose work has done the most in the last half century to highlight and describe moral formation in antiquity is the historian and theorist of philosophy Pierre Hadot. A brief account of his characterization of ancient philosophy will alert us to the general importance of formative practices as well as to some of the specific practices undertaken in antiquity.

On Hadot's account, philosophy originally was—and the ancients understood it as—the pursuit of a new and better way of being in the world, of a way of life radically different from that of most people, in contrast with what philosophy typically is today, the search for an abstract account of reality from which a way of living might eventually follow. "[I]n all ancient philosophy, philosophy consists in the movement by which the individual transcends himself toward something which lies beyond him," Hadot writes. It is "an attempt at spiritual progress and a means of inner transformation." In this attempt, philosophical teachers and students fashioned specific beliefs, forms of community, and, most importantly, practices that would enable them to achieve their moral ideals. The major philosophical schools of antiquity elaborated sophisticated accounts of the universe (physics), of knowledge (logic), of morality (ethics), and more but these beliefs or doctrines did not constitute their philosophies. Rather, they justified and clarified the ways of life the schools advocated and their study and production facilitated progress in this new life. They developed social arrangements and modes of personal relationship centered on moral or spiritual guidance shaping, leading, and exhorting one another's conscience.26 Most importantly, they adopted practices intended to transform their thoughts, desires, and dispositions. Some of these practices were bodily. The Stoic Musonius Rufus, for instance, recommended acclimating oneself to physical discomfort ("to the cold, to heat, to hunger, to frugal nourishment, to hard beds") in order to desensitize the body to pain and thereby render the soul more courageous and temperate. But most of the practices were mental: studying mathematics and the natural world, engaging in dialogue and debate, meditating on doctrinal maxims, monitoring one's inner discourse, and composing and commenting on texts. These practices aimed at such a total reformation—no, transformation—of the person from the inside out that Hadot terms them "spiritual exercises." He believes no other term can capture the scope of their impact, as he explains in the 1974 Annuaire of the École pratique des hautes etudes:

« Exercices spirituels » . L'expression déroute un peu le lecteur contem-orain. Tout d'abord it nest plus de trees bon ton, aujourd'hui, d'employer le mot « spirituel ». Mais it faut bien se resigner a employer ce terme, parce que les autres adjectifs ou qualificatifs possibles : « psychique », «moral », «ethique», « intellectuel », « de pensée », « de l'ame » ne recouvrent pas tous les aspects de la réalité que nous voulons décrire. On pourrait évidemment parley d'exercices de pensée, puisque, dans ces exercices, la pens se prend en quelque sorte pour matière et cherche a se modifier elle-même. Mais le mot « pensée » n'indique pas d'une manière suflisamment claire que l'imagination et la sensibilité interviennent d'une manière très importante dans ces exercices. Pour les mêmes raisons, on ne peut se contenter d'« exercices intellectuels », bien que les aspects intellectuels (definition, division, raisonnement, lecture, recherche, amplification rhétorique) y jouent un grand role. « Exercices ethiques » serait une expression assez séduisante, puisque, nous le verrons, les exercices en question contribuent puissamment a la thérapeutique des passions et se rapportent a la conduite de la vie. Pourtant ce serait la encore une vue trop limitée. En fait, ces exercices—nous l'entrevoyons par le texte de G. Friedmann—correspondent a une transformation de la vision du monde et a une metamorphose de la personnalité. Le mot « spirituel » permet bien de faire entendre que ces exercices sont l'oeuvre, non seulement de la pensée, mais de tout le psychisme de l'individu et surtout it révèle les vraies dimensions de ces exercices : grace a eux, l'individu s'élève a la vie de l'Esprit objectif, c'est-á-dire se replace dans la perspective du Tout (« S'éterniser en se dépassant »).

["Spiritual exercises". The expression confuses the contemporary reader a little. First of all, it is no longer commonplace today to use the word "spiritual". But we must resign ourselves to using this term, because the other possible adjectives or qualifiers: "psychic", "moral", "ethical", "intellectual", "of thought", "of the soul" do not cover all the aspects of reality that we want to describe. One could obviously parley of thought exercises, since, in these exercises, thought takes itself in a way for matter and seeks to modify itself. But the word "thought" does not indicate in a sufficiently clear way that imagination and sensitivity are involved in a very important way in these exercises. For the same reasons, one cannot be satisfied with "intellectual exercises", although the intellectual aspects (definition, division, reasoning, reading, research, rhetorical amplification) play a great role in it. "Ethical exercises" would be a rather attractive expression, since, as we shall see, the exercises in question contribute powerfully to the therapy of the passions and relate to the conduct of life. Yet this would still be too limited a view. In fact, these exercises — we glimpse it through the text of G. Friedmann — correspond to a transformation of the vision of the world and a metamorphosis of the personality. The word "spiritual" allows us to understand that these exercises are the work not only of thought, but of the entire psyche of the individual and above all it reveals the true dimensions of these exercises: thanks to them, the individual rises to the life of the objective Spirit, that is to say, places himself in the perspective of the Whole (“eternalize oneself by going beyond oneself”).]

These exercises are "intended to carry out a radical change in our being," "a transformation of the self" that renders one more capable of the life sought, that allows one to attain a moral ideal. What most modern people have mistaken for philosophy, philosophical discourse, is merely a byproduct of philosophy and not the thing itself, at least not originally. Philosophy itself is originally the attempt to fashion oneself into a particular ideal and regimented practices, or spiritual exercises, are its formative instruments.

Given that this study aims to elucidate the Gospel of Matthew, which engages extensively with Jewish texts and traditions and so seems to emerge from a Jewish intellectual if not social milieu distinct in important ways from the Greek and Roman philosophies on which Hadot focuses, it is worth noting at this point that, according to Hadot, spiritual exercises are not exclusive to ancient philosophical schools, at least as those schools are traditionally delineated (i.e., Platonists, Aristotelians, Stoics, Epicureans, Skeptics, and Cynics). They figure also in ancient Judaism (which might in this and other respects be considered a philosophical school). In an essay intended "not merely to draw attention to the existence of spiritual exercises in Greco-Latin antiquity, but above all to delimit the scope and importance of this phenomenon," Hadot maintains that "spiritual exercises can be best observed in the context of Hellenistic and Roman schools of philosophy," not that they can only be observed in such schools.38 In fact, Hadot finds the most complete catalogues of spiritual exercises in two passages of the first-century Jewish scriptural interpreter Philo (Leg. 3.18; Her. 253). To be sure, Philo participates in the philosophical currents of the ancient Mediterranean and Hadot describes him as naming Platonic and Stoic exercises, as, in other words, Philo Alexandrinus. But these catalogues appear within Philo's interpretation of the Mosaic law, for he is also Philo Judaeus, and they thus prove that morally transformative exercises feature not only in the philosophical schools as customarily conceived but also in some forms of ancient Judaism. Hadot later makes this point implicitly when he claims that Philo's portrayal of Judaism as a philosophy replete with philosophical exercises inspires Christians' presentation of Christianity as a philosophy.

In keeping with his focus on the traditional philosophical schools, of spiritual exercises in Judaism Hadot mentions only Philo's two catalogues. But the phenomenon he identifies, the phenomenon of spiritual exercises, or regimented practices that transform a person into a particular ethical ideal, appears in other ancient Jewish sources as well. The biblical book of Sirach, for instance, constitutes, according to Daniel Harrington, "a handbook for personal and spiritual formation" that enables one to undertake meditative exercises like those Hadot discerns in the Greek and Roman philosophical schools. The Qumran Hodayot provide, on Carol Newsom's reading, "models for oral performances" that create in the performers "dispositions, desires, motivations, and behaviors" that enable them to be proper members of the sect." In other words, they facilitate transformative exercises. Jonathan Schofer has shown that the rabbinic work The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan portrays rabbinic activity in general as the pursuit of self-transformation, just as Hadot portrays philosophy in general, and also forms the basis for some of the specific intellectual exercises Hadot finds within philosophical schools. The content of the exercises that Sirach, the Hodayot, and Rabbi Nathan facilitate and the moral ideals those exercises support differ from those of the philosophical schools and from each other, just as the contents and particular goals of spiritual exercises differ among the philosophical schools. Nonetheless, these three examples show that the phenomenon Hadot describes in the schools and in Philo extends beyond them, specifically into other varieties of Judaism, and so forms part of the ancient Mediterranean world that is Matthew's context, generally speaking, however one might characterize the evangelist's context more specifically. Though he analyzes only those writings where he finds the phenomenon most prominent, Hadot would not be surprised nor would he object to this claim that spiritual exercises appear elsewhere since he does not delimit the phenomenon to the traditional schools and even implies that, while it has a history, it is a perennial feature of human life, a phenomenon "going back to immemorial times."

Hadot's characterization of ancient philosophy thus reveals the prominence of transformative exercises in antiquity and the specificity with which one can describe their dynamics and thereby suggests that a thicker description of Matthew's portrayal of ethical exercise might be both possible and fruitful.

Nevertheless, though he allows for the existence of spiritual exercises outside of philosophies, Hadot does claim that early Christianity did not feature such exercises before the mid-second century, at which point Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria unexpectedly assimilated this apocalyptic brand of Judaism to a Greco-Roman philosophy by, among other changes, introducing "philosophical spiritual exercises into" it. If Matt 5-7 does indeed form the basis for a practice that conforms to Hadot's definition of a spiritual exercise, then Hadot's periodization is not only inconsistent but mistaken and the presence of spiritual exercises characterizes Christianity from at least the time of Matthew's composition. Since Hadot's account of the dissemination of formative practices has proven influential, this investigation has implications then for the historiography of moral formation in the early Roman period.

Hadot's work not only highlights the pervasiveness of transformative exercises in antiquity but also suggests a specific starting point for investigating Matthew's portrayal of such practices. The most fundamental of these exercises, Hadot says, are meditating on key principles expressed briefly and memorably, that is, in gnomic sayings or simply "gnomes," and policing one's inner life. By meditation Hadot means "a purely rational, imaginative, or intuitive exercise than can take extremely varied forms" but which essentially entails "the memorization and assimilation of the fundamental dogmas and rules of

life of the school." In this exercise, one assimilates a way of life's core tenets, or fundamental dogmas and rules, by memorizing them so that they are always present in one's mind and by imagining their application to varied situations so that one can discern their import when confronted with shocking or surprising circumstances. Such meditation makes possible the other fundamental exercise: "attention," or "self-control," in which one continually scrutinizes and disciplines one's thoughts, desires, and emotions so that they conform to the core tenets one has espoused. Through this process of assimilation and self-monitoring, one comes to be and act in accordance with the school's ideals. One realizes its way of life.

To facilitate meditation and, in turn, attention to oneself, schools stated their dogmas in pithy, striking, and hence memorable forms—in gnomic sayingsand compiled collections of those sayings. According to Hadot, so central were these practices and so vital the need to supply fuel for them that the very existence of a sayings collection can constitute evidence of them. "The abundance of collections of Epicurean aphorisms," for instance, "is a response to the demands of the spiritual exercise of meditation." As I will explain below, Matt 5-7, the so-called Sermon on the Mount (henceforth SM), is a collection of gnomic sayings. Given the prominence of spiritual exercises in antiquity and the fact that such collections are often intended to facilitate spiritual exercises, is. the SM then, at least in the narrative world of its host gospel, regardless of how these chapters may have functioned or Matthew may have intended them to function in his or others' communities, an instrument for rendering people capable of attaining the evangelist's ethical ideal? Does Matthew present the SM as the basis for the sort of transformative work on the self that Hadot calls a spiritual exercise? Hadot's studies of philosophical exercises, which, in Arnold Davidson's words, "open up dimensions of ancient philosophy we have typically overlooked or forgotten," suggest these questions are worth pursuing and that answering them may lead us to a more precise description of at least one way in which the First Gospel imagines the realization of a right life, may reveal dimensions of Matthew currently overlooked or forgotten. Therefore, as a way of describing Matthew's ethics, this study will focus on the gnomic collection found in chs. 5-7 and will discern the extent to which the gospel presents it as the basis of a spiritual exercise that transforms one into Matthew's ideal.

In preparation for assessing whether Matt 5-7, as a gnomic collection, facilitates exercises, I will, in the remainder of this introduction, establish that it is indeed a gnomic collection and explain how, in studying it as a formative collection of sayings, I build on previous readings of these chapters by Augustine and Hans Dieter Betz. I will conclude by outlining how the investigation will unfold in subsequent chapters.

***

The Plan of This Study

I will argue that the form of Matt 5-7, the fact that it consists of pithy sayings, or gnomes, allows for a more descriptive answer to the question of how, according to Matthew, one is to realize the gospel's ethical ideal. My thesis is that by featuring prominently within his gospel a sayings collection, the epilogue of which exhorts the reader to internalize the sayings and thereby acquire a new character (7:24-7) consonant with the moral ideal found throughout the gospel, Matthew implies that one can become the self his gospel idealizes through using these sayings in transformative exercises, in what Hadot calls "spiritual exercises." I thus endorse Betz's proposal about the SM's genre but maintain that the case for

it is strengthened, not diminished when the SM is read as a part of Matthew's gospel. The argument unfolds in four chapters.

Chapter two describes the forms and functions of ancient sayings collections and highlights in particular the evidence that some collections were employed to form particular varieties of character. Because Betz chooses them as comparable and because, as I will show in that chapter, the notion that they facilitate exercises is a rather assured result of scholarship in classics and ancient philosophy, I study Epicurus' Kyriai Doxai and Epictetus' Encheiridion to discern how one might know that a particular gnomic work is an instrument intended for use in transformative work on oneself. I offer an account of Epicurus' ideal self and then show that his Kyriai Doxai restates that ideal in gnomic form and that further evidence internal to the work and external to it (e.g., Epicurus' other writings as well as testimonia about the Kyriai Doxai) indicates that it facilitates a spiritual exercise that enables one to become that idealized self. I show the same for Epictetus and the Encheiridion.

Like Betz, I consider the Kyriai Doxai and the Encheiridion to be comparable from within Matthew's historical contexts. These gnomic collections not only provide clear examples of the use of sayings collections in spiritual exercises; they provide clear examples of such formative use in the same language and roughly the same historical period (Greco-Roman antiquity, c. 300 BCE to C. 300 CE) and geographical area (the Mediterranean world) as the SM. Similarities in function between them and the Sermon likely imply then not a genetic relationship, as Hadot would have it, but the adoption of a convention—the use of sayings collections in ethical formation—prevalent in this context.'" Studying the SM in light of those conventions clarifies its function within Matthew's narrative. In this way the existence of these sayings collections within Matthew's environment makes my argument more plausible and the collections thus have some evidentiary value, though the argument rests primarily on evidence internal to Matthew.

But for readers who consider Greek sayings collections outside of or marginal to Matthew's milieu, I believe these comparables still have value as analogies to the SM. Recent scholarship typically stresses Matthew's indebtedness to or participation in particularly Jewish conventions and fruitfully so. Some of my own interpretations of Matthean passages in later chapters stress the gospel's interactions with Jewish traditions. In light of the insights gained by adducing Jewish comparables, one might understandably deem Greek and Roman materials irrelevant or at least of secondary value, in as much as Jewish traditions are not also Greek and/or Roman. Benedict Viviano, for example, considers non-Jewish Greek sources of "tertiary or quaternary" importance to the interpretation of the SM. If one adopts this view, then the Greek works I study in this chapter provide potential analogues to the SM from an unrelated or minimally related context. They are remote and not proximate comparables. As such, they are valuable in that generate questions and hypotheses that the interpreter can pose to and test within the Gospel of Matthew itself. They are of little to no evidentiary value to my thesis about the First Gospel, except in as much as they show that human beings generally tend to utilize collections of wise sayings in self-transformation. The argument depends entirely on evidence internal to Matthew, as understood within a strictly Jewish context. As I have said, I do not view these comparisons thusly; like the collections I discuss therein, chapter two has an intended hermeneutic. Readers, however, may utilize it in multiple ways.

In chapters three through five, I argue that most of the characteristics that indicate that the Kyriai Doxai and the Encheiridion are formative exist for Matthew's SM by following the same analytical procedure carried out on the former gnomologia in chapter two. In chapters three and four, I describe Matthew's character ethic, or ideal self, using primarily what biblical scholars call narrative criticism, that is, through a close, synchronic reading of the text, but incorporating insights from redaction criticism, from diachronic reading, as well. Chapter three traces this gospel's use of the metaphor of trees and their fruits for the source of conduct and conduct itself and shows that particular inward traits and states make right actions possible and that right intentions must accompany those actions. Chapter four finds the same convictions in Matthew's treatment of purity in 15:1-20, eschatological preparation and judgment in chs. 24-5, and hypocrisy throughout the gospel. These chapters reveal that Matthew idealizes a self humble enough to repent in response to John's and Jesus' preaching and become Jesus' disciple, one who maintains the emotional and mental stability necessary to persist in doing the good deeds God demands despite such threats as persecution, the lure of wealth and status, and the unpredictability of the eschaton—to endure in discipleship—, and one who safeguards the intentions that ensure those deeds are good. As I

explain in chapter three, my description of Matthew's moral ideal differs from other recent scholarly accounts only in its emphasis: whereas several prominent studies of late, in reaction to prior scholarship that portrayed Matthew as prioritizing dispositions and intentions, have stressed that the evangelist demands proper conduct, I emphasize that Matthew depicts certain internal states as the necessary pre- or co-requisites of that conduct. Chapter five then identifies evidence internal and external to the SM—evidence comparable to that presented for the Kyriai Doxai and the Encheiridion—that Matthew portrays it as the basis for an exercise that enables one to become that self.

Finally, a conclusion summarizes the results of chapters one through four and presents the study's implications for our understanding of Matthew's ethics, the history of self-transformation in antiquity, and the study of ethics more generally. We begin in the next chapter by surveying gnomic forms and the functions of gnomic collections. <>

BYZANTINE INTERSECTIONALITY: SEXUALITY, GENDER, AND RACE IN THE MIDDLE AGES by Roland Betancourt [Princeton University Press, 978-0691179452]

A fascinating history of marginalized identities in the medieval world

While the term "intersectionality" was coined in 1989, the existence of marginalized identities extends back over millennia. **BYZANTINE INTERSECTIONALITY: SEXUALITY, GENDER, AND RACE IN THE MIDDLE AGES** reveals the fascinating, little-examined conversations in medieval thought and visual culture around matters of sexual and reproductive consent, bullying and slut-shaming, homosocial and homoerotic relationships, trans and nonbinary gender identities, and the depiction of racialized minorities. Roland Betancourt explores these issues in the context of the Byzantine Empire, using sources from late antiquity and early Christianity up to the early modern period. Highlighting nuanced and strikingly modern approaches by medieval writers, philosophers, theologians, and doctors, Betancourt offers a new history of gender, sexuality, and race.

Betancourt weaves together art, literature, and an impressive array of texts to investigate depictions of sexual consent in images of the Virgin Mary, tactics of sexual shaming in the story of Empress Theodora, narratives of transgender monks, portrayals of same-gender desire in images of the Doubting Thomas, and stereotypes of gender and ethnicity in representations of the Ethiopian Eunuch. He also gathers evidence from medical manuals detailing everything from surgical practices for late terminations of pregnancy to save a mother's life to a host of procedures used to affirm a person's gender.

Showing how understandings of gender, sexuality, and race have long been enmeshed, **BYZANTINE INTERSECTIONALITY: SEXUALITY, GENDER, AND RACE IN THE MIDDLE AGES** offers a groundbreaking look at the culture of the medieval world.

Review

"This book is for the outcast and for those who inhabit the margins of the past and present. . . . **BYZANTINE INTERSECTIONALITY** [also] provides art historians, archaeologists, and historians with a better theoretical basis for reconstructing the complex lived reality of queerness, sexual violence, consent, and racial profiling. The marginalized biblical figures and saints examined together serve as a new testament to how engrained systematic oppression functions in society."**---Sarah Bond, *Hyperallergic***

"**BYZANTINE INTERSECTIONALITY**. . . quotes Monica Lewinsky in its epigraph and brings an activist's zeal to its queer-theory close readings of texts and images from the Eastern Roman Empire between the fourth and fifteenth centuries. By scouring legal, medical, and religious sources, and reading misogynist invectives against the grain, Betancourt builds a fascinating picture of more fluid attitudes and practices around sexuality than have been suggested in the mainstream historical record . . . the details Betancourt excavates can be as illuminating as they are juicy."**---Lidija Haas, *Harper's Magazine***

"BYZANTINE INTERSECTIONALITY takes up the challenge of reading ancient texts—visual and linguistic—through the lens of contemporary methodologies and, even more daringly, current social identities and concepts. Dazzling in its analysis, thoroughly researched, and theoretically illuminating, this book changes not only how we see the Byzantine era, but also the stakes of recent work in queer, transgender, and critical race studies. *Byzantine Intersectionality* is for anyone who wants to learn how the past makes the present new."**—Elizabeth Freeman, author of *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories***

"This radically interdisciplinary tour de force gives extraordinary insight into nonnormative Byzantine subjectivities while breathtakingly detailing how gender, race, and sexuality were understood and deployed. A magnificent book, *Byzantine Intersectionality* shows us how critical race theory and queer and transgender studies can change our understanding of the past."**—Steven Nelson, author of *From Cameroon to Paris: Mousgoum Architecture In and Out of Africa***

"**BYZANTINE INTERSECTIONALITY** aims at nothing less than the recuperation of trans identities of the premodern past. Skillfully bridging the chronological gap separating the Byzantine from the modern and beyond, Betancourt exploits the fecundity of anachronism. His engagement with materiality, and his

exploration of the philosophical commitments pertaining to the relationship of form and matter, are nuanced and provocative."**—Suzanne Conklin Akbari, author of *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100–1450***

"**Byzantine Intersectionality** makes claims about historically remote gender-variant subjects and minority sexualities that are bound to be controversial. Whatever readers may think about the historicization of sexuality and gender, however, they are sure to find material here that will challenge preconceived notions about the histories of race, gender, sexuality, and desire."**—Jack Halberstam, author of *Female Masculinity***

"Essential and groundbreaking, **Byzantine Intersectionality** is a major contribution to the ongoing discussion in critical race studies and gender, sexuality, and transgender studies."**—Dorothy Kim, author of *The Alt-Medieval: Digital Whiteness and Medieval Studies***

"Rich with startling and even alarming evidence, this book offers a timely and challenging perspective on Byzantine society and culture. Placing late ancient and medieval Greek texts and images into dialogue with some of the most pressing concerns of our own day, including gender, sexuality, race, and identity, **Byzantine Intersectionality** may be the most significant communication from Byzantine studies to the rest of the humanities this decade."**—Derek Krueger, author of *Liturgical Subjects: Christian Ritual, Biblical Narrative, and the Formation of the Self in Byzantium***

"Provocative, imaginative, and original, **Byzantine Intersectionality** cuts across disciplines with an urgent and political voice. It investigates important topics and will stir up controversy and conversation."**—Charles Barber, author of *Figure and Likeness: On the Limits of Representation in Byzantine Iconoclasm***

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Byzantine Intersectionality

> I was branded as a tramp, tart, slut, whore, bimbo, and, of course, that woman .. . When this happened to me seventeen years ago, there was no name for it. Now we call it cyberbullying and online harassment. —MONICA LEWINSKY

Following the intersectional approach of critical race studies and feminism, this project acknowledges that identity is neither singular nor delimited by neat categories. In 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term "intersectionality" to stress that the lived realities of marginalized people do not exist as isolated factors alone but instead come together at the intersection of gender, sexuality, race, socioeconomic status, and so on. Thus, intersectionality looks at how the overlap of social identities creates unique conditions of inequality and oppression.23 Unlike approaches that study the role of women or foreigners in the medieval world in isolation, intersectionality suggests that a foreign woman, for example, faces a series of challenges that include the struggles of those socially identified as being both foreign and female, yet she is not merely the sum of those parts. This book is titled Byzantine Intersectionality not only because it studies the intersectionality of identity across the Byzantine world but also because the pejorative "byzantine" speaks to the inherent queerness of these stories and the empire from which that slur was taken. Intersectional identity is byzantine—it is infinitely complicated, and it is often characterized as devious, deceitful, and corrupt.

For those reasons, I have chosen to use the phrase "the Byzantine world" throughout this book: it serves as a capacious term to encompass the span of the Greek-speaking Mediterranean, as well as the contributions to this world by its closest neighbors and allies.24 Ultimately, this is a book about the Byzantine Empire, which I define as the Eastern Roman Empire from the foundation of Constantinople in the early fourth century until its conquest in the late fifteenth century. In using a definition that spans the late antique, medieval, and early modern periods, I purposely acknowledge the unbroken tradition of the medieval Roman Empire, which possessed an access to and intimacy with the Greek and Latin heritage of the ancient Greek and Roman Mediterranean and its neighbors.

Intersectionality, however, does more than flesh out the subjectivities of people who experience the overlap of several discriminated against, marginalized, or disenfranchised identities. Intersectionality also alerts us to the subjects whose privilege keeps them away from the public eye. The figure of the abortion-inducing sex worker is shaped by her intersectional identity as a destitute woman of the lowest economic status, yet it also makes us aware that women of privilege would have been spared from such libelous representations in texts, even when performing the same deeds. For example, that an elite medical text would provide detailed prescriptions for abortive suppositories, contraceptive treatments, and late-term surgical methods for terminating a pregnancy demonstrates the privilege of upper-class women's own pursuits of contraception and abortion.

In examining the lives of figures subjected to multiple inequities, we begin to perceive the privileges afforded to some other women, men, and nonbinary figures in society. Privilege, and the privacy it often enables, create the greatest lacunae in the historical record. Privacy creates closets that allow certain figures ample room to maneuver, away from the judgment and agency of publics and oppressors. Such figures are usually also safe from the historian's stylus. Thus, in articulating the intersectionality of disen franchised identities, we will also be outlining the privilege afforded to I hose persons who might have shared in some of these identities, but whose economic status, social rank, race, origin, and so on spared them from vilification in the historical record—if not from any association with a marginalized identity. Intersectionality makes us keenly aware of all those hidden figures who were able to make choices about their sexual consent, pursue abortions and contraceptives, live as transgender monks, engage in same-gender intimacies, and be black at court, without facing the same degree of invective or libel as their poorer counterparts. This book challenges us to take risks in fleshing out the intersectional

lives of the downtrodden, while also providing spectrums of possibility for the identities and freedoms allowed to the more privileged ranks and neglected by the historical record.

Given the historical archive's push toward normative narratives, queer historical tasks such as this require close reading and careful scrutiny of what has been labeled minor. As Elizabeth Freeman has eloquently put it, queer history necessitates "the decision to unfold, slowly, a small number of imaginative texts rather than amass a weighty archive of or around texts, and to treat these texts and their formal work as theories of their own, interventions upon both critical theory and historiography." But, more so, this book struggles with the absences of archives and the potent act of grasping at lives, purposefully and shamefully erased and denied. "To read without a trace," as Anjali Arondekar calls it, is a way of embracing the absences of the archive, the seductions of a retrieval, and the recuperative hermeneutics of accessing minoritized lives and historiographies. It is this intersection of slow unfolding and traceless reading that this book embraces.

The five chapters that follow unfurl a series of minuscule intersectional histories.28 Each history is carefully scaled and delineated to elucidate rich, nuanced, and surprising takes by medieval thinkers and artists on familiar subjects. Sometimes it encompasses a neatly defined trajectory in the evolution of a cluster of ideas; at other times it focuses on a particular person, specific period, or textual genre to generate points of resistance that might otherwise be overlooked or have no place in a broader historical account.

These five chapters will reveal long-standing conversations in medieval thought around matters of reproductive consent, sexual shaming, trans and nonbinary genders, queer intimacies, and racial identity. Chapter 1 traces the evolving emphasis given to consent in treatments of the Annunciation, stressing the important role that Mary's consent to become the Mother of God played in homilies and art after Iconoclasm. Chapter 2 focuses on the practices and tactics that Procopius uses in the Secret History to slut-shame Empress Theodora, focusing on his deployment of graphic sexual detail and accusations against her and other women of abortive and contraceptive practices. Chapter 3 surveys saints' lives, medical texts, and the epistolary tradition not only to present evidence for the representation of transgender and gender nonconforming persons in Byzantium but also to elucidate a host of gender affirming practices found in both surgical guides and ascetic action. Chapter 4 examines representations of the Doubting Thomas scene in text and art to reveal potent narratives of same-gender desire and monastic community, stressing the need to include trans, nonbinary, and asexual figures in the history of queer sexuality and intimacy. And chapter 5 places the visual representations of the Ethiopian Eunuch from the Acts of the Apostles in the context of discourses around racial identity, ethnic grouping, and skin color in order to delineate how artists struggled with the figure's intersectional identity as a eunuch, a Christian, and a black African. None of these narratives is comprehensive or exhaustive, but all are sufficient and provocative orientations that require us to think further into these identities and do better as readers, historians, and modern subjects.

My promise to the reader is that I will endeavor (as much as I responsibly can) to treat the figures in my texts and images as possible medieval subjects with a past, a present, and—most important—a future. Many of the subjectivities encompassed here have been actively denied, negated, or simply assumed to have not existed in the Middle Ages. I will take their existence for granted and treat them as real, because they were real. Whether Empress Theodora actually carried out the sexual deeds and

abortions that Procopius slut-shames her for does not matter, because there were other women in the past subjected to the same—and far worse—rhetorical and physical violence as that imputed against Procopius's literary Theodora. Whether the trans monks discussed in this book actually existed or were simply literary characters is beside the point. The fact is that there were people in the Byzantine Empire who were trans and who, even if they did not have the critical vocabulary to self-identify as such or have their voices recorded, were nevertheless still trans. To deny these realities is to be complicit with violence—both physical and rhetorical—not just in the past but also in the present.

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In 1992, Michael Camille argued that "the margins add an extra dimension, a supplement, that is able to gloss, parody, modernize and problematize the text's authority while never totally undermining it The marginal identities discussed in this volume, however, do not form a strictly binary relationship with the center. In the Byzantine world, the ultimate recognition of the alterity of the so-called marginal is what always shocks those in the center into realizing their misgivings, their failures, and their own lacks. What we have seen here are figures who did not adhere to normative standards and who therefore actively challenged Byzantine culture to confront its privilege and entitlement. The praise enjoyed by transgender monks did not translate to a modern notion of equal rights. Transgender women, for example, are all but absent from the historical record. Nevertheless, because of trans monks, religious authors praised and venerated trans identities, despite legal and biblical prohibitions against their very existence. To consider the histories presented in this book is thus to glimpse the workings of a more ethical medieval past that neither fetishized otherness nor denigrated it, but rather sought to reevaluate its givens by learning from the subjectivities of these people.

In looking at same-gender desire, slut-shaming, or gender identity in Byzantium, we find a world where gender and sexual practices that were nonnormative enjoyed a great deal of room to operate, even if, at times, it drew the ire of ecclesiastical figures or authorities who might have not approved of all the diverse practices in the various centers of the empire, from Constantinople to Alexandria. Camille's notion that the center is "dependent upon the margins for its continued existence"' rests on the assumption that it was by defining an othered and marginalized community that the center was able to retain its privilege and entitlement. Byzantium offers little evidence of this dynamic except in the most simplistic of forms. Byzantium's contact with others was always deeply personal; chances are that many people of any given identity—whether the focus is constructions ofrace, religious confession, or gender expression—existed in Constantinople as residents, tourists, or traders. There is no parallel in western Europe for Eustathios of Thessaloniki's praise for the eclectic and diverse Constantinopolitan court or Michael Psellus's boasts about their multicultural, multilingual, and multiethnic students.

In other words, in Byzantium the center does not depend on ostracizing the margins in order to forcefully exclaim and perpetually reclaim its centrality. Instead, the center depends on the margins for its continued existence in a quite different way; it worked more as an articulated hub in a broad network linked to various global and diverse centers than as a solitary colonial core. The saints' lives discussed here demonstrate an immense degree of mobility and circulation across the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern worlds, as fluid and permeable as the gender and sexual identities that unfold across those spaces. In describing the miraculous sacrifices of trans monks, the stories articulate what the center has to gain and learn from the marginalized, just as some Byzantine philosophers learned Arabic,

spent time abroad, translated texts, and developed their ideas accordingly. When we examine figures like Procopius's Theodora, the homiletics on sexual consent, the various discussions on contraception and abortion, or offhand rules for dealing with same-gender desire in monastic spaces, we are forced to recognize the many discriminated against and disadvantaged figures who operated in the shadows of these centers.

Confronting the intersectionality of identity, we begin to perceive not only the struggles faced by disenfranchised identities but likewise the outlines of excised subjectivities who, owing to certain forms of privilege and entitlement, left a mark on the historical record even if many others like them were erased. Beyond illuminating the tentative and possible lives of medieval subjects, downtrodden because of their intersectional identities, the power of intersectionality as a method is to recognize the ability of privilege to compensate for a person's otherwise ill-regarded lives. Had Elagabalus or Theodora been just another person or performer in a late antique city, their identities would have been entirely expunged, existing only within the indiscriminately nameless mass of denigrated subjectivities compounded within the screeds of invective. Yet, as entitled and privileged figures who were nevertheless subjected to transphobia and slut-shaming, respectively, they managed to leave behind for us a ghostly image of such subjectivities in the premodern world.

My point here is certainly not that Elagabalus and Theodora enjoyed the privileges of the late antique equivalent of a straight white cis male, but rather that, because of the inordinate privileges of rank and wealth that they enjoyed, they were able to bypass the nameless obscurity of those whose identities placed them in positions of far less power. Just as intersectionality makes us aware that white feminism can be toxic to feminists of color whose suffering is radically different by the virtue of their intersecting identities, as historians we can use the privilege of recorded historical figures to excavate interstitial subjectivities that were denied to those less privileged. The relative privilege of a transgender monk, who is praised for his ascent from femininity to masculinity, converts misogynist rhetoric into a meagerly preserved identity in the historical record. Through them we can then obliquely consider the social, medical, and institutional possibilities for transgender women, for whom a transgender identity was met not with misogynistic praise but with transmisogynistic erasure.

Intersectionality thus makes Camille's center/periphery binary wholly irrelevant, redirecting our attention not to what lies at one place or the other, nor to the dialogic constitution of the two, but rather to the multiple states of marginality that repeatedly intersect. Rather than looking at the dynamics of marginality construed through power and authority, even when playfully subverted, we must question the institution of power directly. Despite his allusions to the flux between margins and centers, Camille's margin ultimately plays with glosses on identity without being able to flesh out the textures and messiness of identities in their individual pluralities. After all, as a gay white male scholar, marginal identity was monolithic and defined for Camille. Camille's failures make us keenly aware that to uphold binary constructions of identity is ultimately to accede to the power structures that would rather keep center and periphery as valid classifications. As a retort to Michael Camille's Image on the Edge, this book is intended to stress the intersection, multiplicity, and ultimate erasure of the identities addressed.

Future scholarship must acknowledge that marginalization, oppression, and intersectionality are not modern constructs—they are methodologies. Even if such self-critical language is missing from our primary sources, we cannot state that the lived realities and experience of these subjectivities are not

historically valid or present. To say that articulating and calling out these forces is anachronistic or contrary to the historian's project is to be complicit with oppression. The contemporary notion of being and becoming aware of these problems in our own society is captured by the word "woke," though its own complicities and self-satisfied hubris are also noted and rightly critiqued as virtue signaling. Even in a culture that has a developed language for articulating and fighting the inequalities of systematic oppression, one can far too easily be lulled into complacency and comfortable silence. Even today, to call out and argue for the realities of intersectionality often entails engaging with normalized power structures, ranging from governmental institutions to our friends and colleagues. As a method, intersectionality requires the articulation to each other of the patterns, actions, and mentalities of ingrained systematic oppression, for, as individuals, we often perpetuate these systematically normalized (yet no less violent) exercises of power without our own knowledge or intent.

In history, to write a truer, more ethical past requires a process of explanation that frequently is met with denial, retaliatory aggression, hurt feelings, and slow acceptance, even by those who are close to us. Despite this, to believe that our historical inquiries can begin only when our primary texts willingly offer up and display subjectivities is to be a crude apologist for social inequality and oppression. Furthermore, it is to delude ourselves into believing that we are taking a scholarly high ground in denying the existence of sexual violence, misogyny, transphobia, homophobia, and racism' in the premodern world. If we are not willing to call out the distant historical past for its perpetuation of social inequality, then how will we ever be able to call out our neighbors and ourselves? Our past must be intersectional before our future can ever be—not just because our future depends on our past, but because if we are unwilling to give representation to the marginalized in our histories of the far-removed past, then we are certainly not able to undertake the systematic changes to our culture, infrastructures, and systems necessary to produce a livable reality for oppressed identities in the immediate present. <>

THE UNITY OF BODY AND SOUL IN PATRISTIC AND BYZANTINE THOUGHT edited by Anna Usacheva, Jorg Ulrich, Siam Bhayro [Contexts of Ancient and Medieval Anthropology, Brill/Ferdinand Schoningh, ISBN 9783506703392]

This volume explores the long-standing tensions between such notions as soul and body, spirit and flesh, in the context of human immortality and bodily resurrection. The discussion revolves around late antique views on the resurrected human body and the relevant philosophical, medical and theological notions that formed the background for this topic. Soon after the issue of the divine-human body had been problematised by Christianity, it began to drift away from vast metaphysical deliberations into a sphere of more specialized bodily concepts, developed in ancient medicine and other natural sciences. To capture the main trends of this interdisciplinary dialogue, the contributions in this volume range from the 2nd to the 8th centuries CE, and discuss an array of figures and topics, including Justin, Origen, Bardaisan, and Gregory of Nyssa.

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Dualist or holist, complementary or antagonistic, subordinate or equal, Christian or philosophical—various approaches to the issue of the unity of body and soul have one important implication, namely, all of them transpire through the individual embodied lived experiences of human beings. Hence, general theoretical agreements about psychological concepts can easily attenuate or vanish, yielding to the varied empirical data. Besides, the same person, playing different social roles, often slightly varies her views on the same psychosomatic subject, be it the solemn issue of individual salvation or practical plans for conceiving a new human being. The mysterious beginning and end of human life, together with the challenges of disease, ageing, emotional reactions and diverse perceptions, provide such a variety of theoretical hypotheses and empirical data that can be difficult to harmoniously systematise within some philosophical or religious theories. Nevertheless, the study of the Christian approach to the core psychological issue of the unity of body and soul is of paradigmatic significance for the history of the theories and practices of self-identity, morals, social and gender relations, epistemology, medicine, and scientific method. While covering such a gigantic terrain is an unthinkable enterprise, the specific target of this volume is to explore the diversity of individual lived experiences and theoretical approaches to the unity of body andsoul as expressed by authors who flourished between the second and seventh centuries CE. Monks and bishops, medical doctors and philosophers, exegetes and theologians of Christian East, expressed plenty of nuanced views about the unity of body and soul: from the moment of conception and birth until the resurrection and post-mortem existence. To hear individual Christian voices contextualised in their various social networks and to demonstrate the diversity and peculiar patterns of patristic psychological views is the goal of this collective scholarly work.

This volume is the result of the workshop 'Bodily Resurrection vs Immortality: Philosophy, Medicine, Theology," that took place at the XVIII Conference on Patristic Studies in Oxford (August 19-24, 2019). The general aim of the workshop was to bring together specialists in Patristics, ancient Philosophy, Theology and the History of Medicine in order to explore longstanding tensions between such notions as soul and body, spirit and flesh, in the context of human life, death, reproduction, and bodily resurrection. The discussion revolved around late antique views on the human body and the relevant philosophical, medical and theological contexts. Free from the dichotomy between science and religion, the authors of Late Antiquity developed their concepts in the atmosphere of vibrant interdisciplinary dialogue. To capture the main trends of this discussion, the contributors to this volume shared their expertise on the formation of such notions as body, flesh, soul, mind, emotions, reproduction and redemption in late antique philosophical and Christian contexts.

In the opening chapter of the volume, Professor Jorg Ulrich, from Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, explores how the combined reading of Gen 1:26f and Gen 2:7 in the second century emphasised the unity of body and souL Ulrich pinpoints an important discrepancy between the early Christian understanding of the biblical accounts of the creation of humans. Some patristic authors, whom Ulrich associates primarily with the platonic tradition, believed that when Genesis spoke about the image of God, it referred only to the human soul and not to the human body. Other exegetical traditions supposed that the account of the creation of man out of the dust of the earth, preserved in Gen 2:7, also implied creation in the image of God. Ulrich explores textual testimonies of the second exegetical tradition in the works of Clement of Rome, Justin, Pseudo-Justin, Irenaeus of Lyon, Theophilus of Antioch, and Tertullian. Although Ulrich primarily focuses on early Christian sources, he also shows that the combined interpretation of Gen 1:26f and Gen 2.7 was not an invention of Christian authors but goes back to Old Testament exegetical tradition. In addition to a detailed analysis of second century patristic texts, Ulrich demonstrates how the idea of the unity of body and soul resonated in the early stages of Trinitarian discussions and in later Christological debates.

Professor Samuel Fernandez, from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, analyses Origen's views about rational creatures and matter within the framework of eschatological theory. Fernandez begins by exploring the concept of bodily resurrection in On First Principles and shows the correspondence that, according to Origen, exists between the beginning and the end of human life. Fernandez proposes a helpful review of contemporary scholarly views on the concept of the 'pre-existence of the sour and suggests his own interpretation. In his analysis of the initial and final relationship between rational creatures and matter, Fernandez proposes that we understand the "preexistence of the soul as the prenatal existence of rational creatures provided with light bodies. Hence, according to Origen, the priority of the soul over the body is identical to the priority of rational creatures over matter. Fernandez emphasises that the nature of this priority is logical and not chronological. He argues that the primal transgression of rational creatures brought upon them their earthly birth in heavy bodies, which will be transformed in the eschaton, thus justifying the parallel between the prenatal and post-mortem existence.

Professor Ilaria Ramelli, from Durham University, devotes her contribution to the study of Origen's ideas about the unity of body and soul in both the earthly life and the afterlife, and also to Origen's influence on Gregory of Nyssa in this respect (as in many others). Ramelli shows that, unlike the Neoplatonists, Origen argued against metensomatosis and propounded the notion of ensomatosis,

which emphasised the idea of the unity of one soul and one body. Thus, Ramelli maintain; Origen claimed that only God is entirely intelligible, while rational creatures and human souls were created together with their individual ethereal, pneumatic, spiritual bodies. Therefore, the 'skin tunics' (Gen 3:21) in the eyes of Origen were not simply associated with corporeality per se, but with a particular kind of heavy and corruptible body. Ramelli explains that this blanket corporeal condition of the whole creation is necessary for its freedom. Since the capacity of change is predicated on their corporeal nature, it is only due to their bodies that rational creatures can pursue either virtue or vice, with the following consequences for their bodies. In support of the primordial union of the body and the soul, Origen professed that even the risen body will be composed of the same four elements as the earthly body. Contrary to what is commonly assumed, Ramelli demonstrates that many of Origen's ideas were endorsed and developed by Gregory of Nyssa.

Ilaria Vigorelli, from the Pontifical University of Holy Cross, devotes her chapter to a detailed analysis of various aspects of the trinitarian anthropology of Gregory of Nyssa. She starts by explaining his elaborate methodology of argumentation identified with the notion of akolouthia, understood as a relational logical sequence that takes into account common premises known to his addressees. Another indispensable component of Gregory's method accorded with the notion of piety (eusebeia), which enabled Gregory's audience to grasp his message. After establishing these epistemological requirements of Gregory's discourse on the soul and the body, Vigorelli goes through the most essential aspects of his anthropological thought and shows how he linked it to his trinitarian doctrine. Vigorelli demonstrates that Gregory had a holistic vision of human nature where the dualism of intelligible soul and corporeal body was harmonised by the condition of apatheia and isaggelia, restored by Christ Taking as a point of departure the ontological similitude and kinship of the human soul and divinity, Gregory elaborated the Pauline idea of epektasis as the final relational condition of human divinisation.

Professor Kuo-Yu Tsui, from the National Chengchi University in Taipei, explores the issue of the body in the ascetic thought of Evagrius Ponticus. Contrary to what is commonly assumed, Tsui elucidates the positive role of the body in Evagrius' thought She outlines the tripartite structure of Evagrius' anthropology (derived from Origen and Greek philosophy), and describes how he integrates this scheme with Christian ascetic practices. Thus, according to Evagrius, human nature is divinely endowed with the seed and potential for an eventual unification with the divine through which the body may be elevated to the rank of the soul, and the soul to that of the mind (nous). Evagrius emphasized that this unification does not occur until the mind is sufficiently purified from preoccupations with bodily distractions by means of prayer and contemplation. Tsui demonstrates that, in the teachings and examples of Evagrius, the practical ascetic life (praktike), which consists of both bodily and spiritual disciplines, helps guide and strengthen monks as they struggle and train against intruding or obstructing passions and strive through divine grace for the blessed intermediate stage of apatheia, a prerequisite for higher levels of contemplation (theoria). Tsui observes that, although Evagrius encouraged the desert monks to embrace the ideal of a total withdrawal from the world (anachoresis), he did not regard the body as an impediment to salvation. On the contrary, Tsui demonstrates that Evagrius engaged with the body as a providential vehicle that, when cared for and used according to its proper nature, grants access to sensory experience and knowledge of the material world as divine creation, and is therefore necessary and instrumental in bringing about the restoration of the mind. Tsui shows that, for Evagrius, the path of

the spiritual journey towards higher levels of contemplation is precisely through the virtuous and disciplined body.

Professor Andrew Crislip, from Virginia Commonwealth University, reflects upon resurrection, emotion and embodiment in Egyptian monastic literature. Crislip especially focusses on the affective and emotional language of such doctrines as the resurrection of Christ himself, the real presence of his body and blood in the Eucharist, and the post-mortem fate of martyrs. Thus, Crislip showcases the variety of embodied experiences of individual resurrection, Eucharist and the resurrected body of Christ Crislip starts with an exploration of the letters of Antony the Great and his contemporary Ammons, and then studies the sermons of Shenoute, and homiletic literature produced and transmitted in late antique Coptic monasteries. Crislip offers an emotion-based mode of analysis of the resurrection narratives, which reflects phenomena observed in current research in cognitive and affective neuroscience. This interdisciplinary approach expands our understanding of ancient Christian theories and practices, and creates a platform for an interdisciplinary dialogue between historical and contemporary scientific disciplines.

Anna Usacheva, from the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, analyses Christian theories of reproduction in the context of Hellenistic dualist discourse and embryology. Usacheva gives an overview of the philosophical and patristic texts and compares the embryological theories of Aristotle, Galen and Porphyry with the views of Athenagoras of Athens, Justin the Martyr, Methodius of Olympus and Gregory of Nyssa. She also argues that, in the fifth century, Christian interest in the mysteries of reproduction was heated by the debates about the union of the divine and human natures of Christ, and speculation regarding the details of Jesus' generation. Some novel views of ensoulment were introduced by such representatives of the Antiochene school of theology as Theodoret of Cyrus and Nemesius of Emesa. A brief analysis of Theodoret and Nemesius' views of reproduction demonstrates that, although these authors closely engaged with Aristotelian, Galenic and Neoplatonic concepts, their ideas show a continuity with early Christian concepts. Usacheva claims that, due to the specific metaphysical principles of Christian doctrine, the church fathers were bound to balance a dualist lexicon, which they often used, with holistic anthropological and Christological statements. According to Usacheva, patristic theories of reproduction represent a vivid example of balanced Christian holistic thought, which imbibed plenty of Hellenistic concepts, yet remained true to the fundamental principles of Christian doctrine.

Samuel Kaldas, from St Cyril's Coptic Orthodox Theological College, studies the soul-body relation in the homilies of the fourth century Syrian writer known as Pseudo-Macarius or Macarius-Symeon. Kaldas explores Macarius language and metaphors, and shows just how deep and disguised was Macarius' affinity with Platonic asceticism. Instead of focusing on the direct philosophical influences on Macarius' thought, Kaldas takes the more subtle path of unraveling the intrinsic structure and framework of Macarius' ideas about the spiritual life. It transpires from Kaldas' study that the importance of Macarius' metaphorical language rests on his belief in the twofold nature of the universe, comprising the invisible and visible worlds. Hence, the symbolic characteristics of physical objects, arranged on an imaginary scale of their 'hardness' and 'subtlety', demonstrate Macarius' implicit 'physical theory' of the different kinds of substances. Thus, Kaldas shows that, in the eyes of Macarius, the soul is a 'subtle body', clothed in the 'garment' of the physical body, which although coarser in nature than the soul, is indispensable not only in the present life but also after death. Kaldas demonstrates how, in his theology of the transformation

from 'the garments of flesh' to "the garments of light", Macarius combined the basic outline of Platonic topoi with Syriac imagery.

Professor David Bradshaw, from the University of Kentucky, explores Patristic views on why there is no repentance after death. Bradshaw demonstrates that, despite a strong and biblically justified agreement between the church fathers about the impossibility of post-mortem repentance, their explanations of this doctrine were rather different After outlining the main attitudes to this issue from the second to the fourth centuries, Bradshaw focusses on the more detailed expositions of the problem offered by such later authors as Nemesius of Emesa, Dorotheus of Gaza, Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus and Theophylact of Bulgaria. Bradshaw demonstrates that, according to these theologians, after death and separation from the body, the soul loses its capacity for moral transformation. Bradshaw argues that, although varied in their explanations, the views of the church fathers are not incompatible, and the diversity of their approaches can most likely be explained by the contexts of and motives for their compositions. Bradshaw also analyses Patristic views on Christ's descent to Hades, and the opportunity for repentance that this offered to its inhabitants.

Professor Siam Bhayro, from the University of Exeter, explores treating the body and the soul in late-antique and early-medieval Syriac sources. Bhayro's particular focus is on the legacy of Sergius—a priest, theologian, philosopher, prolific translator, diplomat and chief physician of the city of flesh Ayna. Instead of the conventional comparison of the sixth-century Sergius with the ninth-century Arabic scholar Hunayn ibn Ishaq, or the usual association of Sergius' image with the Graeco-Roman model, Bhayro tries to navigate a new path. He notes that, unlike the Graeco-Roman milieu, with its humoral pathology and differentiation between the roles of physicians and priests, the Syro-Mesopotamian tradition suggested a simultaneous and complementary treatment of the body and the souL Hence, Bhayro compares Sergius' scholarship with the legacy of the earlier Syriac scientist, scholar, astrologer, philosopher and poet, Bardaisan of Edessa. Similarly to Sergius, Bardaisan was also known to be both a priest and a physician, who served in the royal court in Edessa. Bhayro demonstrates that Bardaisan's astral scholarship and medical practice were based on the historic Syro-Mesopotamian systems, as was his overall scholarly model of the priest-physician-scholar. Bhayro argues that Sergius' model of scholarship reflected many aspects of Bardaisan's status and accorded with the traditional near eastern model of scholarship. Hence, Sergius followed the traditional Syro-Mesopotamian approach to the treatment of the body and the soul.

Andrew Summerson, from Calumet College of St Joseph, explores how Maximus the Confessor in his Ad Thalassium presented the issue of human passions in the light of human salvation and theosis. Summerson argues that, according to Maximus, Adam fell at the very moment he was created. Hence, right from the start of human existence, passions became a part of human nature, and thus required a transformation that could only be achieved with the assistance of Christ Summerson shows that, in tune with Neoplatonic tradition, Maximus believed that 'ignorance of God" was at the root of fallen human passibility. Consequently, both human passions and the wrong interpretation of scripture are different symptoms of the same disease of original sin. Summerson explores Maximus' ideas about the medicinal healing of human emotion, which went back to the early Christian trope of Christ as divine physician. In his analysis of the Christian practice of apathela, Summerson points out its distinctly Stoic roots, and explains that the Stoic notion was not about the complete eradication of passions but instead about the replacement or transformation of vicious passions with good ones. To describe such a transformation,

Maximus again employed a medical metaphor that associated the good use of passions with an immunisation, established by God for salutary purposes.

Professor Vladimir Cvetkovic, from the University of Belgrade, analyses Maximus the Confessor's view on the soul and the body in the context of five divisions. To explore the nature of Maximus' anthropology, Cvetkovic chooses a fascinating angle: he studies Maximus doctrine of the fivefold division that comprises such binaries as the unities between male and female, paradise and the inhabited world, earth and sky, sensible and intelligible nature, and human and divine. In tune with other post-Chalcedonian authors, Maximus argued that this final, paradigmatic unity between the divine and human natures is analogous to the union between the human body and souL Cvetkovic demonstrates how Maximus pictured the beautiful divine cosmological design, which harmonised various kinds of universal unities, and particularly focused on the comparison between the body-soul union in the human being and the unity of the divine and human natures in Christ. Cvetkovic also explores the continuity of Maximus' psychology with respect to the teachings of Nemesius of Emesa and Leontius of Byzantium, and analyses Maximus' polemics against Sevens of Antioch. Thus, Cvetkovic explaines the rationale behind Maximus' doctrine of Christ's composite hypostasis and human composite nature, and also outlines a connection between his anthropological, Christological and eschatological doctrines.

This volume represents the first publication in the Series `Contexts of Ancient and Medieval Anthropology' (CAMA), recently established by Schoeningh, a German imprint of Brill. This series welcomes multidisciplinary research on the history of ancient and medieval anthropology, broadly understood in terms of both its European heritage and its reception of, and engagement with, various cultural and intellectual traditions (e.g. in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Arabic etc.). This series encourages multidisciplinary studies of the various philological, textual, and archaeological sources concerned with the development of anthropological theories in ancient medicine, philosophy, religion, and theology, as well as the subsequent theoretical and practical interactions between these theories. Particularly welcome are studies that emphasise the fundamental connection between different philosophical, scientific, and socio-cultural contexts where anthropological theories were produced and applied, and that analyse the implications of these theories in ethical, ascetic, ecological, gender, and political life from Classical Antiquity up to the Middle Ages. Attempts to understand human beings as biological, physiological, religious, and socio-cultural entities persisted from Antiquity and are echoed in the establishing of the complex and multifarious European identity. In grasping this cross-cultural and diversified process, one is able to see the foundations of contemporary scientific, religious, and political discourses that treat the human being and how humanity relates to the world.

The editors of this volume would like to thank all the contributors, and the editorial board of the series, for their enthusiastic and collegial collaboration. We would also like to thank the publisher's team, particularly Dr Martin Illert and Dr Rebecca Hagen, for their professionalism and support. We are also grateful to the following research students in Halle—Franziska Grave, Hannah Malck and Maline Teepe—for their ever-reliable work, which has helped enormously in ensuring the timely publication of this volume. —Anna Usacheva, Siam Bhayro and Jorg Ulrich <>

Essay:

Maximus the Confessor's View on Soul and Body in the Context of Five Divisions by Vladimir Cvetković

The aim her is to analyse how Maximus the Confessor understands the unity between the body and soul and how he fits this unity in the general framework of the fivefold divisions or distinctions that exist in the world.

Introduction

Maximus the Confessor is one of a very few Greek Fathers who explicitly argued about predetermined Incarnation. In Maximus' interpretation from Ad Thalassium, the Holy Trinity created the world with the vision of the final unity between divine and human.' This vision also included the appearance of the Logos of God in the body and his adoption of human nature, as the archetype according to which this unity will be modelled. If the world is created with the foreknowledge of divine Incarnation and the final creaturely deification, then one may argue that the fashioning of the world has also comprised some unities of the lesser kind as the precondition for the final unity of divine and human. Maximus' doctrine of the fivefold division that exists in the nature from his Ambiguum 41, points to lesser unities, i.e. unities between male and female, paradise and the inhabited world, earth and sky and sensible and intelligible nature as necessary steps towards the final unity between human and divine. Since the unity between the divine and human nature is usually interpreted by Maximus and other post-Chalcedonian authors by analogy with the human body and soul, I argue in this paper that the body-soul union in the human being is created as the perfect example of how two different natures may exists in a perfect unity and as a model of how to achieve other unities on the way towards the final union of humanity with divinity. As the general topic of the present volume is the unity of body and soul in Patristic and Byzantine thought, the aim of this paper is not only to explain how the unity of body and soul is established by Maximus the Confessor, but also what was the purpose of this unity and how the body-soul unity fits in the general plan of divine creation and incarnation and creaturely deification.

In the course of this paper, I will first explore the kinds of unity that Maximus elaborates with a specific emphasis on the unity between the body and soul. Then, I will focus on the analogy drawn between the unity of body and soul and the unity of Christ's divine and human nature and explore similarities and differences of these two unities. Finally, the unity of body and soul will be analysed in the framework of the fivefold divisions or distinctions that exist in the world.

Union of Body and Soul

One of the most appealing questions for Maximus the Confessor is the question of the existing natural and supernatural unities. He deals with this question in a number of his works, and particularly in opusc. 18 or the so-called Unionum Definitions written in 633. Here Maximus refers to several kinds of unions: union according to essence, union according to hypostasis, union according to relationship, union by juxtaposition, union by adjustment, union by mixture, union by blending, union by confusion, union by conglomeration and union by coalescence. The union according to essence pertains to several hypostases or individuals who share the same essence or nature. The union according to hypostasis relates to several essences, as it is in the case of the soul and the body, while the union according to relationship is pertinent when it comes to different deliberations, that are unified in a single will. The

next seven definitions pertain to physical objects such as boards, stones and liquids in the case of unions by juxtaposition, adjustment and mixture, dry and liquid elements in the case of union by blending, elements which undergo melting in case of union by confusion, between dry elements in case of union of conglomeration, and diffusive elements, like fire, in case of the union by coalescence. Finally, Maximus returns to the union according to essence and hypostasis, concluding that the union according to essence relates to the realities of different hypostases, while the union according to hypostasis concerns realities of different essences.

Although only one of these twelve definitions mentions explicitly the union of soul and body, they all originated in connection to the nature of soul/body union. Already Peter Van Deun has pointed to Nemesius of Emesa and Leontius of Byzantium as the possible sources that are behind these definitions. Maximus follows Nemesius' On the Nature of Man in regard to different kinds of union. In elaborating the nature of union between soul and body, Nemesius lists all possible kinds of union, relying on Alexander of Aphrodisias' On the Soul and On Mixture. Nemesius denies that the union of body and soul is the same like the unions between two pieces of wood, between pebbles or stones, or between different liquids such as water and wine. He also rejects the similarity of soul-body union with the union between melting elements such as iron and the like, and the union between dry and liquid elements like sponge and oil, and water and papyrus. Although he finds certain similarities between the body-soul union and the unity between light and air and between fire and wood, he finally rejects the similarities between these kinds of unities due to their diffusive natures, as neither light nor fire is present as a whole in air or wood, like the soul is present in the body. Thus, all seven kinds of union that exist in the sensible nature that Nemesius refers to, are also present in Maximus.

Another possible source for these terms is Leontius of Byzantium, who has referred to unions by relation, essence, juxtaposition, mixture, conglomeration, adjustment, adhesion, confusion, blending. Moreover, Leontius may be also a possible source for the first three and the last two definitions of Opusculum 18. In the first two and the last two definitions of Opusculum 18, Maximus argues that the union according to essence relates to different hypostases and the union according to hypostasis relates to different essences. This echoes Leontius' differentiation between realities distinguished in species or essences, but united in hypostasis and realities united in species or essences but distinguished in hypostases."' According to Leontius, the realities united in species, but distinguished in hypostases have a simple kind of union, while the realities distinguished in species but united in hypostases have a compound kind on union.

In Pseudo-Maximus' Opusculum de anima, one may also find examples of the compound kinds of union like in Opusculum 18, but here the emphasis is on the union of body and soul. In this treatise, erroneously attributed to Maximus, the union of body and soul is analysed against the backdrop of other kinds of union, such as union of pebbles, known as the union by adjustment, as well as the union by mixture and the union by blending." The argumentation here is similar, even identical, to Nemesius' On the Nature of Man, not only in regard to the kinds of the body-soul union," but also concerning definitions of soul, as immaterial, self-moved essence." However, apart from the repetition of the previous patristic arguments regarding the union of body and soul, Maximus also brings something new that differentiates him from both Nemesius and Leontius of Byzantium.

In Ambigua ad Iohannem, and especially in Ambiguum 7, Maximus rejects the Origenist stance about the pre-existence of soul. In this regard Maximus disagrees with Nemesius. In order to prove the immortality and imperishability of the soul, Nemesius adopted the Platonist doctrine that souls exist before bodies and the view on the act of learning as an act of recollection, and therefore he argued against Eunomius' view that souls are created at the same time with the bodies and against Apollinaris' view that souls are received from parents like bodies." However, the view which Nemesius attributes to Eunomius is also shared by Gregory of Nyssa, who maintained not only that the body and soul of each human being is created simultaneously, but also that each human being pre-exists in divine providence. Gregory of Nyssa is a probable source of Maximus' doctrine of preexistent logo! for each human being exposed in Ambiguum 7.17 Moreover, Maximus' Ambiguum 7 proves that the question of the pre-existence of the soul was a very actual in his time. This was not only the reminiscence of the 6th century Origenist controversy, but also the consequence of the 7th century debates with the radical anti-Origenists, who outnumbered the disguised Origenists. In this work, Maximus repeated first the main arguments against Origen's teaching about Henad and the eternal existence of the minds with God and their coming as souls to the bodies as a result of divine punishment for transgression, and then he refuted the opposite views of the radical anti-Origenist that soul's existence depends on the body. As recapitulating the whole argument against Origen and his followers from ambig. 7 would take much space, it would be relevant to remind the reader of Maximus' argumentation against the independent existence either of the soul or of the body. For Maximus the union between body and soul falls into Aristotelian categories of reciprocal relation and simultaneous becoming which assume that their relationship is constitutive for the identity of each essence. Maximus argues that the termination of one would lead by necessity to the termination of the other, because neither body nor soul is "a species on its own", but rather the parts of the human being and one cannot exist apart from the other. However, for the sake of the argument Maximus allows that soul and body are species or forms in themselves:

> Further, if the soul is a form in itself before it is joined to the body, and the body is a form before it is joined to the soul, and if the conjunction of the two results in a form that is different from what each is in itself, then this can only be attributed to one of two causes: either they have undergone a change or what they are in their union is what they are by nature. If the former, the change they undergo involves the destruction of their original form, transforming them into something they were not But if what they become is what they are by nature, then this will happen always because it is their nature, and thus the soul would never cease changing bodies, nor the body cease changing souls. In my view, however, this is not what happens, for the constitution of the whole as a form is neither the result of corruption nor the natural power of the parts coming together, but rather the simultaneous coming to be of the whole form with its parts.

In this lengthy passage Maximus analyses two solutions. In the first solution Maximus investigates whether the soul united with the body and the body united with the soul would be identical with the soul and the body that exist independently one from another before or after the unification. He condudes that due to changes they would undergo by unifying or by parting themselves they will not be the same entities in the union as out of the union. In the thorough analysis of this passage, Dirk Krausmuller considers Maximus' argument as the description of 'the compound against nature: The compound against nature indicates that already perfect and complete natures of soul and body would lose their perfect natures by entering in the human compound. Moreover, Krausmuller states that Maximus' exposition of the argument regarding the compound against the nature reveals his strategy of

arguing against the radical anti-Origenist. Following Grigory Benevich, who holds that Maximus' ambig. 7 is directed against naïve or radical anti-Origenists, Krausmuller claims that Maximus' argument is actually a subtle attack against the notion of 'sleep of the soul' or the stance propagated by the extreme anti-Origenists that after the death of the body the disembodied soul is in a comatose state. Krausmuller does not deem Maximus as a disguised Origenist, but by portraying the antiOrigenist atmosphere in the late 6th and early 7th century as extreme, he argues that not only the classical Origenist topos of the preexistence of the souls, but also the stance of soul's self-sufficiency in afterlife held by Maximus, was branded as Origenism. Therefore, according to Krausmuller, by integrating his position about the soul's self-sufficiency in afterlife in the argument against the preexistence of the souls, Maximus' intention was not to argue against Origenist, but against the Chalcedonians who accepted the position of preexisting bodies.26 Krausmuller is right that in Maximus' argument about the compound against the nature everything applied to the soul is applicable to the body as well. However, in reality this argument does not have an equal weight when it is applied to the body, because even the hardline Nestorian arguments for the pre-existence of the body either in the form of semen and menstrual blood, or as the concrete body of Adam that is fashioned before it had received the breath of life (Gen 2:7), presuppose the subsequent unification with the soul. The Nestorian arguments do not consider body as self-sufficient reality, to the same degree as the Origenist argument for the preexistence of the souls considers the soul as a species in itself before it was embodied. Therefore, Krausmuller claims that the argument on compound against nature does not stand on its own but it is complemented with a second argument, that deals with the so-called compound according to nature. This is the second solution that Maximus argues for, namely that only in the compound of human being the soul and the body fully realise the potential of their natures. Driven by the force to complete their natures "the soul would never cease changing bodies, nor the body [would] cease changing souls". This argument implies transmigration of both souls and bodies. According to this scenario, for both the soul and the body another body and soul would be instruments to pass from the state of potentiality to the state of actuality. In this respect finding a complementary body and soul would not lead to the perfection of human being, but to the perfection of bodies and souls as entities independent from the human compound. In his analysis of this solution, Krausmuller argues that Maximus' intention was to present this argument about the incompleteness of both the soul and the body as unacceptable for the Christians for two concealed reasons? The first reason implies that by rejecting the option of body and soul as incomplete parts Maximus will also reject the Nestorian teaching spread among some Chalcedonian Christians about the preexistence of the bodies. The second reason derives from the first and it also reveals Maximus' own position. Namely, the doctrine of the preexistence and consequently post-existence of the body goes hand in hand with the teaching about the 'sleep of the soul' after the death of the body, which Maximus repudiates. Krausmuller offers as an evidence for his claim Maximus' position in his Epistola 7 addressed to John of Cyzicus, who is also the recipient of Ambigua, about self-sufficiency of the soul after its departure from the dead body. Krausmuller concludes that Maximus "insinuates that those who believe that the soul on its own is an incomplete substance must subscribe to the outlawed Origenist view that souls are repeatedly embodied". Although Krausmuller is right in his portrayal of the theological settings at the beginning of the 7th century, I disagree with his interpretation of Maximus' argumentation, as well as his conclusion that Maximus' own position is that the soul is the complete substance.

It would be pertinent to draw a distinction between Maximus' own position and the position of his opponents regarding the faculties of the soul after the death of the body. For the Chalcedonian

Christians who accepted the doctrine of the 'sleep of the soul' the soul loses all of their faculties when is separated from the body. For Maximus however this is not acceptable, and Krausmuller rightly argues on the basis of Epistola 7, that the soul remains self-sufficient. However, it is a question of soul's self-sufficiency after the departure from the deceased body. Does the soul still possess all the faculties it had in the union of the body or not? Krausmuller points to Maximus' claim from ep. 7 that if one strips the soul of its constitutive qualities, i.e. rationality and intellectuality, it will be either nothing or will suffer a change. Again Krausmuller rightly points to intellectual and rational capacities of the soul as constitutive for Maximus, but he wrongly concludes that the soul continues to fully function after the death of the body, because the soul retains only two of its three natural capacities. According to Maximus, the "soul has three general movements that converge into one: movement according to intellect [or mind], according to reason, and according to sensation.' The activity of intellect or mind as "simple and inexplicable' is directed towards God, and by this activity the soul is "circling around God in a manner beyond knowledge, for the soul does not know God after the manner of beings, owing to God's absolute transcendence of beings." The second activity directed towards the objects of knowledge is the activity of reason, by which the soul acquires the knowledge of "all the natural principles of whatever can be known solely in light of this cause, and these principles give shape to the soul". It is obvious from Maximus' reasoning that the intellectual activity of the soul directed towards God or the Logos of God, as well her rational activity directed towards the logoi of beings cannot cease to exist because of the soul's relationship with the untreated and eternal realities, Logos of God and his logoi. However, the third activity of the soul, the activity of sensation directs the soul outside of itself, towards the creation, from which the soul "obtains impressions of the principles of visible things". This activity of the soul is suspended after the death of the body, since the senses, and specifically the sense of vision, do not provide the impressions of the visible objects to the soul. Therefore, it would not be difficult to conclude that one of the three constitutive faculties of the soul is missing after the death of the body and that the state of the soul after the death of the body becomes worse than in the body-soul compound. The soul's activity of sensation is constitutive for the soul, as much as the other two activities because for Maximus the impressions of sensible things acquired by power of sensation are by means of reason transformed into simple spiritual principles (logoi) of sensible things, and unified by the power of intellect are offered to God. The soul's faculties of sensation, reason and intellect are by the divine intention in creation linked for the sake of the process that brings the whole creation into relation with God. According to Maximus the fall occurred when Adam replaced the intellect's natural desire for God with physical sensation, and "in his initial impulse toward sensory objects, mediated through his senses, he came to know pleasure activated contrary to nature:" The immediate result of the redirection of the soul's powers towards the sensible nature is the disruption of the link that soul had with God, which in final instance led to the death of the body. The soul's capacities of intellect and reason are not eradicated, but they are deeply affected by the suspension of the soul's faculty of sensation after the death of the body.

I think that Maximus' reasoning from Epistola 7 that the soul's intellectual and reasoning faculties remained intact after the death of the body is consistent with the rest of his work, but it will be wrong on the basis of this reasoning to conclude that the soul after the separation from the body will continue to function in the same way as it functioned when it was united with the body. Analogously to a car's engine that converts the chemical energy of fuel into thermal energy, which is transformed into mechanical energy that accelerates the car, the soul's faculty of reason converts the physical sensations

provided by the soul's faculty of sensation into natural principles (logoi), which are unified by the soul's faculty of intellect and transformed into natural desire for God. In the same way in which the engine works only when the car is tanked up with fuel, the soul functions properly when the soul's rational and intellectual faculties are supplied with physical sensations.

It goes without saying that Maximus's position thus automatically opposes the claim of the radical anti-Origenists that the soul received most of its functions from the body. In order to reaffirm the incorporeal nature of the soul Maximus argued in his Epistolae 6 and 7 against those who ascribed bodily nature to the soul.

Now I turn to the rest of Maximus' argument dealing with the difference between pre-existence and post-existence of the soul, as well as with the soul's and body's reciprocal relation and their simultaneous becoming:

> But if they should say that, because the soul is able to exist and subsist after the death and dissolution of the body, there is nothing to prevent it from existing and subsisting before the creation of the body, it would seem to me that their argument falls rather wide of the mark, and this for the simple reason that the principle of origin and the principle of being are not the same. The former concerns the 'when and the 'where' of a thing, along with its reciprocal relation to something else. The latter concerns the 'what' and the 'how' of a thing, along with the basic fact of its existence. If this is so, then the soul, after it has come to be, remains eternally in existence on account of its essence, and this is not simply because it came to be, but because it did so in relation to a particular time and place, and standing in a reciprocal relation to something else.

It would be pertinent to draw first a distinction between preexistence and post-existence of both the soul and the body, for the sake of Krausmiiller's reasoning that if the soul can exist in a comatose, but also in a self-sufficient state after death the same should be possible for the time before the composition with the body." According to Maximus this argument falls wide of the mark and I will attempt in the following lines to detect his reasons for claiming this. The preexistence of souls, that Maximus argued against at the beginning of Ambiguum 7, is a constitutive part of the Origenian myth and it presupposes that the souls existed as complete substances or natures before they were punished by God with imprisonment in angelic, human and demonic bodies. It is obvious that by entering in the compound with the bodies, the souls changed from better to worse. According to the same scenario, the souls would long for being freed from the body in order to reclaim their true nature.

The second scenario presupposes that by entering the body or by acquiring soul, both the soul and the body changed from worse to better, because in the union with another reality, either the body or the soul, their natures may be fully actualised. Therefore, in case of leaving the deceased body, the soul actually changes from better to worse, because it loses the opportunity to fully realise its own nature. The question then arises to which degree this change occurs. Maximus' bipartite argument of either change or completion of nature is not fully applicable to the preexistent soul of the Origenists, as Krausmuller claims." The argument is pertinent partially and it may be applied only if the change of nature takes place, because preexistent souls had changed their nature for the worse by being imprisoned in bodies, and they will again change their nature, but now for the better by leaving the bodies. In the case of the souls that are not forms in themselves and need bodies in order to complete their nature this argument is not applicable, because the idea of preexistent souls already implies that these souls are forms in themselves. By considering his opponent's argument as false, Maximus opts for

the scenario in which the actualisation of the natural potentialities of body and soul is possible only in the human compound. Maximus' description of soul-body relation by means of the Aristotelian category of reciprocal relation and simultaneous becoming is applicable in the aforementioned case, because the reciprocal relation could not be constitutive for the body and the soul if they can acquire the fulness of their potentialities independently one from another. Therefore, the reciprocal character of their relationship pertains only to the case when body and soul actualise their potentials in the union of one with another. The second constitutional element for their relationship is the simultaneity of their coming into the union, or better to say their becoming. Simultaneity of their becoming automatically excludes the scenario that either body or soul preexists and that it searches for the union in which it will realise the fulness of its potential. If soul and body enter the union once, there is no sense in their hypothetical continuation of changing to another body or another soul, because in the very process of moving to another body or acquiring another soul both body and soul will change for the worse. Maximus distinguishes between two principles that equally pertain to the soul and the body, the 'principle of being or substance' and the "principle of coming-to-be". The second principle, which defines the "when", and "where" (mu) of the soul's and body's becoming, as well as their mutual relationship or the "towards what" is not ancillary, but substantial for their relationship to the same extent as the 'what' and the 'how" of the soul and body. According to Krausmuller, Maximus' argument about the simultaneity of body's and soul's coming to being by which he complements the "principle of being" with the "principle of coming-to-be" actually adds nothing to the definitions of the soul and body as complete realities." For Krausmuller is illogical why Maximus claims that although the soul remains fully functional after death it retains its relation to the body. The reason why the soul retains its relationship with the body after death is exactly because it is not fully functional without the body, as I have shown above. Therefore, according to Maximus, after the death of a specific human being, his or her soul and body would not be considered as soul and body peruse but still as the soul and the body of this specific human being. As counterargument to Maximus' linking of "when", °where' and "towards what" categories to the definitions of the soul and the body, Krausmuller introduces Leontius of Byzantium's reasoning that the extra-substantial categories of time, relation, and place have no relevance for the definition." Krausmuller builds his case further against Maximus' view of the relationality and simultaneity of the soul and body relying on Leontius' arguments from Contra Nestorianos et Eutychianos.

As it is mentioned above in his doctrine of the soul, the body and their union Maximus relies mostly on Nemesius of Emesa and Leontius of Byzantium, but he also differs from them. It is obvious that the main subject of departure from Nemesius is Maximus' refutation of the preexistence of souls that Nemesius held. Now we arrive to the question of Maximus' difference from Leontius. Krausmuller brings Leontius of Byzantium' views in the discussion in order to discredit Maximus' relational argument as being irrelevant for the definitions of the body and the soul. Here is the text on which Krausmuller relies:

> Soul is distinguished from its body by the difference in nature, and is united [to it] by the category of hypostasis, which their mutually coherent life brings into full being. The second or middle relationship preserves this. But man is completely distinguished from his body by itself and his soul by itself as being their totality; because he has the first sort of relationship to his parts, he brings about the second sort of sharing between them. So Christ, too, acts as a connecting link between two extremes with regard to us and the Father, by means of his parts—if we may consider him a whole made up of parts: he is wholly a hypostasis over against

> the Father, because of his divinity and along with his humanity, and he is wholly a hypostasis over against us, along with his divinity, because of his humanity.

As the focus of this passage is on the analogy drawn between the unity of body and soul and the unity of Christ's divine and human nature, the following chapter will be focused on similarities and differences between these two unities.

Composite Hypostasis versus Composite Nature

By drawing the analogy of the body and soul with Christ's divine and human nature Leontius exposed himself to the criticism of the Monophysites. They claim that if the body and the soul are complete natures then Christ will have either one nature, like human beings have one nature which consists of two natures, or three natures, i.e. the soul, the body and the divinity. Leontius' notion of perfect and complete natures opens actually room for the attack of Monophysites. He argues that the body and the soul are not imperfect per se, but they are imperfect in relation to the human hypostasis. Leontius states also that the same reasoning is applicable to Christ, because although both the Logos and humanity are perfect, neither the Logos nor humanity are the complete Christ53 Here, Leontius emphasises that neither place nor time, in which soul and body, as well as divine and human nature of Christ coming into union do not affect the definition of their natures or essences. This means, as Krausmuller insists, that the time and place in which two natures come into union is perfectly irrelevant. The union of two natures that come to being simultaneously, such as the body and the soul, is identical to the union in which one nature preexists the other, like the union between the divinity and humanity in Christ. The same is applicable to the place. It is completely irrelevant for the natures or the essences of the body and the soul, as well as the divine and human natures, whether they enter into relationship with one another or not, because in both cases they remain complete. However, Maximus has a different view on the relationship between the soul and the body and the relationship between the human and divine nature in Christ For Maximus, as it is mentioned above, both 'when' and 'where' are crucial for the natures or substances. He argues that human form testifies by itself that the body and soul come into being simultaneously. First, the soul and the body are in relationship to each other and they are separable only in thought. Second, the soul and the body are always the soul and the body of a specific human being and they are also unthinkable as being the soul and the body per se. Although Maximus' argument does not go in the direction of comparing this kind of relationship with the relationship between divinity and humanity of Christ it is obvious that the analogy cannot be drawn between the two through the perspective of time and place. Firstly, the simultaneous coming of the two natures into union will violate the principle of natures in the hypostasis of Christ, because the beginningless divine nature has to come to being. Second, Maximus' reasoning that the body and the soul are separable only in thought is not applicable to the human and divine nature, because the natures of the soul and the body do not exist independently one from another, while the divine and human natures are also separable in reality because they are independent one from another. These are at least two reasons why the principle of simultaneity applied to the union of the body and the soul cannot be applied to the union of the divine and the human nature. In regard to the place in which the body and the soul come to be, i.e. particular human person, this principle is again not applicable to the union of the divine and human nature. The soul and the body come to being in a specific human being and they are also unthinkable without being parts of this particular human being. In the same way as the simultaneous coming to being of the body and the soul results in the generation of a particular human being, the simultaneous coming to being of the divine nature together with the human nature, should also result in

a newly generated composition. However, this is not the case because the hypostasis of Logos which preexists from the eternity and bears the divine nature, assumes the human nature at a certain point in time. One part of this composition, namely the divine nature exists before the human nature in the hypostasis of the divine Logos. Therefore, both the principle of reciprocal relationship and the principle of simultaneity of coming to being that pertains to the unity of the body and souls are violated in the case of the unity of the human and divine nature in Christ If one strictly applies the principle of simultaneity to the union of the divine and human natures and if the beginningless divine nature comes somehow to being together with the human nature, then the new divino-human hypostasis will also come to life and one cannot speak about the Holy Trinity anymore, but rather about the Holy Tetrad. Being aware of the negative consequences of the aforementioned analogy Maximus avoids drawing similarities between these two unions.

Maximus would not have been concerned with the hypothetical obstacles of applying the principles relevant for the union of the body and the soul to the union between human and divine nature without the threat that came from the Monophysites. The emphasis of the Monophysites, and especially of Severus of Antioch, in this analogy was that as the intimate unity of body and the soul implies one human nature, the intimate unity of divine and human nature in Christ also implies one composite nature. In Ambigua toJohn, written before 633/4, and perhaps in 628, Maximus tackles the question of composite nature:

> [...] no nature, to speak generally, whether intelligible or sensible—that is, whether simple or composite—ever receives in any way the origin of its coming into being from one of its parts, nor can it subsist with only half of its constitutive elements. If the nature in question is composite, the absolute totality of it subsists together with the absolute totality of the parts proper to it, there being no temporal interval whatsoever dividing it either from itself or from the parts of which it is composed.

This Maximus' argument is a continuation of his previous reasoning about the Logos of God, who in Incarnation assumed human flesh through the medium of a rational soul. As it has been previously mentioned, the Logos of God existed in his divine nature and divine hypostasis within Trinity before his incarnation. By defining the nature, and specifically the composite nature, Maximus insists on the principles of reciprocal relationship and simultaneity of its parts. The argument is actually directed against Severus' identification of Christ's hypostasis with the composite nature. By claiming that nature neither originates from one of its parts, nor it exists with a half of its constitutive elements, Maximus argues against Christ's composite nature. If Christ has a composite nature, then this composite divino-human nature would originate from his divine nature that preexisted his human nature, and the Logos of God would exist before his incarnation only in divine nature, which is only a half of his composite nature. The specificity of the composite nature is a lack of temporal interval between the parts that constitute the composite nature. In the case of the soul and body this is known as the principle of simultaneity. As the human nature comes into existence together with its constitutive parts and it is not separated by a temporal interval from its parts, then one may deduce that human nature is a composit nature...

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Monophysites attributed to him according to essence. However, being himself a composite of divine and human nature, for Maximus Christ is a composite hypostasis without having a composite nature.

Maximus launches further argumentation against Severus by confronting him with the dilemma whether one composite nature is generic or singular." If Christ's composite nature is generic, like the union of the body and the soul is generic then this will resulted in many Christs. If however, the composite nature of Christ is singular then Christ would neither have the same essence with his Father nor with human beings." Maximus concludes that the natural composition cannot be applied to Christ because this will challenge his uniqueness, as well as his natural identity and integrity. However, by way of hypostatic compound or composite hypostasis, Christ preserves both the unique character of his hypostasis, which is not a common attribute of the whole species, and the identity of his two natures by which he shares essential characteristics with the Father as well as with humanity. Therefore, Maximus emphasises that Christ cannot be individual, because this would imply that he is part of a species. Neither is Christ's nature generic, because that would presuppose a number of individuals of the same kind." By the end of the letter Maximus returns to the analogy:

> The point here, in my view, is not that there is no analogy at all between God and the world, but that the correlation or analogy between body and soul belongs to the natural realm and is necessary or unchangeable. The soul is given over to the body, which is able to receive and 'comprehend' the activity of the soul due to the simultaneous coming into being of both body and soul, just as much as the body is handed over to the soul, which possesses the body and is acting within it. The divine nature of Christ however, is not necessarily entering into such a relation with created nature, because Christ's divine nature is supernatural and transcends such a necessary and reciprocal implication in created nature, which cannot measure or comprehend the supernatural.

Here Maximus introduces another argument for differentiating the soul-body union from the union of Christ's two natures, which is built on the necessity of created realm. Thus, the body-soul union as natural union includes certain necessity and reciprocity, while the union of Christ's two natures is beyond nature, because there is no necessity from the side of divine nature to enter such a union, nor reciprocity of the divine nature with human nature in Christ.

In his Opusculum 13 dating also before 633/4,69 Maximus revisits the two natures of Christ, by affirming his position between the Scylla of Nestorianism and the Charybdis of Eutychianism. By arguing against Nestorian who deny the hypostatic union because of the difference of natures in Christ, and Eutychians, who deny natural difference in the hypostatic union, Maximus insists on both the hypostatic union and the natural difference in Christ." In his ep. 15 addressed to Cosmas, an Alexandrine deacon, and dating probably from 633, Maximus explains the difference between Christ's hypostasis and natures and human hypostasis and natures. Maximus claims that by the account of the commonality of nature of his own parts, that is the body and the soul, the human being is of the same essence as other human being. However, by the account of the proper feature of those same parts a particular human being proves the fact that he is of a different hypostasis than another human being)' The human species emerges from the composition of the body and soul and in this respect one can speak of a common human nature, while the composition of divine and human nature of Christ remains unique.

In the Epistola 12 written in 641 and addressed to John Cubicularius, Maximus summarises his position, by distinguishing between composite nature and composite hypostasis. He repeats his previous argument but in a more systematic way, extracting three main reasons why the analogy between the two natures in Christ and the two natures in the human being is not appropriate. First, Maximus

emphasises the necessity by which the union of the body and the soul emerges, concluding that the composite nature does not have the power to unite its parts. Thus, Christ is excluded from the definition of composite nature, because he willingly united his divine nature with the human nature in the incarnation. Second, Maximus repeats his argument regarding the simultaneity of the body's and soul's becoming and forming a human being. This was another argument for the composite nature. In the case of Christ, his divine nature preexisted his human nature and therefore he cannot be deemed to have one composite nature. Finally, Maximus revisits his argument about the reciprocal relationship of the body and the soul as two incomplete natures, which by way of their composition form a new species, the species of human beings." Thus, the human species does not derive from one common human nature, but from the commonality of natural unity of the body and soul in each human being." The argument of the reciprocal character of the union is again not applicable to Christ because neither his two natures are incomplete in themselves, nor by their composition a new species emerges. By relying on Cyril of Alexandria, Maximus insists that Christ cannot be defined?? According to Maximus' argumentation it is obvious that the analogy of Christ's and human's double nature cannot serve as a basis for claiming that the composite nature is also applicable to Christ as it is applicable to human beings. However, it would be wrong to conclude that the body and soul analogy is not relevant for Christology. Maximus maintains that the body and soul that are different by nature are united hypostatically, and thus, apart from being united in composite nature they are also united in composite hypostasis. The human composite hypostasis, regardless of its incomplete natures brought together by necessity, remains a model for understanding the composite hypostasis of Christ. Nicholas Madden rightly observes that it is the human composite nature that gives rise to the composite hypostasis." This observation might help us to understand how the human composite nature fits in Maximus's framework of fivefold divisions or distinctions that exist in the world, which is the topic of the following chapter.

The Body and Soul Union in the Context of Five Divisions

For Maximus the analogy of the body-soul unity with the unity of divine and human nature is not only relevant for Christology, but also for eschatology. In Ambiguum 7 Maximus describes how the creatures, who acted in accordance with their logoi, will become the instruments of the divine nature in the eschatological realm. In order to describe the future state of human beings, Maximus compares the role of the soul in the body-soul union with the role of divine activity in the afterlife of humanity:

> For God in His fullness entirely permeates them, as a soul permeates the body, since they are to serve as His own members, well suited and useful to the Master, who shall use them as He thinks best, filling them with His own glory and blessedness, graciously giving them eternal, inexpressible life, completely free from the constituent properties of this present life, which is marred by corruption ... [God] will be to the soul, as it were, what the soul is to the body, and through the soul He will likewise be present in the body (in a manner that He knows), so that the soul will receive immutability and the body immortality. In this way, man as a whole will be divinised, being made God by the grace of God who became man. Man will remain wholly man in soul and body, owing to his nature, but will become wholly God in soul and body owing to the grace and the splendor of the blessed glory of God, which is wholly appropriate to him, and beyond which nothing more splendid or sublime can be imagined.

Maximus draws a parallel between God and the soul in respect to the role of divine activity in the divinised human being. It appears that God will become to human being what the soul has been to the body. The original constitution of human beings as composition of the soul and the body will remain in

the afterlife, but the human beings will be permeated with the divine energy, in the same way in which the soul permeates the body. However, it would be wrong to conclude that the reciprocal and necessary union of the body and soul is a model for the much higher and ineffable union of human beings with the divine. Maximus maintains that God created the world having in mind the eschatological Christ of the final union of the Logos with all his logo!. This means that everything created is created for serving this final state of divino-human unity. By relying on Gregory Nazianzus, Maximus argues that God created the human being planting his image in the soul On the one hand the role of the soul was to ding to God by its intellectual and rational capacities in order to gain divinisation. On the other hand, the role of the soul was to care for and to prudently use the body by subjecting it to the mind through virtues. By creating the soul, God endowed it with a mediatory role between God and the body. The twofold union, the necessary and reciprocal union of the soul with the body, and free and willing union of the soul with the divine should provide, according to the divine plan, both the immutability of the soul and the immortality of the body. Thus, God created human beings as body-soul compounds in order to give them a foretaste of the future union with the divine, which although is supernatural will be felt as natural as natural is the union of the body and the soul. Moreover, in the supernatural union with God, the soul and the body will be inextricably united one to another, with a bond much stronger than the natural bond. In order to understand how the union of body and soul fits in the divine plan, it is worth consulting two hierarchies that Maximus introduces, one cosmological and one psychological. Both are dating from roughly the same period, namely before mid-630's. The so-called cosmological hierarchy is presented in ambig. 41 in the form of five divisions or distinctions that exist in the nature. The psychological or epistemological hierarchy is introduced several years later in Maximus' Mystagogia, chapter five, in the form of five pairs.

Similarly to Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus introduces hierarchies, but instead of Dionysian enneads (divided into three triads), in Neopythagorean fashion Maximus opts for decades (divided into two pentads). For Maximus God proceeds in two decades, consisting of five pairs each. Broadly speaking the cosmological hierarchy from Ambiguum 41 may be considered as relating to the body and the sensible creation, while the psychological hierarchy pertains to the soul. Maximus uses the Neoplatonic notions of procession and return, or to be more precise the 'creative and sustaining procession' and the "revertive and inductive return." In Ambiguum 41, Maximus describes the process of divine procession or creation of the five pairs in nature. In the first instance God created nature which received its beings in the process of becoming, distinguishing in this way the untreated from created nature. God then divided the created nature into sensible nature, which is perceived by senses and intelligible nature, perceived by mind. In the next step God divided the sensible nature into heaven and earth. Paul Blowers considers these three divisions to be natural, while the next two divisions are the result of the human fall. On several occasions Maximus expresses his conviction that the fall occurred simultaneously with the creation, and that there was no temporal interval prior to Adam's fall. As the fall occurred simultaneously with the creation of humanity, God could also reconsider his existing plan of creation and to reshape the humanity in accordance to the fallen state. One should dismiss the interpretation suggested by some scholars that the simultaneity of the creation and the fall presuppose the Origenistic and gnostic scenario of soul's embodiment, and that the materiality was the consequence of the fall. As Aleksandar Djakovac has convincingly shown, Maximus considers that due to the simultaneity between the creation and the fall, God introduced some changes in the humanity that are evident when one compares them with Christ's human condition. For example, the immaculate conception of Christ and

his birth from the virgin Mary, who remained virgin after giving birth to Jesus, point to another way of generation different from the animal-like generation that became characteristic of humanity after the fall.

The last two divisions are introduced by God and therefore adapted to the postlapsarian state of humanity. The fourth division is the division of the earth into paradise and inhabited world (oikumene). According to Maximus, paradise or paradisiacal state exists here just in potentiality. Finally, the inhabited world is divided into male and female, which is an adaptation for the procreation by copulation and generation. Maximus concludes his reasoning by explaining the purpose of the existing divisions:

> Through this potential, consistent with the purpose behind the origination of divided beings, man was called to achieve within himself the mode of their completion, and so bring to light the great mystery of the divine plan, realising in God the union of the extremes which exist among beings, by harmoniously advancing in an ascending sequence from the proximate to the remote and from the inferior to the superior. This is why man was introduced last among beings—like a kind of natural bond mediating between the universal extremes through his parts, and unifying through himself things that by nature are separated from each other by a great distance ...

Although Maximus does not mention the union of the body and the soul, the allusion that the human being is created the last among beings in order to be a natural bond between already created extremes may be read in the light of this union. By their bodies human beings belong to the sensible reality, while by the souls, the humanity participates in the realm of intelligible beings, like angels. The soul-body union indicates that the two created realms meet in every particular human being and that by belonging simultaneously to the two worlds the role of humanity is to mediate between two worlds. The appropriate employment of psychical and physical capacities in accordance with innate logoi, as well as with the proper mode of existence, opens the possibility for the harmonious advancement of human beings from "the proximate to the remote and from the inferior to the superior'. However, a possible human employment of the natural faculties contrary to their innate logoi, and particularly the irrational movement of human intellectual capacities, not naturally towards God, but unnaturally towards body and sensible nature, led God to introduce another change that deviates from the original plan. Maximus reversed the Origenian myth about the embodiment of the souls as divine punishment for transgression, into the argument about divine adaptation of human nature in the light of the foreseen transgression. Maximus distinguishes between the original plan of God and the deviation of this plan. While the divine original plan according to Maximus did not include the sexual division and the division into paradise and inhabited earth, it certainly included the distinction between soul and body as elements of which is composed human nature. In this respect the Origenistic view on the embodiment of the soul as divine intervention cannot be ascribed to Maximus. According to Maximus, the original plan also included the stability and unchangeability of the soul and the incorruptibility and immortality of the body. However, by foreseeing the possible transgression of the human being, God changed the characteristics of the soul and the body and he linked the soul, now unstable and exposed to passions, to the sufferable, corruptive and, in the last instance, dissolvable body. The purpose of this change was a detachment of the soul from body and matter, inflicted by human physical suffering and hardship.95 For Maximus, God's intention was the awareness of the human being that the way back to their lost stability, incorruptibility and immortality is by prioritising the soul's natural object of desire for God to the soul's irrational lust for created things.

Therefore, it may be concluded that according to Maximus, the human paradisiacal and prelapsarian state has never taken place and that from the beginning the soul and the body had to wrestle with passions, corruptibility and death. The question arises how does one know the real potential of the human paradisiacal and prelapsarian state, if it never took place? Maximus' response would be that the Logos of God through his incarnation gave us not only a glimpse of the paradisiacal state, but also a foretaste of the future divinised humanity.

Christ has undertaken the process of reversion, called also gathering , by overcoming the existing divisions. Maximus claims that Christ became a perfect man, which does not only mean that he became a fully human, with the human soul and the body, but also that he reinstated the original divine plan into human nature. This mainly pertains to the first division between male and female. The immaculate conception and the birth from the virgin points to another mode of multiplication of human beings, which does not presuppose the existence of male and female and the procreation by sexual copulation." By his resurrection from the dead Christ united the inhabited earth with the paradise. As Maximus claims, Christ proved that 'the earth is one and not divided against itself, for it preserves the principle of its existence free of any difference caused by division.' Maximus emphasises here that the earth regardless of its division into inhabited earth and paradise had only one logos of being, and not two. The same could be said for the sexual division. In spite of the fact that the human nature is divided into male and female, the sexes do not have separate logoi, but there is only one logos for the human nature. This is the main reason why these two divisions are considered by some scholars not to be natural, or to be against the nature." By ascension into heaven, Christ has united heaven and earth in one logos of the sensible nature." Christ's passage through the divine and intelligible order of heaven has resulted in uniting the sensible nature with the intelligible nature in the most primal and most universal logos of being. Maximus recapitulates the whole process done by Christ:

> He united, first of all, ourselves in Himself through removal of the difference between male and female, and instead of men and women, in whom this mode of division is especially evident, He showed us as properly and truly to be simply human beings, thoroughly formed according to Him, bearing His image intact and completely unadulterated, touched in no way by any marks of corruption. And with us and for us He encompassed the extremes of the whole creation through the means, as His own parts, and He joined them around Himself, each with the other, tightly and indissolubly: paradise and the inhabited world, heaven and earth, the sensible and the intelligible, since like us He possesses a body, sense perception, soul, and intellect...

Maximus points out that before appearing in front of the Father, Christ as human being fulfilled and completed all that is divinely preordered from eternity for humanity.'°' Christ's appearance and session by the Father in his perfected humanity is also his overcoming of the last division that existed between created and uncreated nature.

Maximus offers in this text a glimpse into the future transformation of the body and the soul. The changes which Christ's body has undergone pertain to its generation, incorruptibility and immortality. Christ adapted the way of human generation to the original plan, showing that the conception by means of sexual intercourse, and subsequent birth from a woman, and thus the existence of man and woman per se are not the only way of human procreation. The body of Mary, the mother of God was subjected neither to pleasure during the immaculate conception, nor to pain during labor. Thus, her body escaped the dialectical pair of pleasure and pain, that is attached to human fallen condition. The fact that the

bodies of Mary, the mother of God and of the infant Jesus were not exposed to corruption through labor points to a different, more subtle existence of the body not exposed to physical laws. The later events from Christ's life, such as walking on water (Mk 6:45—s) and performing various miracles in his pre-resurrection body or passing through a closed door (Joh 20:19) or ascending into heaven (Lk 24:51) in his post-resurrection body, reveal the real nature of the human body. This all points out to the existence of a thin body which is not subjected to corruption. Nevertheless, the major event is the resurrection. In the scheme of Christ's overcoming of five divisions, the resurrection is placed in the second division, or the division between the inhabited earth and paradise. According to Maximus, by uniting the inhabited earth with the paradise, Christ united his human body with his human soul that were separated in the moment of his death on the cross. The human beings in the fallen state contrary to their nature have united what has been naturally divided, such as the soul with the sensible world, and they have divided what has been naturally united, such as the soul with the intelligible world and God, endangering thus the whole creation to return to non-being. According to Maximus, the innovation of the nature that took place with Christ's action did not change their logos of nature, but it changed their mode of existence. As it is mentioned above this new way of existence, by which the soul will receive immutability and the body immortality, implies reattachment of the soul to God and the body to the soul.

It is relevant to apply here the analogy between the soul and the body and the human and divine nature. As due to the unity with divine nature the human nature in Christ may act beyond the limits of its own nature, similarly the nature of the body united with the soul may act beyond the limits of its material nature. In both cases, by being fully permeated by the energies of this other nature, the nature acts beyond its innate limits and appropriates the characteristics of the other nature. Thus, by being fully permeated by the divine energy, the human nature appropriates the characteristics of the divine, although it remains fully human. Similarly, by being fully permeated by the energy of the soul, the body appropriates the characteristics of the soul, remaining at the same time material. This was in accordance with the divine plan, which presuppose the hypostatic union of divine and human, not only in the incarnate Logos, but also in the deified humanity. By having this in mind, God then structured the whole reality, finalising his creation by uniting divinelike and immaterial soul with the material body. The role of the human being was to fashion its body in accordance with its soul and the soul in accordance with its divine origin, as well as to unite all other divisions existing in nature, including the last division between the created and the untreated nature. The difference between composite nature and composite hypostasis, which was in the focus of the previous chapter, still exists here. The human being remains both a composite nature of the body and the soul, as well as a composite hypostasis. The human composite hypostasis does not only deliberately unite different natures in its hypostasis, but it also unites the natures estranged from their natural logoi. For example, the unity of male and female in the human hypostasis is not the unity of two different natures that are determined by two logoi of nature, but the one and the same human nature that undergoes this unnatural division. Similarly, God did not ascribe different logoi to the inhabited earth and paradise, but they have one and the same nature defined by a single logos. In these two cases one nature does not receive the characteristics of another nature, like it is in the case of the body, which receives the characteristics of the soul, but it rather acts in accordance with its logos of nature. The sexual division would be suspended by one's acting in accordance with the logos of human nature. Therefore, the early Church praised the life in virginity and in ascetical struggle, perceiving it as the most appropriate way of life for human beings. Similarly, the

division between inhabited earth and paradise will be abolished by the universal resurrection, because the human beings will return to the state of immortality. Christ's post-resurrection life on earth before his ascension to heaven reveals the characteristics of the paradisiacal life, such as the incorruptible and thin body, not subjected to the laws of nature. Many of the Christian saints acquired during their lives some of the paradisiacal characteristics, such as being served by wild animals, or being free from spatial and temporal restrictions, which is evident in their abilities to levitate and foresee future.

Each of the next three divisions united by Christ consists actually of two natures. The mode of existence is now employed not in order to conform one single nature to its own logos of nature, but in order to regulate the functioning of two natures in accordance with their respective logoi The proper mode of existence of human nature includes the soul's and the body's functioning in accordance with their logoi, for the benefits of all humanity. Similarly, by its proper mode of existence and similarly to Christ, the human hypostasis has to unite earth and heaven in one sensible nature. According to Maximus, the sensible nature, like the human nature, is composite, consisting of dense earth and the thin air of heaven, which can be extended to other celestial bodies and all galaxies. Christ has united earth and heaven in one sensible nature by his bodily ascension to heaven. The unification of these two natures in one sensible nature implies that the characteristics of one nature will also be shared with another. In particular the dense earth and earthly beings will also acquire the features of the thin air, escaping the laws of gravity and other laws that are applicable to earth, but not to the outer space. The ultimate unification in the created nature was the unification of the sensible nature with the intelligible nature, or the angelic orders. Here again one nature, sensible in this case, receives the capacities of another nature, intelligible in particular. By uniting these two natures in one created nature, the composite human hypostasis acquires the features of intelligible, angelic nature, in spite of its participation with the body in the sensible nature. As composed of the soul, belonging to the intelligible realm, and the body, situated in the sensible realm, the human being experiences the fullness of created nature. The final step is to bring the unified created nature into communion with God. While all previous unions were innate to human nature, the final union is beyond nature, because the human beings receive the divine way of being. Thus, the created nature becomes free of all restrictions which imply createdness and apart from immortality, stability and eternity, it also acquires beginningless and infinity by grace.

Maximus presents a similar process of the unification of five divisions in Mystagogia 5. While in Ambiguum 41 the process of unification pertains to the cosmological hierarchy, in Mystagogia 5 the whole process relates to the soul and its capacities. Therefore the latter hierarchy is called psychological or epistemological. As it has been mentioned above, Maximus considers that the human soul is fashioned according to the image of God. Thus, the human soul possesses some characteristics of divinity.

By relying on Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus describes God as being true, good, one and unique." God is truth in regard to his essence, good in regard to his activity, while the divine oneness relates to his mode of existence in the Holy Trinity and the uniqueness pertains to his incarnation. As the soul consists of mind, reason and sensory apparatus," one may discern the image of God as truth or God in his essence in the human mind, and the image of God as goodness or God in his activity in the human reason. Therefore the divine procession or creation of the soul consisted in imprinting the characteristics of divine essence and energy in human mind and reason. The procession of divine essence into human mind consists of five stages, which are: truth, enduring knowledge, knowledge, contemplation, wisdom, until it finally rests in mind. Similarly the procession of divine activity into human

reason goes through five successive stages: good, faith, virtue, action and prudence until it reaches reason. It would be difficult to extract all these elements from the realities to which they are attached. Loosely speaking the pair of the enduring knowledge and faith correlates with the pair of intelligible and sensible natures, the pair of knowledge and virtue corresponds to the natures of sky and earth, the pair of contemplation and action is parallel to the pair of paradise and inhabited earth and finally the pair of wisdom and prudence relates to the pair of male and female. Finally, the mind and reason are planted in the human soul, the former with the function to maintain the link with God through wisdom and contemplation, and the latter to take care of the body and the sensible creation through prudence and action. Maximus distinguishes between essence, potency, habit and activity in vertical paths that lead both mind and reason to God. The potency of mind as essence is wisdom, the habit of mind is contemplation, and the activity of mind is knowledge. When mind acts in according with its nature and acquires knowledge, God grants it enduring knowledge as perpetual and unceasing movement towards God that leads to God as the truth. Similarly, the potency of reason as essence is prudence, its habit is action, and its activity is virtue. By realising its potency in prudence, its habit in action and its activity in virtue, reason acquires faith that further leads to God as the good.

Maximus describes the returning process of the soul, particularly that of mind and reason, to God as gathering. The process of gathering as the process of unification in Ambiguum 41, includes not only vertical but also horizontal gathering. In the composite nature or composite hypostatic, one nature receives the energy and characteristics of the other nature, apart from exercising the energy of its nature. Therefore, the process of gathering does not follow the opposite direction of procession. Mind does not directly revert to wisdom, contemplation, knowledge, enduring knowledge, ending in truth, nor does reason revert to prudence, action, virtue, faith, resting finally in goodness. Relying on the Platonist tradition, Maximus introduces the middle terms as natural bond between extremes. Before the soul unites itself to God, the five pairs of the soul, such as mind and reason, wisdom and prudence, contemplation and action, knowledge and virtue, enduring knowledge and faith are united in the middle terms. Reason is united with mind in one reasonable mind, prudence as the potency of reason is united with wisdom as the potency of mind into prudent wisdom, activity as the habit of reason is united with the contemplation as the habit of mind into active contemplation, and virtue as the activity of reason is united with knowledge as the activity of mind into virtuous knowledge. The whole process leads further to the unification between the faith of reason and the enduring knowledge of mind into faithful and enduring knowledge of the soul. Finally, by the unification of pairs in the middle terms and by ascending the fivefold ladder, the soul reaches truth and goodness, which are identical with the essence and the activity of God. It brings soul into union with God that is beyond reason and mind, and consequently beyond faith and enduring knowledge.

By complementing his cosmological hierarchy exposed in Ambiguum 41 with the psychological hierarchy from Mystagogia 5, Maximus reveals the destiny of the body and the soul in this life and the life to come. The unity of the body and the soul seems to be a model for the unities in the cosmological and psychological hierarches. While the psychological unities of rational mind, prudent wisdom, active contemplation, virtuous knowledge, faithful and unchanging knowledge relate exclusively to the soul, the cosmological unities of genderless humanity, paradisiacal oikumene, heavenly earth, intelligible matter, and divinised creation pertain to human nature as the composite of the soul and the body. Since both body and soul as parts of humanity, as well as mind and reason as parts of the soul are bound by natural

necessity, one may also conclude that the cosmological unities correspond to the psychological unities. Thus, the state of genderless humanity requires prudent wisdom, paradisiacal oikumene presupposes active contemplation, heavenly earth includes virtuous knowledge, the intelligible matter necessitates the faithful and enduring knowledge and the divinised creation means unification of the soul with God, as truth in his essence and good in his activity. Maximus draws a parallel between the human being and the universe, in which the human being is identified with microcosm, while universe is macros anthropos. Maximus's grandiose scheme of the unification of the cosmological and psychological pairs or good reversal may be discerned in the course of the liturgy. The entrance of bishops in the Church, as the symbol Christ's incarnation, refers to both genderless humanity and prudent wisdom. The chanting of hymns that glorify Christ's cross, tomb and resurrection relates to the paradisiacal world and active contemplation.' The bishop's ascendance into the sanctuary, as the symbol of Christ's ascension into heaven, relates to heavenly earth and virtues knowledge. The bishop's descent from the high place, that symbolises the second coming of Christ, together with the closing of the church's doors, links the altar (intelligible realm) with the nave (sensible realm) into one intelligible matter and reveals the faithful and enduring knowledge. Finally, as the reception of the body and blood of Christ, the Eucharist points to divinised creation and final union of the human soul with God. However, apart from embodying a certain symbolism that includes in itself the parallel processes in the cosmos as well as in the soul, the cosmic liturgy implies also divine presence in all these acts. The results of the divine presence in the cosmic liturgy, and particularly in the offerings are evident among the holy people, who already in this life received partial fruits of the life to come.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have argued that Maximus the Confessor perceives the body-soul unity as the first among a number of unities in the created world that the human being has to complete before it enters the final union with God. In his understanding of the body-soul union Maximus both relies on and departs from the views of Nemesius of Emesa and Leontius of Byzantium. Similarly to Nemesius and Leontius, Maximus perceives the human being as the compound of immaterial soul and material body, or as a hypostasis which accommodates in itself two different natures. However, by claiming the simultaneity and reciprocity of the body and soul, he denies the preexistence of the soul maintained by Nemesius, as well as the perfection of their natures held by Leontius. Arguing against Severus of Antioch's claim about Christ's composite nature, Maximus distinguishes between the human composite nature and Christ's composite hypostasis. While the human nature is necessary a compound of body and soul as imperfect elements, Christ's composite hypostasis consists of two natures independent of one another and distinguished by temporal interval. Moreover, for Maximus Christ is neither generic, because he would be thus the member of a species, nor singular, because he would not have then the common nature with God and humanity. However, Maximus does not reject the analogy between Christ as the union of two natures and the body-soul union, because of the similarities between Christ and human being as composite hypostasis. Christ's composite hypostasis is the model for human beings of how to arrange two different natures to act together in one composite hypostasis. Similarly to the human soul that permeates the body, the energy of Christ's divine nature permeates his human nature. The body-soul union is applicable not only to Christology, but also to eschatology. Maximus introduces five intermediate unions which the human being has to achieve before it reaches the final union with God. They are divided into two hierarches, one cosmological exposed in Ambiguum 4r, and another psychological elaborated in Mystagogia 5. By drawing a parallel between human being as microcosm and

cosmos as macros anthropos, Maximus considers all unities achieved by human beings as cosmological unities. Thus, the human being unites male and female in one genderless human nature, paradise and inhabited earth in one paradisiacal oikumene, earth and heaven in one sensible nature, sensible and intelligible nature in one intelligible matter, until it finally enters into union with God and receives divinisation. In the parallel psychological hierarchy, the soul unites intelligible realities, commencing with the mind and reason. Thus, mind and reason are united by the soul in the reasonable mind, wisdom and prudence into prudent wisdom, contemplation and activity into active contemplation, knowledge and virtue into virtuous knowledge, and enduring knowledge and faith into faithful and enduring knowledge. Finally, the soul reaches truth as God in his essence by its mind and goodness as God in his activity by its reason. These two parallel processes are actually one and the same process explained from the perspectives of the human hypostasis and of the soul. For Maximus, the present union of body and soul both needs and anticipates the future union with God, in which God will be for the soul, what the soul is now for the body. <>

STUDY OF SPIRITUALITY IN THE UNITED STATES by the Fetzer Institute is an opensource publication.

An Inquiry into the Spiritual and Civic Dimensions of Our Nature

The **STUDY OF SPIRITUALITY IN THE UNITED STATES** is a qualitative and quantitative inquiry into what spirituality looks like for people of all spiritual and religious backgrounds across the country. Through illuminating personal stories and survey data, the study reveals how the spiritual dimension of our nature informs our understanding of ourselves and each other, inspires us to take action in our communities, and implores us to find love everywhere we turn.

"I think it's a general part of the human experience, that we're all spiritual in some way." Grayce, 19, Moderately spiritual / Slightly religious (Christian)

The Question

What does spirituality mean to people in the United States today, and what effect does it have on community and political engagement?

This study seeks to build on existing spirituality research by reflecting how people understand spirituality and live spiritual lives in their own words, and exploring the relationship—and perceptions of the relationship—between spirituality and public engagement.

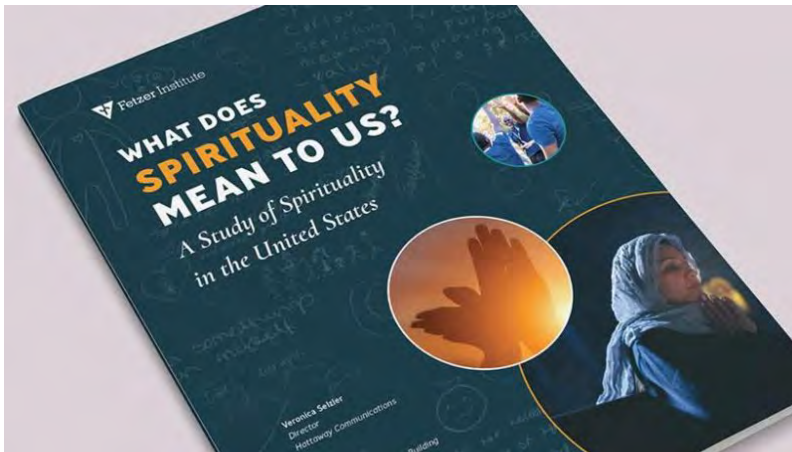
The Process

We designed the research process to listen for and reflect what spirituality means to people of many walks of life. The qualitative research comprised 16 focus groups in five cities and 26 in-depth interviews with people of a range of spiritual and religious backgrounds. Insights from that research informed a nationally representative survey administered to more than 3,600 people in the U.S. in January-February 2020. We worked closely with a diverse group of academics and practitioners throughout the process, from refining the research question and developing research guides to analyzing the findings. Learn more about the research process here.

What We Learned

It's human to be spiritual. Like laughing with a loved one, like telling stories about where we come from, like confronting a long-held fear, spirituality is an essential element of existence that can bring beauty to our lives and animate us in powerful ways.

Spirituality is often hidden within us. For some, it's a private practice to connect with the divine. For others, it is a quiet presence, lacking language or form. And for others, it's the current beneath religious devotion—an experience of deep peace and profound love.



As we heard from thousands of people across the United States, it became clear that one truth unites these experiences: Spirituality is the foundation for a loving world.

People described feeling spiritual when they knelt to pray to God. When they looked up at the stars in awe. When they faced an uncertain future or difficult loss. When they listened closely to someone unlike themselves. We have found spirituality in the tradition of our grandparents, in traditions that we did not inherit, and in no tradition at all.

We found a strong thread weaving together individuals and communities around the world—a common thread with the ability to fashion a vibrant view of spirituality today. <>

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Bibliography

Visions and Faces of the Tragic: The Mimesis of Tragedy and the Folly of Salvation in Early Christian Literature by Paul M. Blowers [Oxford University Press, 9780198854104]

Despite the pervasive early Christian repudiation of pagan theatrical art, especially prior to Constantine, this monograph demonstrates the increasing attention of late-ancient Christian authors to the genre of tragedy as a basis to explore the complexities of human finitude, suffering, and mortality in relation to the wisdom, justice, and providence of God. The book argues that various Christian writers, particularly in the post-Constantinian era, were keenly devoted to the mimesis, or imaginative re-presentation, of the tragic dimension of creaturely existence more than with simply mimicking the poetics of the classical tragedians. It analyzes a whole array of hermeneutical, literary, and rhetorical manifestations of "tragical mimesis" in early Christian writing, which, capitalizing on the elements of tragedy already perceptible in biblical revelation, aspired to deepen and edify Christian engagement with multiform evil and with the extreme vicissitudes of historical existence. Christian tragical mimetics included not only interpreting (and often amplifying) the Bible's own tragedies for contemporary audiences, but also developing models

of the Christian self as a tragic self, revamping the Christian moral conscience as a tragical conscience, and cultivating a distinctively Christian tragical pathos. The study culminates in an extended consideration of the theological intelligence and accountability of "tragical vision" and tragical mimesis in early Christianity, and the unique role of the theological virtue of hope in its repertoire of tragical emotions. <>

Selfless Love and Human Flourishing in Paul Tillich and Iris Murdoch by Julia T. Meszaros [Oxford University Press, 9780198765868]

In an age of self-affirmation and self-assertion, 'selfless love' often appears as a threat to the lover's personal well-being. Such a perception jars with the Biblical promise that we gain our life through losing it. It therefore calls for a theological response. In conversation with the Protestant theologian Paul Tillich and the atheistic moral philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch, this book enquires into the anthropological grounds on which selfless love can be said to build up the lover's self. It proposes that—while the implausibility of selfless love was furthered by the modern deconstruction of the self—both Tillich and Murdoch utilize this very deconstruction towards explicating and restoring the link between selfless love and human flourishing. It is shown that they use the modern diagnosis of the human being's lack of a stable and independent self as manifest in Sartrean existentialism in support of an understanding of the self as relational and fallen. This leads them to view a loving orientation away from self and a surrender to the other as critical to full, flourishing selfhood. The book closely engages Søren Kierkegaard's earlier attempt to keep selfless love and human flourishing in dialectical tension, and examines the breakdown of this tension in the later figures of Anders Nygren, Simone Weil, and Jean-Paul Sartre. It concludes with suggestions for further bolstering Tillich's and Murdoch's case for linking selfless love and human flourishing. <>

The Rapture of God: Balthasar's Theology, Exposition, and Interpretation by William Lloyd Newell [Hamilton Books, 9780761871880]

Editorial Evaluation: This book is a deep dive into the mystical, tangible theology of faith as present in the core of Balthasar's theological enterprise. **The Rapture of God: Balthasar's Theology, Exposition, and Interpretation** not only offers an orientation to reading Balthasar but also provides a masterful diachronic contextualization of Catholic theology during the 20th century. As such, I know of no better account of making Balthasar contemporary to a prayerful and contemplative faith seeking love and understanding within the radical sacramental presence of Christ as an invitation to become truly human(e).

The Rapture of God: Balthasar's Theology, Exposition, and Interpretation recommends Balthasar's theological oeuvre as a kerygma of Christ's love proclaimed theologically as Christ's esthetics of glory in his mission to reinvent himself, the world and us as beauty and glory. Balthasar's hypothesis is that there is true theology and there is false theology. For him, theology is the unique science across the methods of which the decision of faith cuts and divides it into two halves that cannot be united to each other: a genuine theology, which presupposes faith and does its thinking within the nexus of Christ and the Church; and a false theology, which rejects faith as methodologically dubious and irresponsible, and subsumes the truth of the phenomenon which discloses itself, under an anthropological truth (however this may be understood).

In William Newell's book he deeply reflects on the radical thinking being done in Catholic theology since the 1940s in Europe and now in the United States. Each chapter, each excursus, each elision, ushers the reader towards consolations without previous causes, the essence of mysticism in its first stages. The

book, as with true theology, is a ‘come and see’ beckoning the reader to an endless furtherance of the archetypal experience of Christ. <>

Balthasar on the Spiritual Senses: Perceiving Splendour by Mark McInroy [Changing Paradigms in Historical and Systematic Theology, Oxford University Press, 9780199689002]

In this study, Mark McInroy argues that the ‘spiritual senses’ play a crucial yet previously unappreciated role in the theological aesthetics of Hans Urs von Balthasar. The doctrine of the spiritual senses typically claims that human beings can be made capable of perceiving non-corporeal, ‘spiritual’ realities. After a lengthy period of disuse, Balthasar recovers the doctrine in the mid-twentieth century and articulates it afresh in his theological aesthetics. At the heart of this project stands the task of perceiving the absolute beauty of the divine form through which God is revealed to human beings. Although extensive scholarly attention has focused on Balthasar’s understanding of revelation, beauty, and form, what remains curiously under-studied is his model of the perceptual faculties through which one beholds the form that God reveals. McInroy claims that Balthasar draws upon the tradition of the spiritual senses in order to develop the means through which one perceives the ‘splendour’ of divine revelation. McInroy further argues that, in playing this role, the spiritual senses function as an indispensable component of Balthasar’s unique, aesthetic resolution to the high-profile debates in modern Catholic theology between Neo-Scholastic theologians and their opponents. As a third option between Neo-Scholastic ‘extrinsicism’, which arguably insists on the authority of revelation to the point of disaffecting the human being, and ‘immanentism’, which reduces God’s revelation to human categories in the name of relevance, McInroy proposes that Balthasar’s model of spiritual perception allows one to be both delighted and astounded by the glory of God’s revelation. <>

A Theology of Criticism: Balthasar, Postmodernism, and the Catholic Imagination by Michael P. Murphy [Oxford University Press, 9780195333527]

A number of critics and scholars argue for the notion of a distinctly Catholic variety of imagination, not as a matter of doctrine or even of belief, but rather as an artistic sensibility. They figure the blend of intellectual, emotional, spiritual and ethical assumptions that proceed from Catholic belief constitutes a vision of reality that necessarily informs the artist's imaginative expression. The notion of a Catholic imagination, however, has lacked thematic and theological coherence. To articulate this intuition is to cross the problematic interdisciplinary borders between theology and literature; and, although scholars have developed useful methods for undertaking such interdisciplinary "border-crossings," relatively few have been devoted to a serious examination of the theological aesthetic upon which these other aesthetics might hinge.

In **A Theology of Criticism,** Michael Patrick Murphy proposes a new framework to better define the concept of a Catholic imagination. He explores the many ways in which the theological work of Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) can provide the model, content, and optic for distinguishing this type of imagination from others. Since Balthasar views art and literature precisely as theologies, Murphy surveys a broad array of poetry, drama, fiction, and film and sets it against central aspects of Balthasar's theological program. In doing so, Murphy seeks to develop a theology of criticism. <>

Kenosis in Theosis: An Exploration of Balthasar’s Theology of Deification by Sigurd Lefsrud [Pickwick Publications, 9781532693694]

The perennial questions surrounding human identity and meaning have never before been so acute. How we define ourselves is crucial since it determines our conception of society, ethics, sexuality--in short,

our very notion of the "good." The traditional Christian teaching of "deification" powerfully addresses this theme by revealing the sacred dignity and purpose of all created life, and providing a comprehensive vision of reality that extends from the individual to the cosmos.

Hans Urs von Balthasar is a valuable guide in elucidating the church's teaching on this vital subject. Following the patristic tradition, he focuses his attention on Jesus Christ, whose kenotic descent in his incarnation and passion reveals both the loving character of God and the perfection of humanity. Christ is the "concrete analogy of being" who in his two natures as God and man unites heaven and earth. It is the Trinity, however, that brings to fruition the fullness of the meaning of theosis in Balthasar's theology. The community of divine persons eternally deifies the cosmos by embracing and transforming it into the paradigm of all reality--the imago trinitatis--overcoming the distance between the created and uncreated while maintaining and honoring their difference. <>

Oxford Handbook of Catholic Theology *edited by Lewis Ayres and Medi Ann Volpe* [Oxford University Press, 9780199566273]

The Oxford Handbook of Catholic Theology provides a one-volume introduction to all the major aspects of Catholic theology. Part One considers the nature of theological thinking, and the major topics of Catholic teaching, including the Triune God, the Creation, and the mission of the Incarnate Word. It also covers the character of the Christian sacramental life and the major themes of Catholic moral teaching. The treatments in the first part of the Handbook offer personal syntheses of Catholic teaching, but each offers an account in accord with Catholic theology as it is expressed in the Second Vatican Council and authoritative documentation. Part Two focuses on the historical development of Catholic Theology. An initial section offers essays on some of Catholic theology's most important sources between 200 and 1870, and the final section of the collection considers all the main movements and developments in Catholic theology across the world since 1870.
This comprehensive volume features fifty-six original contributions by some of the best-known names in current Catholic theology from the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa. The chapters are written in an engaging and easily comprehensible style functioning both as a scholarly reference and as a survey of the field. There are no comparable studies available in one volume and the book will be an indispensable reference for students of Catholic theology at all levels and in all contexts. <>

The Ethical Thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar by Christopher Steck (Herder & Herder, 9780824519155)

College Theology Society Book of the Year. 2002

In this remarkable study, the first of its kind in any language, Christopher Steck uncovers the ethical dimension of von Balthasar's thought, showing its relation to other key issues in his works, and to key figures such as Ignatius Loyola, Karl Barth, and especially Karl Rahner. Steck shows both the importance of ethics in von Balthasar's thinking and how it exposes limitations of current ethical reflection. This clear, authoritative introduction is indispensable for von Balthasar scholars and students of contemporary Catholic theology, as well as all interested in major trends about religious ethics. <>

The Systematic Thought of Von Balthasar: An Irenaean Retrieval by Kevin Mongrain [Herder & Herder, 9780824519278]

Is there a single driving force unifying the diverse writings of Hans Urs von Balthasar? Kevin Mongrain points to von Balthasar's retrieval of Irenaeus of Lyons. In Irenaeus, von Balthasar found inspiration for a

genuinely Christian theology that resists the recurring danger of gnosticism while honoring the Mystery of God. <>

Method and Mysticism: Cosmos, Nature and Environmental Islamic Mysticism by Seyyed Shahabeddin Mesbahi [Fons Vitae, 9781891785863]

In this pioneering work, Seyyed Shahabeddin Mesbahi offers a new methodology for approaching Islamic mystical concepts by examining the importance, place, and manifestation of the concepts of cosmos, nature, and environment in Islamic mysticism. The study presents a framework for understanding the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of these concepts, within selected stations (maqamat of the mystical path tariqa), and how, in a reciprocal interaction, they weave a "symbiotic whole." This work also reexamines the concept of "mystical experience" with regards to the Islamic mystics' approach toward the concepts of cosmos, nature, and environment, especially in the thoughts of great masters, such as Hallaj, Bayazid Bastami, Ghazali, Ruzbihan Baqli Shirazi, Ibn 'Arabi, Rumi, and Mulla Sadra. <>

Piety and Rebellion: Essays in Hasidism by Shaul Magid [New Perspectives in Post-Rabbinic Judaism, Academic Studies Press, 9781618117519]

Piety and Rebellion examines the span of the Hasidic textual tradition from its earliest phases to the 20th century. The essays collected in this volume focus on the tension between Hasidic fidelity to tradition and its rebellious attempt to push the devotional life beyond the borders of conventional religious practice. Many of the essays exhibit a comparative perspective deployed to better articulate the innovative spirit, and traditional challenges, Hasidism presents to the traditional Jewish world. **Piety and Rebellion** is an attempt to present Hasidism as one case whereby maximalist religion can yield a rebellious challenge to conventional conceptions of religious thought and practice. <>

Hakol Kol Yaakov: The Joel Roth Jubilee Volume edited by Robert A. Harris and Jonathan S. Milgram [The Brill Reference Library of Judaism, Brill, Hardback: 9789004420458, E-Book (PDF): 9789004420465] Open Access

Hakol Kol Yaakov: The Joel Roth Jubilee Volume contains twenty articles dedicated to Rabbi Joel Roth, written by colleagues and students. Some are academic articles in the general area of Talmud and Rabbinics, while others are rabbinic responsa that treat an issue of contemporary Jewish law. In his career, Joel Roth has been known as a scholar and teacher of Talmud par excellence, and, without question, as the preeminent decisor of Jewish law for the Conservative movement of his generation. In the meticulous style and approach of the Talmud scholarship of his generation, Roth painstakingly and precisely assayed the vast array of rabbinic legal sources, and proceeded to apply these in pedagogy, in scholarship and particularly in the production of contemporary legal responsa. The articles in this volume reflect the unique and integrated voice and vision that Joel Roth has brought to the American Jewish community. <>

Time and Difference In Rabbinic Judaism by Sarit Kattan Gribetz [Princeton University Press, 978-0691192857]

How the rabbis of late antiquity used time to define the boundaries of Jewish identity.

The rabbinic corpus begins with a question— "when?"—and is brimming with discussions about time and the relationship between people, God, and the hour. *Time and Difference in Rabbinic Judaism* explores the rhythms of time that animated the rabbinic world of late antiquity, revealing how rabbis conceptualized time as a way of constructing difference between themselves and imperial Rome, Jews

and Christians, men and women, and human and divine.

In each chapter, Sarit Kattan Gribetz explores a unique aspect of rabbinic discourse on time. She shows how the ancient rabbinic texts artfully subvert Roman imperialism by offering "rabbinic time" as an alternative to "Roman time." She examines rabbinic discourse about the Sabbath, demonstrating how the weekly day of rest marked "Jewish time" from "Christian time." Gribetz looks at gendered daily rituals, showing how rabbis created "men's time" and "women's time" by mandating certain rituals for men and others for women. She delves into rabbinic writings that reflect on how God spends time and how God's use of time relates to human beings, merging "divine time" with "human time." Finally, she traces the legacies of rabbinic constructions of time in the medieval and modern periods. <>

The Sermon on the Mount and Spiritual Exercises: The Making of the Matthean Self by George Branch-Trevathan [Supplements to Novum Testamentum, Brill, 9789004424449]

What, in Matthew's view, should a human being become and how does one attain that ideal? In **The Sermon on the Mount and Spiritual Exercises: The Making of the Matthean Self**, George Branch-Trevathan presents a new account of Matthew's ethics and argues that the evangelist presents the Sermon on the Mount as functioning like many other ancient sayings collections, that is, as facilitating transformative work on oneself, or "spiritual exercises," that enable one to realize the evangelist's ideals. The conclusion suggests some implications for our understanding of ethical formation in antiquity and the study of ethics more generally. This will be an essential volume for scholars studying the Gospel of Matthew, early Christian ethics, the relationships between early Christian and ancient philosophical writings, or ethical formation in antiquity. <>

Byzantine Intersectionality: Sexuality, Gender, and Race in the Middle Ages by Roland Betancourt [Princeton University Press, 978-0691179452]

A fascinating history of marginalized identities in the medieval world

While the term "intersectionality" was coined in 1989, the existence of marginalized identities extends back over millennia. **Byzantine Intersectionality: Sexuality, Gender, and Race in the Middle Ages** reveals the fascinating, little-examined conversations in medieval thought and visual culture around matters of sexual and reproductive consent, bullying and slut-shaming, homosocial and homoerotic relationships, trans and nonbinary gender identities, and the depiction of racialized minorities. Roland Betancourt explores these issues in the context of the Byzantine Empire, using sources from late antiquity and early Christianity up to the early modern period. Highlighting nuanced and strikingly modern approaches by medieval writers, philosophers, theologians, and doctors, Betancourt offers a new history of gender, sexuality, and race. <>

The Unity of Body and Soul in Patristic and Byzantine Thought edited by Anna Usacheva, Jorg Ulrich, Siam Bhayro [Contexts of Ancient and Medieval Anthropology, Brill/Ferdinand Schoningh, ISBN 9783506703392]

This volume explores the long-standing tensions between such notions as soul and body, spirit and flesh, in the context of human immortality and bodily resurrection. The discussion revolves around late antique views on the resurrected human body and the relevant philosophical, medical and theological notions that formed the background for this topic. Soon after the issue of the divine-human body had been problematised by Christianity, it began to drift away from vast metaphysical deliberations into a sphere of more specialized bodily concepts, developed in ancient medicine and other natural sciences.

To capture the main trends of this interdisciplinary dialogue, the contributions in this volume range from the 2nd to the 8th centuries CE, and discuss an array of figures and topics, including Justin, Origen, Bardaisan, and Gregory of Nyssa. <>

Study of Spirituality in the United States by the Fetzer Institute is an opensource publication.

An Inquiry into the Spiritual and Civic Dimensions of Our Nature

The **Study of Spirituality in the United States** is a qualitative and quantitative inquiry into what spirituality looks like for people of all spiritual and religious backgrounds across the country. Through illuminating personal stories and survey data, the study reveals how the spiritual dimension of our nature informs our understanding of ourselves and each other, inspires us to take action in our communities, and implores us to find love everywhere we turn. <>

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