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Giftng Freedom to the Samaritan: Considerations on access to both the sacramental event and salvation for those who, for whatever reason, find themselves outside the Church, and the consequences of identity for the Church in giftng such access

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GIFTING FREEDOM TO THE SAMARITAN:

CONSIDERATIONS ON ACCESS TO BOTH THE SACRAMENTAL EVENT AND SALVATION
FOR THOSE WHO, FOR WHATEVER REASON, FIND THEMSELVES OUTSIDE THE CHURCH,
AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF IDENTITY FOR THE CHURCH IN GIFTING SUCH ACCESS

BY

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND SEMINARY OF
SAINT JOHN'S UNIVERSITY, COLLEGEVILLE, MINNESOTA, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF THEOLOGY.

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND SEMINARY

SAINT JOHN'S UNIVERSITY
COLLEGEVILLE, MINNESOTA

15 MAY 2015

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Dr. William Cahoy

1 September 2015

GIFTING FREEDOM TO THE SAMARITAN

Description: This thesis gives consideration to issues surrounding the question of access to salvation, and to sacramental event, for contemporary ‘Samaritans’ – those persons who, for whatever reason, find themselves outside the Church. To chart such access, attention must be afforded, not only to the historical pronouncements of the Church, but also, most importantly, to the voiced laments and insights of these Samaritans themselves, enduring their dissonance and respecting their critique, both theological and ecclesiastical. Through such colloquy, a return to the Samaritan in Luke who offers hope to the exigencies of access, and leaves to linger an ecclesiastical question of identity – if the Church gifts to the Samaritan the freedom of this access, what is to become of the Church?

This thesis may be duplicated.

Signature of Student

15 May 2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project comes to be *in conversation* – it concerns itself with considerations, which in and of themselves come to be not *ex nihilo* – out of nothing – but from the thoughts, writings, complaints, speculations, and hopes shared, with others, encountered and attended. This project confesses a curiosity that has been a characteristic of a life, inspired, critiqued, and supported by many: by friends and family, by strangers, colleagues, and mentors, living and long dead – and to these persons who form the constellation of my life and my curiosities, I give much thanks.

The need to find access for the Samaritan has become central to my hope, because my life has been blessed with the sojourns of many Samaritans, of every stripe. The man on Death Row, who having just met me, and knowing fully my Catholic orientation in faith, challenged me to be his spiritual advisor and to help him explore neo-paganism. The grandfather, who having endured Anti-Semitism all his life, would still care and help others who were Anti-Semitic (who, in turn, sat me down at age six, to show me a collection of black and white images that he personally snapped as he helped liberate the camp KZ Mittelbau-Dora, in the Harz mountains, and, in doing so, challenged me to endure the realities of the banality of evil). Friends in the film industry and elsewhere, kind and generous and loving people, who, in negotiating their own identities and orientations, challenged me to radically revisit the formulae and rubrics of neoscholastic sensibility and its entitled restrictions on authenticity. The abbot in Uganda, who suggested to do something about such concerns regarding access, and put the very idea of graduate scholarship before me.

Such persons have implicitly been the great motivators in my life and in my interest regarding access, and regarding persons who are often named ‘Samaritan,’ not by they themselves, for where they stand they do not seem out-of-place, but by those who feel compelled to draw up and legislate boundaries and exiles.

Specific to scholarship, I would like to thank the following persons, in particular: Dr. John C. Endres, S.J., who patiently invited me to explore exegetical scholarship as a means of liberation; Dr. Paul G. Crowley, S.J., who challenged me to rest comfortably in the asymptotic pursuit of theological investigation, and who, in particular, introduced me to Karl Rahner and the notion of the anonymous Christian; Dr. William J. Dohar, who showed me the power of historical inquiry, both as a means of reclaiming identity, and throwing of the shackles of sedimentation caused by centuries of indifferent interpellation; Dr. Kristin Colberg, who gave me the confidence to think outside the box, and who introduced me to the power intrinsic to mystery; Dr. Columba Stewart, O.S.B., who encouraged the untried colloquy between voices very old and voices new and still germinal, but who, nonetheless, required critical inquiry leveled at both; Dr. Anna Mercedes, who invited me to entertain ‘dissonant voices’ and to respect their claims and critique (no matter the inconvenience of my personal discomfort), and who asked me to re-envision the notion of immanence; Dr. Charles Bobertz,

who was always willing to listen to my questions as I conducted my investigations, and who challenged me to not disavow the tradition in considering access; Dr. Jason Schlude, who opened up the worlds of Attic and Koine Greek for me, and who instilled in me a passion for etymology and a respect for ambiguity; and, finally, to Dr. William Cahoy, my dean, my professor, my advisor, my mentor, and my friend – who graciously put up with my ‘creative’ processes, as I ‘played’ my way into my topic, and investigated many a cul-de-sac, many an eddy, many a rabbit hole, and who then would help me intuit the valid insights and construct of consideration, reminding me to remind myself of the reasons behind the tasks of scholarship.

But scholarship ‘takes a village’ – beyond the professors and beyond the scholars. My work would never have developed without the generous support of the donors and staff at both the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, and the School of Theology and Seminary at Saint John’s University, in Collegeville, MN. In addition, special thanks must be given to several individuals. The library staff at Alcuin Library deserves a special note of gratitude, in particular, David Wuolu and Janine Lotz, who both made sure that any article or volume, no matter how obscure, would be given serious attention, either as a loan from another institution, or a procurement for Alcuin. Their interest in my interests was invaluable. In addition, Kim Melby Tollefson, who assisted Dr. Cahoy, helped me, on countless occasions, navigate the waters at Saint John’s. Her support and her friendship helped to ensure the fruition of my labors.

Lastly, much thanks must be directed to my parents, who have championed a long life of curiosity and play. Their support during my earlier work as a film director, and later in my endeavors on Death Row and in the war zones of Central Africa, did not stop with my return to academia. My father’s untiring willingness to ‘proof’ any item, no item too small, created a wonderful partnership of exploration. My mother’s example of an authentic ‘living faith’ inspires me to this day. They are ‘guilty’ of inculcating curiosity into this life. It is a guilt for which I can never give enough thanks and praise.

PREFACE

The project before the reader begins and ends with a simple question: is there access to salvation (the inheritance of eternal life) and to sacrament (a direct, intimate knowledge of the divine) for persons outside of the Church? An additional question is offered: what would happen to ‘the Church’ if the Church were to gift freedom to such access to such persons?

The project locates these religious (theological) questions within the political sphere which circumscribes all things religious (existence, inquiry, institution). The project examines by means of considerations, not by means of strict systematized analyses. These considerations begin by focusing on the landscape of existence and the political mechanics used by both the secular and the religious to map such landscape i.e. to discover meaning. They then move to re-examine areas that are often pronounced as circumscribed in certitude, but which, in fact, may be otherwise – *flesh* and *God*. These considerations then address the issue of *love* as both the condition for *salvation* and constitutive of the communion which lies at the heart of *sacrament*. Bookending these considerations of flesh and God are explorations into the parable of a certain Samaritan, in Luke 10. This parable is chosen as a lens which may offer a loosening of the *strong* thought of interpellation, usually used when discussing matters of salvation, sacrament, and access.

The reader’s patience is tested by the second feature of this project – the desire to incite conversation, by structuring the project as a site of *conversation*. As with a ‘drinks party,’ people are invited to come, to converse, without the rigidity of *discourse*. With this distinction in mind, the project has sought a wide range of voices: voices within the boundaries (*limes*) of both Church and theology, and voices far afield, and has attempted to allow these voices equal access to the conversation. Such allowance and welcome makes for a rich colloquy. But, as with any good gathering, it also can lead to being, at times, difficult to flow; its openness allowing for the occasional voice talking on top of another voice, producing a momentary dissonance, or the line of conversation being temporarily hijacked by another voice in the room. The reader is asked to forgive such happenings for the benefits of the larger dialogue: a diversity of perspective, and a richness to the considerations presented – both more indicative of the Real with which they are inviting the reader to engage.

The reader is encouraged to play freely with access to the project by means of its arrangement – the *chiasmus*. The project has been arranged into six sections. These sections can be read severally or sequentially I-VI. They may also be read with a fulcrum in mind, a middle to a chiasmus, somewhere between the latter half of sec. III and the beginnings to sec. IV, where the invisibility of *flesh* gives way to the infinity of the divine.

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I.
THE NIHILISTIC NEED

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Das Ganze ist das Unwahre. – Theodor Adorno¹

Est vrai ce qui se montre. – Michel Henry²

Christianity: a nihilistic religion

In his provocative exploration of the God-question in *The God of Jesus Christ*, Cardinal
Walter Kasper puts forward the succinct claim: “Christianity itself is a nihilistic religion.”³
Kasper’s dictum finds the strength of its concision on mimetic interplay with the aphoristic

¹ “The whole is the false.” Theodor W Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus d. beschädigten Leben* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), sec. 29, 55. For the English version of Adorno’s work, please refer to: Theodor W Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N Jephcott (London; New York: Verso, 2005), 50. Note that is an “inversion of Hegel’s famous dictum: *Das Wahre ist das Ganze* – the whole is the true; cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Werke 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 24.

² “True is what shows itself.” – Michel Henry, *C’est moi la vérité: pour une philosophie du christianisme* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1996), 21. (Author’s trans.)

³ Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 41. It is not the intention of this author to place too much emphasis on the relationship of this declaration to the promotions of Kasper’s opus as a whole. The statement is to be read with a sympathy akin to that which the theorist J. Hillis Miller advances as *anachronistic*. A particular advancement out of the reader-response approach to exegetical engagement, Miller avers: “A poem encrypts, though not predictably, the effects it may have when at some future moment, in another context, it happens to be read and inscribed in a new situation, in ‘an interpretation that transforms the very thing it interprets,’ as Jacques Derrida puts it in *Specters of Marx*.” Cf. J Hillis Miller, “Anachronistic Reading,” *Derrida Today* 3, no. 1 (2010): 75. See also Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: the state of the debt, the work of mourning, and the New international*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), 51. Reading the location of meaning, Miller claims: “The reader creates the meaning retroactively, by a species of metalepsis or what Freud called *Nachträglichkeit*, cause after effect, the cart before horse” (76). Placing meaning within the reading bears a kinship to the propositions of this paper, as they come to light in the advancement of the navigational metaphor.

rhetorical force of the anti-systematic irruptive claims of Friedrich Nietzsche, from which it takes its particular appreciation of nihilism.

For Nietzsche – *Der Nihilismus ein normaler Zustand*.⁴ It arrives as *consequence*,⁵ having been foreshadowed by the presence of pessimism,⁶ heralding a situation in which morality becomes impossibly detached from the will to exist⁷ – in desperation and abandonment: „Umsonst bisher!“⁸ Nihilism marks an existential confrontation, which, in essence, commands upon the perceiver a course of action. At the moment of its arrival, the aim of life, its navigational claim, falters, and *es fehlt die Antwort auf das „Warum“* (“*Lacking is the answer to the Why*”). Nihilism calls out for a response. For Nietzsche, there are only two: one that rises to the challenge in *strength* (*Stärke*), and one that spirals down into further and further devaluation, out of *weakness* (*Schwäche*). The former confronts the situation with two-pronged agency: firstly, employing a certain violent force of dismantlement, it achieves a freed space;⁹ and, secondly, it pushes forward on account of its force-fulness to posit (*setzen*) a *new aim* (*Ziel*), a *new reason* (*Warum*), and a *new faith* (*Glauben*), through which to navigate the flux and contingency of existence.¹⁰ This forcing past the condition into possibility – this forced movement – makes meaning. Meaning is not residue from a transcendent form – nor is it holed up in absolutized doctrine. Instead, meaning makes itself

⁴ Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *Der Wille zur Macht; Versuch eine Umwertung aller Werte* (Stuttgart: A. Kröner, 1964), sec. 23. “Nihilism [is] a normal condition [of existence].” (Author’s trans.)

⁵ Ibid., sec. 8.

⁶ Ibid., sec. 9.

⁷ Ibid., sec. 11.

⁸ “Up to now—zilch!” - Ibid., sec. 8. (Author’s trans.)

⁹ Space, here, is to be understood as liberated from constriction and restriction forced upon it by the conceptual claims and abstractions of a singular sovereign or sovereignty: space becomes open to be re-claimed by the free agents and thereby be put to use as sites of meaning as these same agents discover their own meaning through their located being-in-the-world.

¹⁰ Nietzsche, *Der Wille zur Macht; Versuch eine Umwertung aller Werte*, sec. 23. (Author’s trans.)

manifest in the movement through the condition of nihilism and the threat of disvalue into the creative unveiling of new meaning, that is borne out of the new navigational aim: the new reason and purpose that comes out of the side of that directional claim. This force of movement incurred as existence is directed along the new tack, and finds its momentum from its faith in its attack toward the horizon.

Implicit in this *active* Nihilism is a kinesis coupled with intentionality: a pushing past, a reaching out, in order to re-connect meaning, once again, with existence, with be-ing in the very present unfolding of life. Kasper's Christianity is a faith attentive to its condition of incarnation, bound up within the ever-evolving historical claim of a living faith. As such, it must always feel meaningful, and when nihilism eventually comes with contingencies from beyond the horizon of the here-and-now, it must confront its lacking of aim, its weakened meaning, and must push through, to re-claim its essential sense of faith and purpose—through a permanent revolution of essential conversions. Such is the challenge of the Jesus of the Evangelist John: μή κρίνετε κατ' ὄψιν, ἀλλὰ τὴν δικαίαν κρίσιν κρίνετε. (“Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”)¹¹ One cannot employ religious thinking as a calculus abstracted from situation and from the wholeness of the person caught up in the situation.

Meaning and value come from the occurrence of the thinking in the very unfolding of its process against the undulations and contingencies of existence. To navigate effectively one cannot navigate only by absolute (or abosultized) coordinates. *Life moves*. The sea-state changes.

Weather systems come and go. The vessel cannot be obdurate to the sea-state; it cannot keep inert

¹¹ Jn 7:24. Nb. – All translations given, unless otherwise indicated will be from the NRSV. In the Gospel of John, much attention is placed on judgment and condemnation (cf. the disciples judging the Samaritan woman at the well, Jn 4:27, as opposed to Jesus who, in the pericope, does not judge the woman's living situation, but praises her for the honesty of her reply concerning her status, Jn 4:17-19; this lack of condemnation is repeated with the woman brought forward, at the Temple, on the charge of adultery, Jn 8:1-11; and this comparative distinction on judgment predicated on limited human sensory perception and that based on divine understanding is made explicit in Jn 8:15 – ὑμεῖς κατὰ τὴν σάρκα κρίνετε, ἐγὼ οὐ κρίνω οὐδένα. (“You judge by human standards; I judge no one.”))

and static without suffering the force of the wind and the swell. The vessel itself must be in motion out on the high seas, in order to find its stability in the balance of wind and sea against its hull, and “sit” into its “zone,” providing for those aboard a stable platform on which to exist in a sea of constant flux. This achievement of stability is accrued only by the constant choreographing of movements, the shifting of tacks, against the constant intake of data and coordinates, and the abandonment of old tack and old marks, for new aims and new reliance, purchased from the strength to posit re-visions, re-actions, and faith in the continuance of effective and effecting movements.

The Benedictine visionary Henri Le Saux (Swami Abhishiktananda) noted this need for openness and adjustment a half century ago. Despite the efforts of the Second Vatican Council, he found himself compelled to warn: “The teaching of the Church no longer impresses; her cult even if renewed, too often fails to touch people to the depths of their being... Most of her present day adaptations and reformulations disappoint all hopes because they remain at that level that is called religious.”¹² *Religare*, from which ‘religion’ is derived, means ‘fasten.’ Le Saux thus calls attention to a paradoxical condition of religion, when it binds in a manner contrary to its primary purpose, that being sacramental, as in fastening the person and the divine in communion, through intimate and self-less love.¹³ The condition of disappointment is constitutive of the nihilistic event – it is a call to respond, to make a meaningful re-claim. The Trappist sage Thomas Merton links this devaluation to a refusal to budge, to a “static and inert” religious obduracy, one which by its very claim as an ahistorical bulwark runs against the responsibilities incurred by incarnation, and instead

¹² Henri Le Saux, O.S.B. (Abhishiktananda), “The Theology of Presence As a Form of Evangelization in the Context of Non-Christian Religions,” in *The Eyes of Light* (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1983), 57.

¹³ This fundamental understanding of the sacramental event is lucidly explained by liturgical theologian Matthew J. O’Connell, S.J., at the time of the Second Vatican Council. Cf. Matthew J. O’Connell, “New Perspectives in Sacramental Theology,” *Worship* 39, no. 4 (1964): 195–206.

runs “in complete continuity with what is most questionable and indeed scandalous in the history of the Church: Inquisition, persecution, intolerance, Papal power, clerical influence, alliance with worldly power, love of wealth and pomp, etc.”¹⁴ Defenders of such a faith, writes Merton, “will go to *any length* in order to defend their own fanatical concept of the Church” – “intent on preserving the scandal at the cost of greater scandal.” Paul Ricoeur asks, “If we follow out to its limit this suspicion that a subtle form of the will to power is concealed by the most sincere forms of this humility of what we call the will to truth, what do we find?”¹⁵ For Ricoeur, all quests for truth, including that sought under the banner of “religious knowledge,” are consequently called into question. The obstinate construction of “religious proofs for the existence of God” is undertaken “because we seek in God the supreme guarantee upon which to found our claim to mastery over the world.” In the performativity¹⁶ of such a claim, the Church confesses its own unbelief. This is the faith, writes moral theologian Richard Niebuhr, “that burns the books of the unbelievers.” For Niebuhr, theologian Karl Barth and philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach are in concord on this point. They challenge: “to believe in religion is to believe in man, that to hope that religion will save man is to hope that man will save himself.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 286. Thomas Merton penned his concern for the Church, against the crises of the Sixties, under the storm clouds of a Cuban Missile Crisis, an expanding, un official war in Vietnam, within shadows of his own censure by his order and the Church and the memories of Auschwitz, Hiroshima, and concords made between the Holy See and the fascist dictators of Europe as a means of defense for the Church.

¹⁵ Paul Ricœur, “Whoever Loses Their Life for My Sake Will Find It,” in *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, ed. Mark I. Wallace, trans. David Pellauer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 285–6.

¹⁶ I am using the term *performativity*, as expressed by the philosopher Judith Butler. Cf. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993). Butler stresses that “performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate ‘act,’ but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names” (2). This discourse is not conversation. It assumes a matrix, in which *sex*, for example, as a category, “is, from the start, normative, it is what Foucault has called a ‘regulatory ideal.’ In this sense, then ‘sex’ not only functions as a norm, but is part of regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs” (1). Caught up in the material and political consequences of *performativity* is the weight and force of *interpellation*.

¹⁷ Richard Niebuhr, preface to Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper, 1957), vii–viii. Niebuhr penned these words in a post-McCarthy New York. They themselves comment on a lecture of Karl Barth given in

Against the implications of hegemonic self-preservation¹⁸ stands Kasper's dictum of Christian identity linking to an active, recurring nihilistic performative. In its cyclical confrontation, demolition, and re-generation, Christianity preserves its Christly identity, only by turning and *re*-turning to *re*-fasten the Christian to the radical source – Λόγος (*Logos*, Word) – through which all, without exception, comes into be-ing; the source of the cosmos which is both Life and Light, and, as Light, is such that can never be captured by the darkness.¹⁹ Kasper's nihilistic Christianity is a religion forever watchful, careful to sense the impending arrival of the nihilistic

defense of teaching Ludwig Feuerbach on the eve of Hitler's Reich which would burn all dissenting voices, and against similar practices commonly put into play by various contemporary ecclesial bodies.

¹⁸ The Protestant theologian Paul Tillich terms this hegemonic self-interest – *heteronomy*. In his memoir *On the Boundary*, he professes, "I have long been opposed to the most expressly heteronomous religious system, Roman Catholicism." Cf. Paul Tillich, *On the Boundary; an Autobiographical Sketch* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), 39. Tillich is careful to point out that this "protest" of his is not "against the dogmatic values or liturgical forms in the Roman Catholic system but rather against Catholicism's heteronomous character with its assertion of a dogmatic authority that is valid even when submission to it is only superficial" (39). Believing Barthian supranaturalism to be "a denial of the Protestant principle," Tillich sees such "tight-fitting armor" – "anti-autonomous and anti-humanistic" to be a new heteronomy (40-41). Utilizing an understanding of *justification* (Paul-Luther) to be such that it "denies every human claim before God and every identification of God and man" (48), Tillich concludes: "Not only human acts but human thinking as well stand under the divine 'No'. No one, not even a believer or a Church, can boast of possessing truth, just as no one can boast of possessing love. Orthodoxy is intellectual pharisaism. the justification of the doubter corresponds to the justification of the sinner" (51). Therefore: "It is not permissible to designate as "un-churched" those who have become alienated from organized denominations and traditional creeds." Tillich states personally that in "living among these groups for half a generation I learned how much of the latent Church there is within him" (65).

For a Catholic appreciation that arrives at similar conclusions, see Karl Rahner, "The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation," in *Experience of the Spirit: Source of Theology*, by Karl Rahner, trans. David Morland, OSB, (Theological investigations ; v.16) (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979), 199-224, esp. 202, where Rahner notes: "The Second Vatican Council, in contrast to the previous traditions of the schools, reckons with the possibility of the saving activities of faith, hope, and loving being found even in the case of atheists who remain attached to their belief. So the possibility cannot be denied to any other group of men [or women], whatever their externally verifiable attitudes and beliefs." It is important to stress the openness to 'saving activities' that are both present and salvific (i.e. effective) despite external objectification to the contrary. Rahner later underscores the genuine nature and capacity of the implied and the implicit. He states: "A person who is searching for something which is specific and yet unknown has a genuine existential connection" (221). Authenticity, with respect to faith, love and hope, rests wholly with God. More important than explicit/implicit, writes Rahner, is that "all possess not only a relationship of faith to God's self-revelation, but also a genuine relationship to Jesus Christ and his saving action" (220). And what constitutes such a relationship? Approaching the "absolute love of neighbor" with "radical seriousness." Rahner points out that "if one adopts a theology of purely legal attribution [e.g. heteronomy], then one distorts the sense of Jesus' words which is take from the real experience of love." Simply put: "*The true meaning is that through a radical and unconditional love of another, a man makes an implicit act of faith and love in Christ*" (222). This openness of the faith claim is centered in the real experience—in the react gift to the particular neighbor (cf. Mt 25).

Thus in re-turning to the Christly radix, one re-engages with the love that is God (1 Jn 4), and that marks God's ultimate gift (Jn 3:16).

¹⁹ Jn 1:1-5.

condition, forever eventual and reoccurring, forever in need of a counter re-generative response.²⁰

Nihilistic marks a re-occurrence: forever threading all meaning and value from the re-fastening of the Christly claim, the commandment to love,²¹ evidenced most explicitly in the Resurrection,²² to the contingent encounters of the other/neighbor within the flux of history. To do this, to constantly release and return, anew, in order to refasten afresh in the for-ever-new momentary present, requires kinesis, plasticity, and continuity.

Aim of the project

The aim of this project is not to present an apology or a static system, which, in turn, may be defended or proselytized at all costs. Rather, it presents considerations, borne from “condensations of experiences lived,” to borrow the words of Raimon Panikkar, “(and often suffered) within

²⁰ Though the language might suggest a disposition not unlike the one often taken in apocalyptic literature, the actual position is a ‘twisting’ of such a claim. The watchfulness is not towards some final telos beyond the immediate horizon; implied is a caution against such an impulse. Here, there is no satisfaction in a triumphant sense of being among the elect; here, there is no boasting. By extension, even the consideration of such ideas or possibilities would impede the necessary watchfulness and flexibility to make responsive adjustments to the unanticipated. Salvation comes from the repeated performance. For, as St Isaac the Syrian warns: “We gain God when we abandon all, even the Kingdom of Heaven, for His love.” Holding on to concerns of attaining the Kingdom of Heaven will, in fact, keep one from the Kingdom of Heaven. Cf. Isaac, *The ascetical homilies of Saint Isaac the Syrian*, trans. The Holy Transfiguration Monastery (Boston, MA: The Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 2011), 414, 5:93. See also, Rom 9:3. Each arrival of the nihilistic condition not only calls the status quo into question, but in its call, and in the redress, and of the eventual re-course, also points proleptically to the future, and to future arrivals, and thus to the eternal recurrence of its meaningful event.

²¹ Cf. Jn 15:9-14; Jn 13:34-5; for the traditional double commandment of love, exscribed from passages in the OT, see in particular Matt 22:35-40 and Mk 12:28-34. For the OT sources, see Deut 6:4-5 and Lev 19:18. It should be also kept in mind that Jesus opens up the circle of inclusion marked by the *ger*, ‘resident stranger’ to include not only the *nokbri*, ‘alien,’ but the enemy (*ἐχθρὸς*) in Matt 5:43, thus wiping out the exception for the gifting of love upon an other. See also note 18, for a contemporary reading of this commandment and its implications (Rahner). See also, Karl Rahner, “The Theology of Power,” in *More Recent Writings*, trans. Kevin Smyth, (Theological investigations ; v.4) (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1966), 391–409, esp. 406–408, for a nuanced consideration of the relationship between power and love.

²² Cf., Paul Evdokimov, *In the World, of the Church: A Paul Evdokimov Reader*, ed. Michael Plekon and Alexis Vinogradov (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), 187. Evdokimov quotes St Isaac the Syrian’s redaction of the Christian profession to be, essentially, nothing more than the fundamental belief in the Resurrection. Specifically, citing St Isaac’s *Sentences* (118), Evdokimov writes that the saint “makes it clear that the only true sin is to be ‘insensible to the Resurrection.’”

the framework of tradition.”²³ These condensations, thus, in turn, serve as seeds of consideration, not borne of themselves, but which, given life through Life’s humus, may give hope and reality to two possibilities: (1) *access* to sacrament, and ultimately salvation, to those, who, for whatever reason, find their place in a landscape outside and apart from the *limes*²⁴ (boundaries) by which the Church defines and defends its sense of the sacred and itself, in its traditional sense, as Church; and (2) the *gifting* of inclusion, consideration, sacrament, and ultimately of salvation, to those outside imposed ecclesial *limes*, by the very same Church.

The aim of this project is a conversation, not a discourse.²⁵ The considerations brought into conversation concern solely the question of gifting access to sacrament and salvation of those outside the Church’s boundary. These considerations are brought forward, in the words of Thomas Merton, as simple, “day-to-day impressions, the simple conjectures of a man in his own world with its own challenges.”²⁶ The project aims to follow this question openly, in duty to the contingency

²³ Raimundo Panikkar, *Christophany: The Fullness of Man*, trans. Alfred DiLascia (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2004), 143. Panikkar uses consideration because it does not carry with it the limitation of human thought to a mere “formula of induction/deduction” which “frightens us into believing.” Panikkar goes on to loosen the bonds of scientific and Aristotelian assertions: “No one can deduce an oak from a seed; some of the oak’s properties may be derived from its physico-chemical composition but not the oak itself” (143). This inability at deduction will gain significance as the conjectures of this paper unfold.

²⁴ Umberto Eco, in his essay, “Weak thought and the Limits of Interpretation.” presents a concise delineation of the evolution of the *juris* that comes out of classical notions of rationalism. He writes: “According to Greek rationalism—from Plato to Aristotle and beyond—to know is to know by cause. Even to define God is to define a cause such that there can exist no other cause. To explain the world by causes is to elaborate a notion of a unidirectional chain ... no force can make it go from Omega toward Alpha.” He goes on: “Latin rationalism accepts the principles of Greek rationalism, but it transforms them and enriches them in a juridical and contractual sense. The basic principle thus becomes the notion of *limes*, that is, of the border and thus of the limit.” Cf. Umberto Eco, “Weak Thought and the Limits of Interpretation,” in *Weakening Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Gianni Vattimo*, ed. Santiago Zabala, trans. Antonio Calcagno (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 37–56. Against this stands Vattimo’s notion of ‘weak thought.’ For an introduction to this concept, see Gianni Vattimo, “Dialectics, Difference, and Weak Thought,” trans. Thomas Harrison, *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 10, no. 1 (1984): 151–164. For conversation concerning ‘weak thought,’ see Santiago Zabala, ed., *Weakening Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Gianni Vattimo* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007). And for a sympathetic, theological appropriation and application of Vattimo’s investigations, see John D Caputo, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

²⁵ For a clear concise distinction between ‘discourse’ and ‘conversation,’ see David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 18–23. Tracy’s distinction underscores Merton’s aforementioned fears. Tracy writes of the vulnerability that lies at the heart of any earnest conversation or dialogue. “Persons willing to converse are always at one major disadvantage from those who are not. The former always consider the possibility that they may be wrong.”

²⁶ Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, vii. Merton’s simple offer, without dogmatic force, is appealing. It is a sentiment I wish to employ, and one echoed in the following words Raimon Panikkar uses to conclude a speech he gave outlining his line of thinking found in greater detail in his book, *Christophany*. The speech can be found in print, cf. Raimon Panikkar, “A Christophany

within question, and in faith of the answer that “is the answer to the question, that is contained in all questions,” and is the answer “that includes and transcends all other answers.”²⁷ *To achieve this, both a movement of release and a movement of return are required.* ‘Release’ begins with being attentive²⁸: with the beginning of a conversing: a listening open to the “strident and uncivil” voices of the “victims of our discourses and our history,” discourses, by their very nature, bent on the exclusion of “those others who might disrupt the established hierarchies and challenge the prevailing hegemony of power.” For as David Tracy offers, it is by beginning “to listen to those other voices may we also begin to hear the other within our own discourses and within ourselves. What we might then begin to hear, above our own chatter, are possibilities we have never dared to dream.” These are the possibilities needed to be known in order to put Kasper’s nihilistic performative into play, and these possibilities are purchased with the inclusion of the voices of those outside, and of their vision of existence and co-existence, whether defined in religious or secular language.²⁹

The act of releasing pushes forward to the Christly radix: Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν – “And the *logos*³⁰ came into being flesh, and the *logos*—as—flesh dwelt among

for Our Times,” *Theology Digest* 39, no. 1 (1992): 3–21. Pannikar concludes, confessing: “I do not even defend my own views. I simply present them, glad to learn from others, to be eventually corrected, and always ready to know better the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ’s love which exceeds all knowledge, because it belongs to the *plérōma* of God, echoing, of course, Ephesians 3” (21).

²⁷ Cf. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 5.

²⁸ Cf. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 321. Lonergan puts his transcendental precepts into practical play in a brilliant, concise critique he wrote on authentic authority. Cf. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., “Dialectic of Authority,” in *A Third Collection: Papers*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York; London: Paulist Press; Geoffrey Chapman, 1985), 5–12.

²⁹ The shared identity, between those inside the boundaries and those outside, through the everyday, immanent experiences of age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.” Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Gaudium et spes* (Pastoral constitution of the Church in the modern world, 1965), sec. 1, official English trans., Holy See, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html. Hereafter, the constitution will be cited simply with an acronym of its initials and the relevant section number, e.g. GS 1.

³⁰ The translation has been adjusted by the author, with respect to the Greek. See following:

us” (Jn 1:14). *Flesh comes to be the shared site of encounter*: for God incarnate “among us,” and as the means of opening ourselves to the possibility of the sacramental event: communion with God (cf. 1 John 4, esp. verse 12). *Flesh* is that which traces the tidal region between self and world, between interior and exterior, between expression and reception, between each exhale and inhale. *Flesh* marks our very living. It can be expanded, and pushed to allow for strength and for growth, and it can collapse back upon itself, in folds and bearing the traces of the trials and scars of experience. It can be amputated and augmented, but it cannot be completely abandoned without abandoning life itself. *Flesh* breathes, and confesses the limitation and finitude of our very being.³¹

It should be kept in mind that λόγος is a ‘thick’ word, which has multiple nuanced meanings and implications, and which many exegetes consider, in the end, untranslatable. It vibrates not unlike a quantum participle between an expressive force, Lat. *oratio*, as in “*that by which the inward thought is expressed*,” and Lat. *ratio* – “*the inward thought itself*.” Further, it can signify Lat. *vox*, in the sense of “*that which is said or spoken*,” viz. a word, or words, or a language, or a statement, such as: καὶ εἶπεν ὁ Θεός· γενηθήτω φῶς· καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς. (“And God said ‘Let there be light, and there was light;’ Gen 1:3). In this sense, λόγος becomes intertwined with the God and the generating of Life: λόγος marks God’s voice and the breath of his Spirit which allows all to come into be-ing. With respect to the nuances of *ratio*: λόγος may mark more than a command, or the inward thought leading to a command – it may be the very ‘ground’ / ‘consideration’ / ‘expectation’ of the event-ing (Creation i.e. πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν – “And through [the *logos*] all things came into be-ing, not even was one which came to be apart from [the *logos*];” (Jn 1:3) trans. adjusted by author, on the basis that to use “him” for αὐτοῦ is presumptive that the masculine carries a gender beyond the marker of the masculine noun; this is important insofar as in the very next verses: ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων (Jn 1:4) wherein λόγος (*logos*, masc.) is linked to ζωὴ (life, fem.) and to φῶς (light, neut.) blurring the particularities of rigid engendered categories; Jesus himself declares in Jn 14: 6 that he constitutes/can be equated to three feminine considerations: way (ἡ ὁδός), truth (ἡ ἀλήθεια), and life (ἡ ζωή). This notion of *logos* as both ground and expectation, contained in the singularity of the same noun be-ing uttered, may also be thought to hold a sense of eternity, as in “I am the Alpha and the Omega” – “the one being, the who was, the one coming” (Rev 1:8; trans. adjusted). Finally, λόγος can imply “*due relation, proportion, analogy*” as in the choreography of relation contained within the opening verse of John’s prologue: Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ Λόγος, καὶ ὁ Λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ Λόγος. “In – beginning [as in a primordial beginning beyond human comprehension and circumscribed understanding] there was the *logos*, and the *logos* was toward the God, and God was the *logos*” (trans. adjusted to the Greek, and to reflect the signification of the missing definite article with respect to ἀρχῇ). Cf. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, 7th ed. (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Fine Books, 2013).

With respect to Jn 1:14 – the *logos* became σὰρξ (“flesh,” fem., but without the definite article, and so as ‘elemental,’ in the classical sense). The use of the verb γίνομαι carries the force of equivalence, not unlike the verb εἰμί (“to be”). Furthermore though ἐν ἡμῖν is translated here as “among us” by the NRSV, it finds its parallel in the conditional set forth in 1 Jn 4:12, wherein, God is said to indwell in those who love each other: [...] ἐὰν ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, ὁ Θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν μένει [...] Here, the NRSV elects to translate this dative as “in us.” This sense of ‘among’ *versus* ‘in’ will become significant in the following discussions of *flesh* as classically defined (Augustine), and as developed phenomenologically by Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Michel Henry among others.

³¹ The literary theorist and essayist Terry Eagleton calls poignant attention to this in *Reason, Faith, and Revolution*. Eagleton writes: “The New Testament is a brutal destroyer of human illusions. If you follow Jesus and don’t end up dead, it appears you have some explaining to do. The stark signifier of the human condition is one who spoke up for love and justice and was done to death for his pains. The traumatic truth of human history is a mutilated body.” Terry Eagleton, *Reason, Faith, & Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 27.

Next are the considerations of *flesh* (finite and visible) and *God* (excess and invisible), and the interweaving that marks place, weak enough in its *limes*, to allow for the positing of possibility as a gift. To allow for this unfolding of place-in-response to both the challenge of the contingencies of the unforeseen and of the cry from “other sheep that do not belong to this fold” (Jn 10:16), the apophatic posture and the Eastern understanding of the symbol become essential.

The *apophatic* claim is that at the heart of any statement, concerning the infinite and ‘the One,’ is a confession of finitude on the part of the claimant.³² The absolute One, being absolute and not merely particular, cannot be grasped by anything particular (i.e. less than One). *Flesh* embeds the particular, incarnating the particular within a particular finite constellation of intercorporeality and visibilities, and are given shape through the flesh that surrounds and delineates and separates. *Flesh* confesses the gap between the one and the One. *Flesh* inhibits any

³² For an excellent survey of the implications of such a confession, see Karl Rahner, “The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology (3 Lectures),” in *More Recent Writings*, trans. Kevin Smyth, (Theological investigations ; v.4) (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1966), 36–73. Specifically, Rahner writes: “One can only speak correctly of God when he is conceived of as the infinite. But he can only be grasped as such when we return to the transcendent illumination of every act, since merely to remove the limits of the finite as such is not enough to bring about an understanding of what the absolute and positively infinite means. All conceptual expressions about God, necessary though they are, always stem from the unobjectivate experiences of transcendence as such: the concept from the pre-conception, the name from the experience of the nameless” (50-51). The problems arise when this indebtedness has lost sight of, and the concepts – provisional, finite, and ultimately unreliable (as man is finite and intrinsically unreliable) – are absolutized. Rahner, recalling the entire rich apophatic continuum, from the Arcopagite onwards, reframes the incomprehensibility of God, from an apparent deficit, a “limit of his [man’s] happiness,” into his *theosis*, “the blessedness of man” – man being “made for the one abiding mystery” (58).

Rahner extends this appreciation to include St. Thomas Aquinas. Rahner writes: “So too we read in St Thomas (de Pot., q. 7, a. 5): *ex quo intellectus noster divinam substantiam non adaequat, hoc ipsum quod est Dei substantia remanet nostrum intellectum excedens et ita a nobis ignoratur et propter hoc illud est ultimum cognitionis humanae de Deo, quod sciat se Deum nescire, in quantum cognoscit illud Deus est omne ipsum quod de eo intelligimus excedere.* (“Since our mind is not proportionate to the divine substance, that which is the substance of God remains beyond our intellect and so is unknown to us. Hence the supreme knowledge which man has of God is to know that he does not know God, in so far as he knows that what God is surpasses all that we can understand of him)” (58-59).

Rahner claims that man’s “real being, as spirit, is transcendence, the being of the holy mystery. Man is he who is always confronted with the holy mystery, even where he is dealing with what is within hand’s reach, comprehensible and amenable to a conceptual framework.” Every object, every concept, is given shape and apprehension because it is always encountered against the horizon, infinite and, as such, incomprehensible. “Man,” concludes Rahner, “always lives by the holy mystery, even where he is not conscious of it” (53-54). This singular, whole and incomprehensible mystery that frames and gives shape to everything always existing within its infinite horizon – this mystery is God, infinite, completely present and proximate and, consequently, always just beyond.

authenticity to any finite claim to absolute. *Flesh* opens the finite to capacity to make the apophatic confession.

“Apophatic theology and the idea of the symbol,” writes Paul Evdokimov, are the “key-stone for every ecumenical dialogue and for all dialogue with the world as well.”³³ Evdokimov understands *symbol* as “from the Greek word ‘to throw together’” and thus “implies the putting together of two halves.”³⁴ Confessing that one does not and cannot have claim on the Infinite and the One allows one to meet the other in colloquy, each with different claims and different meanings, each joined in confessing the apophatic reality at the heart of any claim with the divine. Thus, in the very act that two divergent claims can come together, the Eastern sense of symbol is made manifest and points to a unifying – signifying that which transcends any perceived immediate discord between finites. In this way, *symbol*, “at the same time acts as an expressive receptacle of the presence. It is then *epiphanic*, witnessing to the coming of the Transcendent.”³⁵ To consider oneself, one’s divine claim, one’s political claim, apophatically marks a starting-point of “vulnerability” and “injurability” which constitute, for philosopher Judith Butler, the foundational ground for “co-habitation.”³⁶ This vulnerability is the epiphany. The epiphany is a coming into the understanding of one’s radical, inescapable finitude. The epiphany does witness the coming of the

³³ Evdokimov, *In the World, of the Church*, 187.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 186. Evdokimov, elsewhere, notes further that ‘symbol’ and ‘devil’ share the same root, but comes to manifest opposing ‘senses.’ The devil separates, fractures, and isolates; the symbol reunites and re-establishes communion, a bridge across the borderlands of two worlds (“*En grec les mots : « symbole » et « diable » viennent de la même racine mais avec le sens opposé : le diable sépare, morcelle, isole ; le symbole réunit, lie, rétablit la communion, il est le pont qui unit les rivages de deux mondes*”). Cf. Paul Evdokimov, *La Prière de l’Eglise d’Orient: La Liturgie Byzantine de Saint Jean Chrysostome*, Approches œcuméniques (Mulhouse: Editions Salvator, 1966), 48.

³⁵ Evdokimov, *In the World, of the Church*, 186.

³⁶ Cf. Introduction to Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, eds., *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 7–8, wherein Mendieta and VanAntwerpen give a synoptic understanding of Butler’s argument using these terms. For a complete understanding of her position, please refer to Judith Butler, “Is Judaism Zionism?,” in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 70–91, but esp. her notion of redemption, found on 81, and her notion of cohabitation, within 85–88.

Transcendent, insofar as it empties its claim to allow for the coming. This understanding may not “throw together” the two – the ‘*dia*’ within the dialogue – (and thus fashioning the perfect symbol,) but it permits the two their voice and a shared space in which to perform. To speak apophatically of one’s self is to release one’s sovereignty;³⁷ it is to erase the clarity of the boundary and of the bounded. It is to make a movement from the static, inert of the totality, and to push through into an openness, which, in the best sense, reflects the essential aspect of the infinite.

Through classical apophatic consideration of God (Old Testament, Proclus, Cusanus et al.) and contemporary phenomenological (and apophatic) consideration of *flesh* (M. Merleau-Ponty et al.), we can begin a *Re-turn*: through the unique phenomenality of God, Life and Incarnation (M. Henry). Freed from the violence of the totality that limits and seeks to silence, we are nonetheless confronted with the residual trace of the *Christly* command – and the call to sacramental life it posits.

Considerations and questions

The aim of this project is to chart the place for religion in the public (political) sphere.

People find themselves apart from the institutional Church, either by choice, ignorance, or forced

³⁷ This understanding of release and sovereignty is wrapped up in the notions of strong and weak thought, found in the philosophical writings of Gianni Vattimo. Vattimo will be more fully presented in the subsequent section. With that understood, Vattimo proffers that “we derive an ethics of non-violence from weak ontology;” cf. Gianni Vattimo, *Belief*, trans. Luca D’Isanto and David Webb (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 44. Violence, on the other hand, “ultimately draws from the need, the resolve, and the desire to reach and be taken up into the first principle;” cf. Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity*, trans. Luca D’Isanto (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 113. He continues: “I do not know whether this might be the original sin [i.e. Cain, not just the apple in the garden]. Yet it seems certain that the almost innate need, which metaphysics addresses, to grasp the origin (*arché*) is deeply linked to *hubris*, that is, to the desire to own one’s existence completely.” The essayist Richard Rodriguez charts this back to the monotheistic claim: “There is something in the leveling jealousy of the desert God that summons a possessive response in us. *We are His people* becomes *He is our God*. The blasphemy that attaches to monotheism is the blasphemy of certainty. If God is on our side, we must be right. We are right because we believe in God. We must defend God against the goddess. Certitude clears a way for violence.” Cf. Richard Rodriguez, *Darling: A Spiritual Autobiography* (New York: Viking, 2013), 48.

exile. The conjectures or considerations that follow are, in no way, meant as a challenge to overturn the traditions of the Church or the primacy of magisterial performativity within the limits and boundaries the Church understands it holds itself to, through the self-understanding it has come to assent to as its dual identity and self-identification.³⁸

But if one brackets the concerns of justification and limitation, the question one is left with is the question of gift. Can the Church gift wholly the acknowledgement of access of sacrament (intimate communion with the divine) and through such sacramental encountering, participation in salvation, to those who do not find themselves inside her boundaries? Can the Church believe and think and be all it does and all it is, and still resist the violence that comes from circumscription caused by the totality of the metaphysical system, and from apostasy, which is borne, for example, according to Panikkar, from the castigation of non-Christians “because they cannot understand and accept the grandeur of Christianity (as if Christians could understand it)”³⁹ The project thus ends, by plumbing the possibility of such a gifting. In the return is a further release—the *gift-ing*. What does it mean for identity to give away? Is identity dependent on the exclusion? Can one give oneself wholly away (*kenosis*), in constant intention if not actually in result, either as individual or as community (Church), and still have identity? What happens to one’s identity when one receives such a gift? What constitutes, finally, Christly identity, in a Christ who: challenges his disciples through a series of imperatives aimed at kenosis? Εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἐλθεῖν, ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀκολουθείτω μοι — “If anyone wishes to go after me, let this one deny himself and let him pick up his cross, and let him follow me” (Matt 16:24; trans.

³⁸ The author employs the term Church in this paper, with an obvious reference to the Roman Catholic Church. That said, the reader is invited to draw comparisons not only to other Christian churches, and other organized faith traditions, but to any community that comes together in worship and that constructs its sense of community according to its claims of faith, in contrast to the claims of other faith communities, and against the larger society beyond the faith community.

³⁹ Panikkar, “A Christophany for Our Times,” 9.

adjusted to reflect the Greek). The evangelist employs the soft, yet persistent and unrelenting imperatives locked into the anonymous third person singular, and tied the use of the nonspecific, uncircumscribed τῆς (“anyone”) in order to leave wide open the conditional invitation.

It is time to turn. It is time to begin at this time—by turning attentively to the τῆς outside the lines.

II. THE PLAINT WITHIN THE POLITICAL SPHERE

DYADS AND LIBIDO DOMINANDI (STRONG THOUGHT AND THE PROJECT OF SELF-PRESERVATION) —
AN EXAMPLE: SEX — MÊLÉE: THE OBJECTIVISM OF THE OPPRESSOR VS. THE
CLAIM OF TRANSCENDENCE BY THE OPPRESSED — MOVEMENT AND AGENCY:
BETWEEN BORDER AND CENTER — METAPHOR, MAP, AND MEANING —
SOVEREIGNTY AND TRANSGRESSION — IDENTITY AND DISPOSSESSION:
'BEYOND FAITH, BEYOND LAW' — DISPOSSESSION, APOPHASIS, 'THE NOTHING
OF THE WORLD,' AND 'A CERTAIN SAMARITAN' — KENOSIS IN THE FLESH

The pursuit of theology inevitably has a political dimension. Theology is never purely contemplative. Every theological statement is political in the twofold sense that it affects the social life of the church and that of the secular community... [The theologian's] assertion that theology can, or possibly should abstract from the present situation and follow a logic based solely on Scripture or some rational system inevitably strengthens the trends in the Church that hold sway among the policy-makers and hence promotes the *status quo ante*. In other words, the wish to regard theology as non-political is itself a political choice, whatever the conscious intention of the scholar.

— Gregory Baum, O.C.⁴⁰

When Europeans first arrived in southern Africa, they called themselves *Christians* and the indigenous people *wild* or *heathen*. The dyad *Christian/heathen* later mutated, taking a succession of forms, among them *civilized/primitive*, *European/native*, *white/nonwhite*. But in each case, no matter what the nominally opposed terms, there was a constant feature: it was always the Christian (or white or European or civilized person) in whose power it lay to apply the names—the name for himself, the name for the other.

— J. M. Coetzee⁴¹

Dyads and libido dominandi

Coetzee's colonialist dyad illustrates an asymmetrical identity as set upon the identification of the other being unequal. At the same time, the performative prerogative/force for the generation of these two identities rests exclusively in the mouth of the occupier/ dominator, the one with the gun: the sovereign who, as described by the fascist jurist Carl Schmitt, stakes his claim

⁴⁰ Gregory Baum, *New Horizon: Theological Essays*. (New York: Paulist Press, 1972), 111, 112.

⁴¹ J. M. Coetzee, *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1.

on the ability to proclaim “a state of emergency”—“a moment at which life is abandoned and forsaken by the law and exposed to violence that the law does not punish, as Giorgio Agamben explains.”⁴² Schmitt based his political theology of privilege on the Catholic Church and its strict historical, hierarchal heteronomy, claiming that the exceptional nature of its juridical privilege mirrored the divine exception attributed to God. As cited earlier, the Roman rationalism took the Greek’s dictum “to know is to know by a cause,” and out of principle, drew a circle around it. Thus “to define God is to define a cause such that there can exist no other cause.”⁴³ Later, in the frenzy of the Counter-Reformation, this logic would come to play in the calculus of Robert Bellarmine: the Christian was known/defined by: public profession faith, by communal participation in the Holy sacraments (primarily Eucharist), and submission to ecclesial governance (Rome). Each stage of the calculation served to exclude: the first eliminated the nonbeliever, heretic, apostate, and the pagan (Jew, Muslim, et cetera); the second eliminated the catechumen and the excommunicated; and the last pushed out the schismatic.⁴⁴ Christ was circumscribed by the circuitry of ecclesial economic exchange: ever the edict, and forever the adherence. Thus Paul Evdokimov can both observe and lament, that in

all the recent theological definitions of her nature, the Church is conceived in an astonishingly static manner, as essentially a self-serving, self-preserving institution. She has settled on maintaining the subsistence of her own membership. In losing the apostolic sense of the Body, the living organism of the real presence of Christ, of Christ who came neither just for the apostles

⁴² This synopsis of Schmitt’s state of exception and its human consequences can be found in the political essay “Disaster as a Place of Morality” by the Israeli philosopher Adi Ophir. Cf., Adi Ophir, “Disaster as a Place of Morality: The Sovereign, the Humanitarian, and the Terrorist,” *Qui Parle* 16, no. 1 (2006): 95–116, esp. 104 and 109. Ophir references (without specifics) two seminal works: Carl Schmitt, *Political theology: four chapters on the concept of sovereignty* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985); and Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998).

⁴³ See note 24.

⁴⁴ Cf. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Image Books, Doubleday, 2002), 8.

nor for a handful of parishes, the Church no longer exists for the world.⁴⁵

In mapping the moral exigency of the secular now, Israeli philosopher Adi Ophir comes up with a similar evaluation. Ophir defines *morality* “as a domain or social sphere, the *stakes* of which “would be the distress, humiliation, suffering, and more generally, the mal-being of others.”⁴⁶ (One could easily draw a comparison with the bloodied traveler left for dead in Lk 10: 25-37 or the women accused of adultery in Jn 8:1-11.) Morality’s *concern* “would be how to reduce them,” and morality’s *interest* – “the wellbeing of others.” Against such an embodied imperative, Ophir criticizes what he terms the “religious domain, where moralizing precedes and often suppresses moral judgment, and in which proper, i.e., marital and monogamous, sexuality and reproduction constitute the main stakes [in contrast to *the mal-being of others*] and have become once again the scene of Man’s most frequent sins.”⁴⁷ Such claims of propriety mark sanctioned behavior (*juris* i.e. laws) and underscore the sovereign bid to declare a state of emergency (Schmitt). Such admixture births *theocracy*, which, for Rowan Williams, “assumes that there can be an end to dialogue and discovery; that believers would have the right (if they had the power) to outlaw.”⁴⁸ Theocracy reflects, not the kingdom but, “a misunderstanding of the hope for God’s kingdom, a fusion of divine and earthly sovereignty in a way quite foreign to the language and practice of Jesus.”⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Evdokimov, *In the World, of the Church*, 50. See also note 18, esp. Paul Tillich’s critique of heteronomy and the Roman Church. Of similar note are the critical comments of Maurice Merleau-Ponty attached to note 229.

⁴⁶ Ophir, “Disaster as a Place of Morality,” 95.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁴⁸ Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford, UK; Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 36.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* On this confusion of the kingdom according to human criteria, see Søren Kierkegaard, “The Instant No. 5,” in *Kierkegaard’s Attack upon “Christendom,” 1854-1855*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), 155–177. For Kierkegaard, God “is thy mortal enemy. He Who is Love would be loved by thee. This signifies that thou must die, die unto the world, for otherwise thou canst not love Him” (157). In this way, Kierkegaard chastises those with ecclesial privilege (“them that walk in long robes”) from justifying such casuistry that would accord them *exception*: “Beware of them that *like* to walk in long robes. A Bible interpretation over the teacups will at once seize upon the word ‘like’ and explain that Christ has in view only individuals in the profession class, those who take vain pride in long robes, etc. No, my good long-robed man, that perhaps by great

This misunderstanding allows for the Christian to hold back (contra to the caution and consequence in Acts 5:1-11). It permits the justification of the institution over the command to deny and to follow. The elect thus brackets the $\tau\iota\varsigma$ ⁵⁰ and places the restrictions on the pronoun, banishing it outside the *limes* (boundaries), and subjecting it to the violence⁵¹ of the metaphysics of its ecclesial self-justification. This mirrors the exploitation against which Frantz Fanon writes:

All forms of exploitation are alike. They all seek to justify their existence by citing some biblical decree.⁵² All forms of exploitation are identical, since they apply to the same ‘object’: man. By con-

solemnity in the pulpit you can make women and children believe, it also corresponds perfectly with the picture of Christ which is presented in the Sunday services. But you cannot make me believe it; and the Christ of the New Testament does not speak in this way. He always speaks about the whole order and does not resort to the meaningless gabble that there are some members of the order who are depraved, which is true at all times of all classes, so that obviously nothing whatever is said. No, he conceives the order as a whole and says that the order as a whole is depraved, so that the order as a whole has a depraved liking for walking in long robes, because to be a priest in the official sense is exactly the opposite of what Christ understood by being a teacher, the latter meaning to suffer for the teaching, the former meaning to enjoy the earthly as it is refined by the glory of being God’s representative” (175). Cf. Lk 20:46; Mk 12:38.

⁵⁰ Cf. for “anyone.” See pages 14-15, and Matt. 16:24.

⁵¹ Regarding the violence that the metaphysical privilege allows for, see Rabbi Irving Greenberg, *Voluntary Covenant* (New York, N.Y.: National Jewish Resource Center, 1982). Greenberg’s criteria for an *authentic* faith-claim is all the more powerful, in that he himself is an orthodox rabbi. He writes: “Actions speak louder than words. People who profess God but gas men, women, and children or burn them alive are atheists whatever their words may be. People who profess to be atheists or to be without hope yet who actively uphold the covenant, even at the cost of their lives, betray their true position by their actions. If anything, their denials only add to the hiddenness of the Divine. Therefore, their theological language is the appropriate one for this time, more appropriate than those who go on speaking as if God were visible and fully performing under the previous terms of the covenant.”

⁵² For an excellent overview on inclusion/exclusion in the Old Testament, see the recent survey Ishay Rosen-Zvi and Adi Ophir, “Paul and the Invention of the Gentiles,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 105, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 1–41, esp. 2–12. Rosen-Zvi and Ophir give a concise outline of the genealogy of *goy* (“nation”): from its generic origins to its eventual advancement of an exclusive marker “mostly for foreign nations” (4). This differentiation is helped along by the lexicographical enterprise associated with the production of the Septuagint, wherein $\xi\theta\nu\eta$ (*ethnē*) signifies “foreign nations” and $\lambda\acute{\alpha}\omicron\varsigma$ (*laos*) refers to Israel. (4). Of additional note is the comprehensive collection of references, some of which offer provocative new insights and speculations.

Regarding the actual sanction of violence, both in terms of physical act and in terms of categorized objectification of the human person, see Deut. 20: known, according to the NRSV, as “Rules of Warfare.” These rules, given in the voice of Moses, are attributed to God, and thus divinely sanctioned. Moreover, complicity between priests (vv. 2-4) and officials (5-8) and commanders (9) is made explicitly manifest. Righteous conduct is laid out as follows: Israel begins war, by offering peace (10), peace being defined as unconditional surrender, whereupon “all of the people in it [the enemy nation] shall serve you as forced labor” (11). Any resistance to such terms is to be countered by siege and conquest (12). All males are to be summarily executed (13); women are to be objectified as “booty,” and along with children, livestock, “and everything else in the town [viz. slaves and merchandise],” (14) “you may enjoy” (15). [One should note the eventual parallel with the Greek hierarchy of ‘natures’ predicated on citizen.] After such plunder (“inheritance” from God), nothing else “that breathes” must “remain alive” (16). The command is given: “You shall annihilate” so that “they may not teach you to do all the abhorrent things that they do” and “you thus sin against the Lord your God” (18). Differentiation is seen as a contagion that could cause division between chosen/preferred and God and as such must be handled preemptively and completely. The risk alone is warrant. Within this single pericope are the vectors that separate man from woman, holy nation from unholy, inside from outside, God from gods. The political imperative is sanctioned not only by God, but through all branches of the polis of the Israelites: the priestly, the official, and the military, all, in turn represented by patriarchies, delineated by God through Moses, in the antecedent chapters of the Deuteronomic Code. See also, note 21.

sidering the structure of such and such exploitation from an abstract point of view we are closing our eyes to the fundamentally important problem of restoring men to his rightful place.

Colonial racism is no different from other racisms.

Anti-Semitism cuts me to the quick; I get upset; a frightful rage makes me anemic; they deny me the right to be a man. I cannot dissociate myself from the fate reserved for my brother. Every one of my acts commits me as a man. Every instance of my reticence, every instance of my cowardice, manifests the man.⁵³

Such violence comes from what philosopher Gianni Vattimo terms *strong thought*, “the absolutization of some contingent historical horizons,”⁵⁴ a performative consequence in alignment with the force of Greek and Roman rationalism,⁵⁵ and which for the Church “are claimed to be inseparable from the truth of revelation” – it is written: thus so.

An example: sex

Absolutization can be found in situations involving culture, language, ethnicities, genders, race, et cetera. For purposes of a careful examination of its permutations, this section’s investi-

⁵³ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 69. It should be noted that missing in this translation is the sense of touch and being touched; missing is the focus on the flesh. Where the translator has chosen the words “cuts me to the quick” to emphasize the fullness of emotional wrought caused by Anti-Semitism upon Fanon, Fanon himself writes “*L’antisémitisme me touche en pleine chair, je m’émous*” and then, only have being touched fully in the flesh, and registering that touch, does Fanon build, and go on to writes of “*une contestation effroyable*.” Thus the condition for the empathy and the solidarity is not just the invasive brutality of the exploitation, but the openness by which the human opens her or his self to the world and to the other beings around her or him. Cf. Frantz Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975), 71.

Fanon continues in a footnote to this pericope: “When we wrote this we had in mind Jasper’s metaphysical guilt: ‘There exists a solidarity among men as human beings that makes each co-responsible for every wrong and every injustice in the world, especially for crimes committed in his presence or with his knowledge. If I fail to do whatever I can to prevent them, I too am guilty.... That somewhere among men the unconditioned prevails—the capacity to live only together or not at all, if crimes are committed against the one or the other, of if physical living requirements have to be shared—therein consists the substance of their being.’” Cf. Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, trans. E. B. Ashton (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976), 32. Fanon concludes: “Jaspers declares that jurisdiction rests with God alone. It is easy to see that God has nothing to do with the matter, unless one wants to clarify this obligation for mankind to feel co-responsible, ‘responsible’ meaning that the least of my acts involves mankind” (69-70).

Black Skin, White Masks is seminal in its argument concerning the force of interpellation on the psyche and identity of race.

⁵⁴ Vattimo, *Belief*, 52–53.

gation will limit consideration to the example found in matters of sex. In a similar vein to Coetzee, Susan Sontag extends the asymmetrical dyad to include *male/female*. In her essay “The Third World of Men,” she writes, “All women live in an ‘imperialist’ situation in which men are colonialists and women are natives.”⁵⁶ The strength of this asymmetry comes from the male domination of the discourse for most of the historical epochs. By warrant of its domination, the *masculine* “dispenses with justification,” writes sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. “[T]he androcentric vision imposes itself as neutral and has no need to spell itself out in discourses aimed at legitimating it.”⁵⁷ This vision of strength is married to biological difference. The ‘natures’ of man (form, life force, vitality) and of women (matter, nature, receptivity), as put forth by Aristotle,⁵⁸ and essentially, all men *are* of a singular “masculine” nature, and all women, likewise, *are* of the “feminine” *esse*.⁵⁹ All of this takes on the weight of *habitus*, what Judith Butler would term *sedimentation*,⁶⁰ in which acts upon acts accumulate and congeal, and to ‘disappear,’ under the force of performativity (see, note 16). Such discourse is not conversation. It assumes a matrix, in which *sex*, as a category, “is, from the start, normative, it is what Foucault has called a ‘regulatory ideal.’ In this sense, ‘sex’ not

⁵⁵ See, note 24.

⁵⁶ Susan Sontag, “The Third World of Women,” in *Essays of the 1960s & 70s*, ed. David Rieff (New York: The Library of America, 2013), 774.

⁵⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 9. Bourdieu elaborates upon the total immanence of this construct, evident in the very organization of society and space: “The social order functions as an immense symbolic machine tending to ratify the masculine domination on which it is founded: it is the sexual division of labour, a very strict distribution of the activities assigned to each sex, of their place, time and instruments; it is the structure of space, with the opposition between the place of assembly or the market, reserved for men, and the house, reserved for women, or, within the house, between the male part, the hearth, and the female part—the stable, the water and vegetable stores; it is the structure of time, the day and the farming year, or the cycle of life, with its male moments of rupture and the long female periods of gestation” (9-10).

⁵⁸ For a concise, well-referenced overview of Aristotle’s notions of biology, see James Lennox, “Aristotle’s Biology,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2014., 2014, accessed April 27, 2015, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/aristotle-biology/>.

⁵⁹ Cf. Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 66 passim.

⁶⁰ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 10, see also the footnote on 244–45.

only functions as a norm, but is part of regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs.”⁶¹ Matter, therefore, is not an a priori *esse*, but grows out of this regulatory practice, “as *a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter.*”⁶² This objectification of women⁶³ (and, it should be remembered as Bourdieu notes, that this situation could easily embody dyads of “ethnic, gender, cultural or linguistic, etc.”⁶⁴) traces its force back beyond sexual production and reproduction to something deeply primal, and something that transcends a culture or an age—the *libido dominandi*, the will to dominate, the will to power, the will to control.

It is in this light that feminist theologian Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza cautions against a limited understanding of such patriarchy. To view such a claim “solely in terms of male supremacy and misogynist sexism is not able to articulate the interaction of racism, classism and sexism in,” what are for her, “Western militarist societies.”⁶⁵ Women, for example, were for Aristotle, pieces in a larger matrix of male status, defined by gradations of domination/subordination, organized top/down, from ruler/State to citizen/household. “Wives, children, slaves and property were owned and at the disposal of the freeborn Greek male head of the household,” writes Fiorenza. “The patriarchal relationships in household and State according to Aristotle are based not on social convention but on ‘nature.’”⁶⁶ For these ‘naturally’ inferior

⁶¹ Ibid., 1.

⁶² Ibid., 9.

⁶³ Nb. – In a contemporary secular context, this objectification of another, with respect to sexual attraction should not be in anyway construed as limited to a male/female dyad.

⁶⁴ Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 37.

⁶⁵ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Breaking the Silence - Becoming Visible,” in *Women, Invisible in Theology and Church*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Mary Collins, and Marcus Lefébure (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985), 5.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

categories (“women, slaves, young people who were not yet citizens”), it was, according to Regina Ammicht Quinn, “acceptable” for them to be given the ‘passive’ sexual role. Adult males who were freeborn, and consequently citizens, could not engage each other sexually, without problematic consequences.⁶⁷ “Penetration,” writes Bourdieu, “especially when performed on a man, is one of the affirmations of the *libido dominandi* that is never entirely absent from the male libido.”⁶⁸ He goes on to point out that “among the Greeks, it condemned the victim to dishonor and the loss of the status of a complete man and a citizen.”⁶⁹ For theologian Marcella Maria Althaus-Reid, such “immobile definitions and fixed conceptualization ... not only reduces people’s lives and their vocation to no more than ideological definitions, but also reduces God.”⁷⁰ Such fixity violates, for Althaus-Reid, the very dignity of the nature of the human person. It mimics, with its force, pornography.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Regina Ammicht Quinn, “‘We’ and ‘Others’: In Place of an Introduction,” in *Homosexualities*, ed. Marcella Althaus-Reid et al., Concilium (London: SCM Press, 2008), 11. This implicit acceptance of inferiority as a normative position is brought forward by Quinn, in an reading of the word ‘discrimination’ as employed by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in relation to persons of same-sex orientation. Quinn writes that though CCC § 2358 notes that “it is wrong to subject homosexuals to ‘unjust discrimination’” such phraseology as *unjust discrimination* “would seem to suggest there is just and unjust discrimination of human beings” – and, as such, marks “a step in the wrong direction. It is a step towards the establishment or reinforcement of a divisive category.” She goes on to posit: “Therefore the recommendation that ‘such’ people should be treated with ‘respect’ would seem to be a rhetorical device that both calls for respect yet relies on an essential contempt. It consolidates a form of being ‘other’ that is classed as morally deficient, and allows for the separation of ‘abnormal’ people from ‘us’” (11-12).

See, note 52, for a nuanced reading of Deut 20, and similar hierarchal understandings of patriarchal privilege in the praxis of Mosaic Israel as presented in the Old Testament.

⁶⁸ Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*, 21.

⁶⁹ Ibid. Bourdieu cites, for general reference, K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

⁷⁰ Marcella Maria Althaus-Reid, “A Woman’s Right to Not Being Straight (El Derecho a No Ser Derecha): On Theology, Church and Pornography,” in *Concilium: The Rights of Women*, ed. Concilium Foundation (London: SCM Press, 2002), 91.

⁷¹ The word ‘pornography’ is an apt choice as its genealogy traces a trail of domination and the *libido* intertwined with domination. Etymological investigation into the word πορνογράφος (“pornography” – “writing of harlots”) will lead first to two pejorative nominations: πόρνη (harlot, prostitute, unchaste woman) and τὸ πόρνος (catamite, sodomite, ‘feminized’ man). In turn these nouns will lead back not only to the verb πορνεύω (to prostitute, as in to give one’s own self to the trade), but also to the verb πέρνημι, from πόρνη which is in fact derived, a verb of commerce, which in later use referred to merchandise in general, but which has as its originary meaning, “to export for sale,” usually “of exporting captives to foreign parts for sale as slaves.” The word πόρνη thus did not originally mark so much loose women, women who had fallen out of grace with the natural order, oversexed women, but women, who had been captured, by men, and sold as sex slaves to other men, for entrepreneurial profit. Cf. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, ed. Sir Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

Susan Sontag pushes back against the weight of the total claim of *dominandi*, when she provocatively asserts, “One can’t possess reality, one can possess (and be possessed by) images.”⁷² She goes on to aver, “In the real world, something *is* happening and no one knows what is *going* to happen. In the image-world, it *has* happened, and it *will* forever happen in that way.”⁷³ This movement to control that, which, by its nature, cannot be controlled, is (for a theologian like Althaus-Reid) essentially “pornographic,” whether it is the production of sexually-arousing images or the production of theological prescriptions. Althaus-Reid draws into the foreground the issue of intentionality, force, control, and ‘pornographic’ consequences, explicit and systemic. As this paper asserts, the authenticity of the sovereign comes into question, the moment a heteronomous attempt to control the uncontrollable is introduced. Philosopher Luce Irigaray connects the pornographic with the performative force of the very society in which the woman finds herself. Pornography, writes Irigaray, “is the *reign of the series*. One more time, one more ‘victim,’ one more blow, one more death.”⁷⁴ The reign is the result from the simple fact that the “exchanges upon which patriarchal societies are based take place exclusively among men. Women, signs, commodities, and currency always pass from one man to another.” She goes on to aver, “Heterosexuality is nothing but the assignment of economic roles: there are producer subjects of exchange (male) on the one hand, productive earth and commodities (female) on the other.”⁷⁵ Thus, she concludes, “all economic organization is homosexual. That of desire, as well, even the

⁷² Susan Sontag, “The Image-World,” in *Essays of the 1960s & 70s*, ed. David Rieff (New York: The Library of America, 2013), 643. It is the opinion of this author, that this remark by Sontag should be read less as an argument wrapped around *qua*’ – but rather as a credible plea, however logically questionable, from the desperate victims from under the weight of centuries of patriarchal *juris* and privilege.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 646.

⁷⁴ Luce Irigaray, *This sex which is not one*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 202.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 192.

desire for women. Woman,” according to Irigaray, “exists only as an occasion for mediation, transaction, transition, transference, between man and his fellow man, indeed between man and himself.”⁷⁶ Thus to read 1 Timothy 2:11-14 is to witness the dominant act and the retroactive justification, marked in time and in deficient capacity:

Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.

Paul’s dyad of male/female laid out according to the genealogy and consequence found in Scripture, flows freely within a continuum of patriarchal colonialism, one in which Aristotelian understandings will readily re-merge in Augustine’s tractate on John 1:14, such that *flesh* is in no way classically elemental; the verb *to become* also loses equivalency (for that would challenge the dyad), and, instead: “*Flesh* therefore is put for the woman, just as spirit is sometimes put for the husband.” *Logos* does not become flesh (as is written in the Greek); the *logos* comes into being, through the flesh i.e. through woman. Augustine continues: “And why? Because the one governs, the other is governed. The one ought to be master, the other servant. For when the flesh is master and the spirit servant, it is an ill-ordered house. What can be worse than a house, in which the wife has mastery over the husband?”⁷⁷ Augustine moves everything back upon the weight of the Aristotelian household (οἶκος), and under the pressure of centuries of interpellation. The justification of the dyad appears in the fourth article of Question 93, within the first part of Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*, concerning the image of God. In the end, on account of analogy of

⁷⁶ Ibid., 193.

⁷⁷ Augustine, *Trac. II*, § 14; for the English translation, confer: Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel according to S. John*, trans. Henry Browne, vol. 1 (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1849). The Latin original reads, in full: *Ponitur ergo caro pro uxore, quomodo et aliquando spiritus pro marito. Quare? Quia ille regit, haec regitur, ille imperare debet, ista servire. Nam ubi caro imperat et spiritus servit, perverse domus est. Quid peius domo, ubi femina habet imperium super virum?* Cf. Augustin, *Œuvres de saint Augustin, homélies sur l'évangile de saint Jean*, trans. M.-F. Berrouard (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1993).

mastery and biological (life) force, “the image of God is found in man, and not in woman: for man is the beginning and end of woman; as God is the beginning and end of every creature.”⁷⁸ A gap separates the *esse* of man from that of woman, and stacks the two vertically, one in a mirroring potentiality of God, the other deficient.

This dyad – spirit (life force) *contra* flesh (receptacle) – is reissued into contemporary understandings. In his apostolic letter concerning the dignity and vocation of women, John Paul II delineates between human persons and their purported dispositions: “The bridegroom is the one who loves. The bride is loved. It is she who receives love, in order to love in return.”⁷⁹ The woman, under the weight of such interpellation, is viewed as object; in the discourse, she is not accorded agency or the ability to initiate. Thus, whether fully intended or not, the language repeats the historical assertions, adding to the sedimentation of an asymmetrical claim (master/servant, agent/object) that, at best, appears anachronistic. As this paper argues, such objectivism has led, by the juridical application of dyads, to the exclusion of persons, and political systems, throughout history, judged as disordered, unnatural. Thus, assembled as with one voice, the late medieval Church had been able to declare firmly, with conviction, that the Church

firmly believes, professes, and preaches that ‘none of those who are outside of the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews, heretics, and schismatics, can become sharers of eternal life, but they will go into the eternal fire ‘that was prepared for the devil and his angels’ – ‘No one can be saved, no matter how many alms he has given, and if he sheds his blood for the name of Christ, unless he remains in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church.’⁸⁰

⁷⁸ St Thomas, S. th., I, q. 93, a. 4. Nb.– For the English cited, see: Thomas, *Summa theologiae: Latin text and English translation, introductions, notes, appendices, and glossaries*, trans. Blackfriars, 60 vols. (Cambridge, UK and New York: Blackfriars and McGraw-Hill, 1964).

⁷⁹ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (on the dignity and vocation of women on the occasion of the Marian year, 1988), sec. 29, English trans., Holy See, Vatican Archive, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1988/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19880815_mulieris-dignitatem.html.

⁸⁰ Council of Florence, *Cantate Domino*, 4 February 1442 (Denzinger, § 1351).

In the above calculus, *caritas* counts not as consequence, and martyrdom for Christ does not signify efficacy, unless one first can demonstrate an explicit remainder within the *limes* (boundaries) dictated by the Church. Explicitly marked membership within the Church becomes the primary condition for communion with the divine, and of access to salvation.⁸¹ Such absolute, objectivist claims maintain the force of their interpellation, in a constricted hierarchal hegemony. The claimants rely on the force of interpellation, generated by structured and systemic performativity. As St. Thomas alludes in the ninety-third question in his *Summa*: according to the assumptions of this discourse, there is a sustained constancy of *esse* from beginning to end, without variance or complication. The problem arises when such rigidity no longer is believed.

Mélée: the objectivism of the oppressor vs. the claim of transcendence by the oppressed

One challenge to this rigidity arises when the “victims of our discourses and our history” find their voice, and then voice their own discourses back, full of polysemy and superimposed

⁸¹ It should be mentioned that this hierarchy of significations has been inverted, in principle, by the re-ordering suggested in section 14 of the constitution *Lumen gentium*: “The bonds which bind men to the Church in a visible way are profession of faith, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical government and communion. He is not saved, however, who, though part of the body of the Church, does not persevere in charity. He remains indeed in the bosom of the Church, but, as it were, only in a “bodily” manner and not “in his heart.” All the Church’s children should remember that their exalted status is to be attributed not to their own merits but to the special grace of Christ. If they fail moreover to respond to that grace in thought, word and deed, not only shall they not be saved but they will be the more severely judged. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Lumen gentium* (Dogmatic constitution on the Church, 1964), sec. 14, official English trans., Holy See, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html. Hereafter, the constitution will be cited simply with an acronym of its initials and the relevant section number, e.g. *LG* 14.

In addition, it should be kept in mind that *Nostra Aetate* put an end to the justification against the Jews, applied by the Church from time to time throughout its history, and succinctly made explicit in the citation from Florence, in 1442. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Declaration *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions, 1965), see esp. sec. 3, 4, and 5, official English trans., Holy See, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

multiplicity.⁸² Thus, against the white, colonialist chaste and chastising God, Fanon can counterclaim: “Coitus is an occasion to call on the gods of the clan. It is a sacred act, pure, absolute, bringing invisible forces into action.”⁸³ Coitus calls to the gods, and they come, vibrant and immediate and excess; they come and blot out the judgment of the white colonialist god, who demands separation, as in the slave from her homeland. Coitus inverts the colonialist master’s imposed notions of propriety and privilege. In coitus comes incarnation, neither exclusive or distant. In coitus, the gods of the tribe are called, and they, in turn, call the members back into the tribe, and back to them, restoring the trinitarian whole that is identity and covenant, brought into being through person—tribe—gods. The Negro, for Fanon, is “not a Negro, oh, no, but the Negro ... standing in the spotlight of the world, spraying the world with his poetical power, ‘porous to every breath in the world.’ I embrace the world! I am the world!”⁸⁴ With every breath, Fanon breathes himself into the world, and the world back into him. His body dissolves into an open intercorporeality with the beyond; open and irreducible, transforming the objectivist boundaries of stigma through the very act of transcending the confinement-as-subaltern, in the immanence of his each and every breath. Beyond the objectivism of the objective world of the colonialist claim at primacy and mastery, “black consciousness is immanent in itself. I am not a potentiality of something; I am fully what I am. I do not have to look for the universal. There’s no room for probability inside me. My black consciousness does not claim to be a loss. It *is*. It merges with itself.”⁸⁵

⁸² Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity*, 79.

⁸³ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 105.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 114. Of note, is the gender blurring inherent in the French: consciousness being a feminine noun. Thus the original reads: *Ma conscience nègre ne se donne pas comme manque. Elle est. Elle est adhérente à elle-même.* Missing, as well, is the notion of loss and of merger. The author would suggest that at play, instead, is the notion of not giving oneself as *manque* – “lack,” and the

I am fully what I am – in the immanence of the immediate, in the inhale and the exhale of breath, and the force of the spray of the poetical; ontology of *black* meaning is claimed and re-claimed, against the omnipresent *white*: “All this whiteness burns me to a cinder.” Weak as it may seem to be, it *is* – and is present in its obduracy and its creativity: it refuses to lay down, to objectify its self back down into “a toy in the hands of the white man.”⁸⁶ At the same time, for the “toy” to claim its own immanence against the obduracy of that otherwise proclaimed by the history and ontology of its master, the toy understands that it must “explode” in the hands of the master.⁸⁷ That not to explode apart the hands will commit it to a constancy of being toy.

In this movement from one state into another, the marginalized object migrating into a subject, gains the sense of similar shifts in the landscape. Thus Fanon, in 1952, can claim movement in the Church, against the ahistorical assumptions of its own discourse: “As times changed, we have seen how the Catholic religion justified, then condemned slavery and discrimination.”⁸⁸ The Church may move, but it moves according to itself, inclusive of its warrants and its understanding of itself, based on a calculus that aims to define and protect its claim of unique identification. The Church does not necessarily initiate its own release/ abandonment of

notion that this *conscience nègre*, not sensing that ‘lack’ lies at the heart of all colonialist enterprise, is then free to adhere to *elle-même* – “her-self” i.e. itself.” The adherence suggested in the original does not display the sense of falling-back-into or retreat that may be suggested by the translation above. Rather, the adhering to oneself is not unlike the navigating mariner, who trusts in her own capacities to attend, to calculate, to choose a course, and adjust her vessel’s path accordingly. Cf. Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, 109.

⁸⁶ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 119.

⁸⁷ Ibid. Again, it is important to note that Fanon’s use of *jouet* can suggest both “toy” and “plaything” “*entre les mains du Blanc*.” And as such, ‘slave’ and ‘concubine’ and ‘boy’ and many other potential asymmetries can be entertained. In addition, the notion of explode (*explose*) seems to come out as the inevitable consequence of and only-possible means to escape from “*ce cercle infernal*,” there being within the infernal and its dynamic encircling the very agency and possibility for explosion. (Note that this tie of cause back upon the situation of oppressive asymmetry is somewhat lessen in translating *cercle infernal* as “vicious circle.”) Cf. Fanon, *Peau noire, masques blancs*, 113. This idea that the asymmetry carries within its assertive claim of static sovereignty its own end is powerful when one reflects upon the theological and the ecclesiological realities of the current era.

⁸⁸ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 99.

absolutist claims, but releases, in a reactionary position, to the claims coming out of the convergence of the previously unheard uncouncted.⁸⁹

Movement and agency: between border and center

This movement has traditionally been thought of in binary terms (us/them, slave/master, woman/man, LGBT/straight, ordered/disordered), the oppressed borrowing the dyad and its definitions from the status quo. This is made explicit in Susan Sontag's dictum: "Women cannot be liberated without reducing the power of men."⁹⁰ For Sontag, male privilege has always applauded a small band of women, like Joan of Arc, Saint Teresa, Marie Curie, Amelia Earhart. But these women "do not shake the general presumption of women's inferiority," nor are they lauded as feminine paradigms. "Such women," writes Sontag, are credited with "masculine" energy.⁹¹ Such re-defining is readily apparent in the midcentury philosophy of José Ortega y Gasset. In his book *On Love*, Ortega y Gasset moves away from the assumptions of the Aristotelian dyad of form (all males) and matter (all females). He confesses: "The classification of human beings into men

⁸⁹ Such is the conclusion drawn by Oskar Köbler, writing on "Absolutism," for the theological encyclopedia *Sacramentum Mundi* (1968): "*It was outside and against the Church, that men carried on the successful struggle against the absolutist State and for the separation of Church and State as necessary to modern liberty. The Church itself clung to the union between throne and altar till well into the nineteenth century.* How far criticism of the Church's past is in order we can gather by comparing the criticism which should have been made of absolutism (without prejudice to its historical importance) on the basis of Christian social doctrine, but which was only undertaken by a few individuals, with the unbridled criticism that was then directed against liber and democratic society until the situation changed under Leo XIII." Cf. Oskar Köbler, "Absolutism," in *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. 1 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 8 [Italics added by the author]. The pendulum shift towards an embrace of the democratic is made most explicit in certain passages of *Gaudium et spes*, see especially article 28: "Respect and love ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political and even religious matters. In fact, the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them." Though the article goes on to remind its hearer that such a disposition "must in no way render us indifferent to truth and goodness," it also states that the one in error "never loses the dignity of being a person even when he is flawed by false or inadequate religious notions," and as God alone can judge a person's "internal guilt," one is commanded to "forgive injuries," and extend love "to include the enemy" (*GS*, 28).

⁹⁰ Sontag, "The Third World of Women," 775.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 770–71.

and women is, obviously, inexact; reality presents innumerable gradations between both extremes... Each existing individual represents a peculiar equation in which both genders participate.”⁹² Though he allows for such admixture, he still holds the ideals to be “all” of one or of the other, and, as a consequence, he permits himself to conclude: “Thus, [the biblical] Judith and Salome are two variations of that type of woman which is most surprising because it is the most contradictory: the woman of prey.”⁹³ In freeing these two biblical persons from the fixity of “all women,” he locks them both up in surprising, contradictory “natures”—just that such women as Judith and Salome are cursed to be “all men.”

Sontag’s call *to take power away* seems to be incapable of escaping the circuitry of dyadic struggle, in which both sexes are objectified into absolute, forever-oppositional binary categories: still two determined spaces, still the same relationship, with the only difference being the placement of occupants. Behind her operation (for liberation), the force of *libido dominandi* is still readily at play. To borrow metaphors from Fanon, the toy becomes the hand, to free itself and to make the hand pay for holding it, either by amputating the hand, or by somehow forcing the hand to become the toy. The payback can be justified as pedagogy, but the trace of the dominance of domination is never erased. For Judith Butler, the employment of a liberating counterforce (revolutionary, terrorist) to the inhibiting force (sovereign, institution, culture) does not easily end in a balance or peaceful stasis. Against the anti- of any anti-ism, she avers: “‘Victim’ is a quickly transposable term: it can shift from minute to minute, from the Jew killed by the suicide bombers on the bus to the Palestinian child killed by Israeli gunfire.” In the raw simplicity of immanence and existence, each person woven into the fabric of the situation “exceeds both determinations, and is to be found,

⁹² José Ortega y Gasset, *On Love: Aspects of a Single Theme*, trans. Toby Talbot (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), 172–73.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

substantively, as a historically and culturally changing identity that takes no single form and has no single telos.”⁹⁴ *Changing* shifts identity from ‘location’ (as locked down, restrained according to *limes*, and instantly authenticated by *juridication*) to ‘emanation’ (opened to evolution, contingency, and performativity, and authenticated only through an interplay between observation and rumination sustained over duration). *Identity is thus charged with temporality: it is borne in the fleeting moment, but only inherits meaning through “a sameness” that comes as a consequence of sustained hermeneutic conversation.*

Metaphor, map, and meaning

At the heart of such living discourse is a chosen disposition: one must choose between two hermeneutics, according to Paul Ricoeur.⁹⁵ One must choose between “a hermeneutics of *I am*” and “a hermeneutics of *I think*.”⁹⁶ The former allows for “the permanent return” of “self-presentation” to the “event of speech.” “Discourse *qua* event,” writes Ricoeur, “has a fleeting existence: it appears and disappears.” It thus comes to be “the counterpart of language understood as code or system.” That said, it can be, all the time at the same time, “identified and re-identified as the same.” Ricoeur locates the relationship between “event and meaning” within *metaphor*.⁹⁷ Metaphor marks the truth of navigation. Navigation (hermeneutics) is only necessary if stasis is not

⁹⁴ Cf. Judith Butler, “No, It’s Not Anti-Semitic,” *London Review of Books*, August 21, 2003.

⁹⁵ Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the human sciences: essays on language, action, and interpretation*, trans. John B Thompson (Cambridge [England]; New York; Paris: Cambridge University Press; Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l’homme, 1981), 193.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* This dialectic between event/meaning is not limited to the speech-event but also defines the “action-event” (cf., 205), and thus existence and lived reality, as we come into it and understand it.

the normative of reality. For political geographer and *urbaniste* Edward Soja and for philosopher Edward Casey, such permanent movement charts the “place-world,” a *locus-as-habitus* that is constituted continually by the “placiality of its ongoing setting and the temporality of its recurrent re-enactment.”⁹⁸ In the inevitable gap brought on by and through the reappearing *re-*, “the geographical subject is able to insinuate himself or herself all the more completely into the life-world of ongoing experience.”⁹⁹ Soja avers that such a *locus* is,

a knowable and unknowable, real and imagined lifeworld of experiences, emotions, events, and political choices that is existentially shaped by the generative and problematic interplay between centers and peripheries, the abstract and concrete, the impassioned spaces of the conceptual and the lived, marked out materially and metaphorically in *spatial praxis*, the transformation of (spatial) knowledge into (spatial) action in a field of unevenly developed (spatial) power.”¹⁰⁰

This *spatial praxis* is the hermeneutics constantly called forth within the recurring confession—*I am*. Like Fanon, the person moves, whether physically or imaginatively, flipping between the virtual and the real, the center and the peripheries. In moving, the person creates her place within a landscape of an inexhaustibility of possible places. By moving the person pushes the center and its gravity. At the same time the landscape shifts. New surroundings come into view, while others dip below the horizon. Under the performative force of this navigation, a transcendental experience is unveiled: the new is always coming into view; a new is always up for consideration. Even a return to a familiar place or a traditional claim becomes new, by the fact that the surround is never static.

⁹⁸ Edward S Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy: What Does It Mean to Be in the Place-World?,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 91, no. 4 (2001): 686. Casey himself relies heavily upon Soja’s work; see in particular Edward W Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996).

⁹⁹ Casey, “Between Geography and Philosophy,” 686.

¹⁰⁰ Soja, *Thirdspace*, 3. Casey himself marks this place as “a world that is not only perceived or conceived but also actively *lived* and receptively *experienced*,” cf. This crisscrossing will be plumbed subsequently in exploring the work of Merleau-Ponty, with particular care given to his understanding of both *flesh* and *chiasmus*, as names that mark and locate the blur that allows for the movement that *is* life and *gives* meaning.

This is the generative, liberating, hopeful force of existence. By virtue of such valid movement, the claim of an “absolute knowledge” is made “impossible;”¹⁰¹ and one is forced to navigate the contingencies of the white spaces that come between words on a page,¹⁰² and navigate also the disequilibrium that rushes in after each *metabolic* moment.¹⁰³ Out on the life-ocean, the person

¹⁰¹ Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the human sciences*, 205. Ricoeur calls this “insurmountable and inescapable” situation a “conflict of interpretations.” The unfortunate implication with *conflict* is that, in everyday use and in the language of the political institution, *conflict* is a state that is to be remedied; it carries with its use an aura of mal-being. Conflict can also simply mark the underlying “state” of reality. As a given, that is without alternative, it can no longer be placed in opposition to a viable alternative, and thus loses any negativity on account of comparison. It *is*. One is reminded of Heraclitus’ notion of *flux*, in which everything that is, and has come to be, finds itself—so that, as Jonathan Barnes writes, Heraclitus sees “everything is always flowing in *some* respects.” Cf. Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (London; Boston, Mass.: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 82. Barnes appreciates Heraclitus through the lens of Plato (cf., *Cratylus* 402a = A6). Contemporary scholarship has opened up new avenues for understanding Heraclitus’ sense of flux, so that it need not signify the destruction of constancy, but rather, mark itself as constitutive of constancy; cf. Daniel W. Graham, “Heraclitus,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2011., 2011, sec. 3.1, accessed May 1, 2015, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/heraclitus/>. Graham provides an interesting exploration of fragment B12 [ποταμοῖσι τοῖσιν αὐτοῖσιν ἐμβαίνουσιν ἕτερα καὶ ἕτερα ὕδατα ἐπιρρεῖ (“On those stepping into rivers staying the same other and other waters flow”)], noting: “It is that some things stay the same only by changing. One kind of long-lasting material reality exists by virtue of constant turnover in its constituent matter. Here constancy and change are not opposed but inextricably connected. A human body could be understood in precisely the same way, as living and continuing by virtue of constant metabolism—as Aristotle for instance later understood it.”

¹⁰² The literary scholar Wolfgang Iser writes of the performing act of reading: “The blanks break up the connectability of the schemata, and thus they marshal selected norms and perspective segments into a fragmented, counterfactual, contradictory or telescoped sequence, nullifying any expectation of *good continuation*. As a result, the imagination is automatically mobilized, thus increasing the constitutive activity of the reader, who cannot help but try and supply the missing links that will bring the schemata together in an integrated gestalt.” The reader must navigate the reality of the page and its threats and the always-immediate risk of the *dis*—of discontinuity or disconnect. The reader is called into her very *be-ing*. Cf. Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 186.

¹⁰³ *Metabolic* is employed to suggest the radical nature of a state which is grounded in flux. The term is derived from Greek (μεταβολικός), and gives echo to Heraclitus’s possible understanding of flux as constitutive of constancy as opposed to it. The change does not lead to a stasis, a resolution, but leads into a change of course. This change of course will lead, with time, to disequilibrium caused by the life-ocean, and, thus, to the necessity for another ‘metabolic moment.’

In a similar vein, the philosopher of science Michel Serres appropriates *metabola*, and posits: “States change phase, and systems change state, by transitions of phases or of states. But the system itself is never stable. Its equilibrium is ideal, abstract, and never reached. The state, in the first meaning of the word, is outside time. The state is the contrary of history, for history tries to block and fix the state. The state is the mortal enemy of history. And it can kill history.” Cf. Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, trans. Lawrence R Schehr (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982). He goes on to focus in on *aggregation*, as a state of transformation, a state not so much of loss or gain, but as a constant midpoint that lends an appearance of constancy along an endless garland of *metabolas*. “An aggregation, it loses parts like a vase covered with cracks. A miracle reunites its fragments and makes its synthesis blaze; time slowly disaggregates it. That is what existence is: facing death, being in perpetual difference from equilibrium. These flows never stop running over lacunar lands. To devour them, parasite them, nourish them, and make them live. The fall kills us and creates us. We move unending toward noise, but we come from noise. Oxygen feeds the heat of our lives, but aging is an oxidation. It works because it doesn’t work. The system is very badly named. Maybe there is not or never was a system. As soon as the world came into being, its transformation began. The system in itself is a space of transformation. There are only *metabolas*. What we take as an equilibrium is only a slowing down of metabolic processes. My body is an exchanger of time. It is filled with signals, noises, messages, and parasites. And it is not at all exceptional in this vast world” (72)... “The system is nonknowledge. The other side of nonknowledge. One side of nonknowledge is chaos; the other, system. Knowledge forms a bridge between the two banks. Knowledge as such is a space of transformation” (73). Nb.— the similarity to the landscape of Serres and the situation of active nihilism laid out in the opening pages.

must navigate against the contingencies that appear, turning these into navigational aids, using these in the performance of navigation, and changing tack, living into a metabolic event, and, exiting, onto a new tack. And the metabola does not change the over-arching existential situation. The particularities of course and relationality have shifted, but the underlying state of existence continues. And this continuation, by virtue of its state, will consist of new and unforeseen metabolic moments. And, in the repetition of the navigating – the taking in of data, the discovering of bearings, the inserting of these bearings into the calculus of triangulation, the discovering of the fix, the circumscribing of the fix within a circle of error, the taking of the straight edge and of the pencil – one sets down a profession of faith, as one projects and commits to an orientation, *true* for the moment, and in the moment. This re-commitment of faith thus permits one to voyage on into a constancy of repetitions of the *same* performative—a constancy of navigation, of purposed movement, across the constancy of flux, within the immanence of the vessel, against the immanence of the life-world, always with a telos to point to—and in all of this unfolds *hope*.

Wrapped around this constant performative is a *be-ing* in and out of an *attend-ing*: to the changing winds and sea-state, to the mood and energy of the one(s) moving the vessel along its route, to purpose and objectives of the undertaking. At the center is an unspoken affirmation, a profession of faith, in the cognate capabilities and agency of the one entering into the navigational act. This center must be true *enough* for the effects to be-*come* manifest. The center is judged against existence of the outcome and the constancy of the repeated, adjusted manifestation of outcome(s). The efficacy of navigation dictates the authenticity of the center: it has no *a priori* qualification: sex, gender, faith, ethnicity, race economic class, caste, level of higher education, none of these inhibit the potential capacity of the navigator. The center is democratic in its access,

and, in that way, the navigator is not unlike any human person, born into a fluxed¹⁰⁴ present, born into the presuppositions and predispositions intertwined between one's culture and the mystery, unique make-up that has historically been referred to as one's *nature*, and challenged against all of the above, to attend to what is *truly* present, to interpolate, and to set course, and to set it true.

To extend this democratic center to all centers lies at the heart of the secularist enterprise. It is a gift of each person to each and every other person. For a democracy to be a democracy, writes philosopher Charles Taylor, “[w]e cannot favor Christianity over Islam, but also religion over against nonbelief in religion or vice versa.”¹⁰⁵ Thus to drag *laïcité* (secularism) down and to circumscribe it as a “relation of the state and religion” would be to err, for in fact, avers Taylor, “it has to do with the (correct) response of the democratic state to diversity.”¹⁰⁶ Amidst the various entities that constitute the pluralistic social reality must be “some kind of neutrality, or ‘principled distance.’”¹⁰⁷ This distance is maintained, for Taylor, when three ‘navigational’ bearings are maintained by the social vessel as it moves through the life-ocean. Each of these bearings finds its principle in one of the three claims of the French Revolution: liberty, equality, and fraternity. The bearings are: (1) re: *liberty* – “no one must be forced” in any “basic belief” religious or otherwise; (2) re: *equality* – “no religious outlook or (religious or areligious)

¹⁰⁴ Here, I am borrowing from the contemporary French verb *fluxer*, cf. the online lexicography of the Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales, accessed May 9, 2015, <http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/flux>.

¹⁰⁵ Charles Taylor, “Why We Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism,” in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, ed. Eduardo Mendieta and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 37.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 34. It should be noted that Charles Taylor willfully includes the notion of *principled distance* brought forward by Rajeev Bhargava, in the essay, “What Is Secularism For,” included in the volume *Secularism and its Critics*, which he edited, the volume, as a whole, providing an important non-Western Asian assessment, critique, and apology for *democracy* and the *secularist* construct. Cf. Rajeev Bhargava, “What Is Secularism For?,” in *Secularism and Its Critics*, ed. Rajeev Bhargava (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 486–552. In addition to Bhargava’s essay, the reader is encouraged to seek out Amartya Sen, “Secularism and Its Discontents,” in *Secularism and Its Critics*, ed. Rajeev Bhargava (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 455–485. Taylor’s inclusion of the insights of Bhargava implicitly gives weight to his secularist, non-absolutist principles of inclusion in any democratic colloquy.

*Weltanschauung*¹⁰⁸ can enjoy a privileged status, let alone be adopted as the official view of the state; (3) re: *fraternity* – “all spiritual families must be heard, included in the ongoing process of determining what the society is about” i.e. “how it is going to realize its goals (the exact regime of rights and privileges).”¹⁰⁹

Amartya Sen further complicates this notion of *principled distance* in his claim that each and every contemporary living person is, in fact, not singular, i.e. Christian or Muslim, man or woman, religious or secular, but is rather *plural* in his or her identity.¹¹⁰ Thus, he himself can confess: “I can be, at the same time,

an Asian, an Indian citizen, a Bengali with Bangladeshi ancestry, an American or British resident, an economist, a dabbler in philosophy, an author, a Sanskritist, a strong believer in secularism and democracy, a man, a feminist, a heterosexual, a defender of gay and lesbian rights, with a nonreligious lifestyle, from a Hindu background, a non-Brahmin, a nonbeliever in an afterlife (and also, in case the question is asked, a nonbeliever in a ‘before-life’ as well).”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ “World-view” – “A particular philosophy or view of life; a concept of the world held by an individual or a group;” from the German *Welt* (world) and *Anschauung* (perception); cf. *OED*, online, accessed May 9, 2015, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/227763?redirectedFrom=Weltanschauung&>. Taylor himself does not define the term in the article. One could argue that Taylor’s prescriptions are in fact presented as a privileged, and thus excluding, *Weltanschauung*. But even with such an allowance, it must be measured as one which strives for openness and inclusion, of all views that allow for the inclusion of all other views. It is not fabricated against the general tenets of a democratic, pluralistic vibrancy, such as is found in all legitimate, contemporary democratic cultures. And thus, though it is privileged, it is so towards a neutrality that allows for the greatest amount of flourishing among all of its constitutive members.

¹⁰⁹ Taylor, “Why We Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism,” 34–35.

¹¹⁰ Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 19. Nb.— When theologian Ammicht Quinn appropriates Sen’s observation, in “‘We’ and ‘Others,’” she intentionally changes the sex of the identity, by choosing a similar passage found earlier in Sen’s preface to his book. Cf. Ammicht Quinn, “‘We’ and ‘Others’: In Place of an Introduction,” 9. Writes Sen earlier in *Identity and Violence*: “A solitarist approach can be a good way of misunderstanding nearly everyone in the world. In our normal lives, we see ourselves as members of a variety of groups—we belong to all of them. The same person can be, *without any contradiction*, an American citizen, of Caribbean origin, with African ancestry, a *Christian*, a liberal, a *woman*, a vegetarian, a long-distance runner, a historian, a schoolteacher, a novelist, a feminist, a heterosexual, a believer in gay and lesbian rights, a theater lover, an environmental activist, a tennis fan, a jazz musician, and someone who is deeply committed to the view that there are intelligent beings in outer space with whom it is extremely urgent to talk (preferably in English.” (xii–xiii, emphasis selectively added.) Important in this re-statement in the same work is the performative dispossession of Sen’s claim. His statement is untethered from any ascendancy based on the historical norms of privilege: race, sex, profession, sexuality, religion, etc. Also noteworthy is the lack of hierarchal ordering of the diverse identities in the constellation, and his assertion that these identities freely co-exist *without any contradiction*.

For Sen, this “robust” situation, with its “divergent loyalties and priorities,”¹¹² does not necessarily end in an oppositional struggle (in which one identity must come out dominant at all costs), but rather in an awareness, a maieutic conclusion to an extended endurance of free-activity,¹¹³ in which one comes to realize “the importance of one identity need not obliterate the importance of others.”¹¹⁴ This manner of seeing ourselves is, according to Sen, “an extremely ordinary and elementary recognition.”¹¹⁵ Thus, in her living out the day-to-day, the performativity by which the person uses to navigate the ever-expanding, ever-collapsing, ever-shifting constellation of identities, that come together, at any given moment, to constitute her immediate sense of self and her sense of placement in the flux of Spacetime, this force gives credible testament to the presence of this *principled distance* within the microcosmic life-ocean that *is* her life, and serves as a navigational paradigm for her negotiating the interstices and the convergences between her life-ocean and the life-oceans of others.

Sovereignty and transgression

Against such a lived understanding of navigation and negotiation, *sovereignty*, historically understood and exhibited as a “monolithic, unified and coherent concept,”¹¹⁶ cannot maintain its totality and its *limes*. Adi Ophir is quick to point out that: (1) such sovereignty is “undermined by

¹¹² Sen, *Identity and Violence*, 19.

¹¹³ “Free activity,” *OED*, online, accessed May 9, 2015, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/74375#eid3667769>. Free-activity here is being employed in relation to the pedagogical notion of *freie Arbeitsgemeinschaft*, popular in the Weimar Republic, which denotes “a method of teaching in which children learn through their own efforts and experiments and not through instruction by a teacher.”

¹¹⁴ Sen, *Identity and Violence*, 19.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹¹⁶ Ophir, “Disaster as a Place of Morality,” 109.

the very multiplicity of agents that negotiate, compete, and fight over different types of exception-making” – as populate a free democratic culture; and (2) “the territorial boundaries that spatially delimit sovereignty are constantly transgressed by streams of people, goods, and information flowing into and out” of the area it claims.¹¹⁷ By locating the site of navigation within each person afloat within her life-ocean (and its ever-shifting constellation of identities), a complex ‘moving’ field of matrices comes together, when these navigators cluster in community.

A community, then, no longer is merely a cluster of points connected by vectors, because each point is not a point but a constellation of floating identities that sometimes touch, either vertically or horizontally, and sometimes become superimposed imperfectly, where portions of each intersect, and other remainders float free. These constellations may, or may not, share some affinity with each other, but there is not absolute guarantee, for the sovereignty of the group, that all participating constellations (navigators) participate in the greater within any constancy of uniformity. While effect and consequence may have the appearance of such agreed-to alignment, intention and interiority remain forever unrestricted and unaccounted.

In such a state, what is at immanent *risik*, according to Ophir, is “the authority of the sovereign to be the sole legitimate source of the decision to declare who should be abandoned, whose life can be forsaken, and which exception is the proper one.”¹¹⁸ Thus for the sovereignty traditionally bound up in *ἐκκλησία* (‘ecclesia,’ i.e. Church, or, for secularists like Ophir, ‘religious domain’) and its fixations on purity and proper sexual activity,¹¹⁹ the initial exodus of the deviant

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 111.

¹¹⁹ Ophir, a secularist, is critically questioning the apparent primacy that contemporary religious institutions place on issues of (sexual) purity, against the tsunami of mal-being that much of this world is subjected to throughout the entirety of their lives. Though the inclusion of Ophir’s critical voice could open up a Pandora’s box of theological debate, the author feels that his voice is valid as a plea for those too easily forgotten and forfeited when attentions become so aligned.

and the *degenerate* is not a problem. The problem only comes to the surface when, such exodus does not come with any shameful sense of exile or consequence. Notes Althaus-Reid, “sexual dissidents do not feel deprived of their communion with God, but from the churches.”¹²⁰ These deviants/dissidents take seriously “the free kisses from God” to be indiscriminately *free* (cf. Matt

A philosopher like Gianni Vattimo will turn the critical lens on his own secular philosophical pursuits. In his essay “The Vocation to Philosophy and the Responsibility of Philosophy,” Vattimo confesses: “I began to study philosophy because I felt myself caught up in a project to transform humanity, a program of emancipation”... [But] – “There’s a mass of unskilled labor in the world and *Bildung* is the last thing on their mind because they are living hand to mouth... I myself am sometimes appalled at the narrowness of the horizons that bound my own reflections... [T]he urban poor squatting in the streets of Calcutta, what could the things I am talking about ever matter to them?” Gianni Vattimo, “The Vocation to Philosophy and the Responsibility of Philosophy,” in *The Responsibility of the Philosopher*, ed. Franca D’Agostini, trans. William McCuaig (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 105, 115.

¹²⁰ Marcella Maria Althaus-Reid, “A Woman’s Right to Not Being Straight (El Derecho a No Ser Derecha): On Theology, Church and Pornography,” 89. One of the most powerful examples of this can be found in the complex and problematic poem, “I smoked a spliff,” by the South African poet Lebogang Mashile:

I smoked a spliff with Jesus Christ last night
Then leaned over and stuck my eyes inside his soul
The father let me take a journey through his pain
And beside the tears of Judas, I saw my own

...

But he was Jesus
And I’m a sister and I’ve been through more shit
Because I’m black
And life is hard in Jozi[†] when you’ve got tits

...

J said:
“Love is infinite gratitude for the power of the self
Seek the answers in your own voice before you look to anyone else
Nurse the child who weeps in the valley of your suffering
Cleanse her face with ebony rains and make way for what the future brings
Teach her to make love not find love
To be love not seek love
To grow love and know love

That she might live love and receive love in due time
But don’t make martyrs from the flaws of mortal kinds
Before you let another burn you, think twice
Remember no one is worth your paradise”

[†] ‘Jozi’ is slang for Johannesburg; implicit in it is also a feminine ‘nickname,’ thus a trans-ing appropriation of a patriarchal establishment.

Cf. Lebogang Mashile, *In a Ribbon of Rhythm* (Johannesburg; Cape Town: Mutloatse Arts Heritage Trust ; Oshun Books, 2005), 39–40. Christ is an immanent Christ, a Jesus who can share a spliff, and remind the author to not let the wants of another become a stumbling block for eternity. To nurse the child within; to nurse the child not on the colonialist norms, nor the norms of a male-dominated tradition—but to take courage, and to go to the root—love—and to begin anew from within a rightly centering womb.

5:43 ff.), such that, first and foremost, “the grace of God as a gratuitous love given to human beings and creation.”¹²¹ When one begins to navigate one’s life-ocean with this *Ausgangspunkt* of understanding, and perform navigational corrections based on this ‘given,’ over and over, and over and against the presuppositions of history and tradition, Butler’s performativity works as a political force for liberation and for re-orientation.

Identity and dispossession: ‘beyond faith, beyond law’

Butler sees the soul to be “an instrument of power,” which “forms and frames the body, stamps it, and in stamping it, brings it into being.”¹²² The soul, thus, should be understood as “a normative and normalizing ideal”¹²³—which releases its animating influence, not in the singular act or choice, but only within “as a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power.”¹²⁴

Thus, for Butler, within this process, identity is, in being “produced,” “destabilized” at the very same time, “in the course” of its becoming constructed, on account that the act of construction, is not only in time, but is constitutive of time, and never finds ground external to temporality.¹²⁵ The single act of defiance does not change the force of the sovereign claim or the weight of historical interpellations. But the change of tack does mark a start, which, when built

¹²¹ Marcella Maria Althaus-Reid, “A Woman’s Right to Not Being Straight (El Derecho a No Ser Derecha): On Theology, Church and Pornography,” 89.

¹²² Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 34.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

upon, over time, by other navigations and negotiations, can, with grace, move identity into a new surround, with new testaments and new evidence as to meaning.

The freedom for the construction of identity for this person is predicated on her freedom to attend, to discern, to navigate, and to move accordingly—and to continuously do it all over again. Butler notes that this freedom *to be* and *to become*, “in the context of a differentiated (and continually differentiating population),”¹²⁶ can only be guaranteed in “the very possibility of ethical relation” which, in turn, depends on “a *dispossession* that characterizes our relationality from the start, and so the possibility of any ethical relation.”¹²⁷

Though secular in language, this dispossession *is* that which permits any ecumenism to really reveal itself and to hold. Dispossession allows for obdurate specificities to be transcended in the universalizing claim of equality by unacceptable duress. Though one’s suffering cannot ever truly find analogy with another’s, “any and all suffering by virtue of forcible displacement and statelessness is equally unacceptable.”¹²⁸

This notion of unacceptability complements the earlier navigational coordinates set up by Charles Taylor, and mark the complete deconstruction, in ideal if not in reality, of Ophir’s absolute sovereign, and the sovereign’s exclusive claim of exception. Thus, all must be heard, and be allowed to participate; all are free to make choices, to receive consequences, and to change, and change again. The only caveat is that the other, the stranger, the neighbor, the alien, is accorded

¹²⁶ Butler, “Is Judaism Zionism?,” 85–86.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 88. (Emphasis added.) Butler elaborates on this primal dispossession: “Thus it is, even from the start, to the stranger that we are bound, the one, or the ones, we never knew and never chose. If we accept this sort of ontological condition, then to destroy the other is to destroy my life, that sense of my life that is invariably social life.” She goes on, to wryly conclude: “This may be less our common condition than our *convergent condition*.” (Emphasis added.) Butler’s “to the stranger then we are bound” should not be read as some sort of Hegelian Master/Slave mutuality, or against the Schmittian existential identity built upon the maintenance of enmity. Butler’s sense of obligation is not to the stranger being kept as a stranger, but to the stranger being honored with equity and an access to full participation despite not being familiar.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

the same. What does such freedom mean? It means the freedom to *be* strange.¹²⁹ The other is allowed to move freely across the borders of exclusion, or not. The other is afforded equity of status, independent of any willingness to conform or assimilate. It is from the strength of such a dispossession of sovereignty, that the atheist Albert Camus, addressing the Dominican Monastery of Latour-Maubourg in 1948, could aver:

I shall never start from the supposition that Christian truth is illusory, but merely from the fact that I could not accept it... Hence, I shall not, as far as I am concerned, try to pass myself off as a Christian in your presence. I share with you the same revulsion from evil. But I do not share your hope, and I continue to struggle against this universe in which children suffer and die.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ See the concluding observation to note 127.

¹³⁰ Albert Camus, “The Unbelievers and Christians,” in *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death*, trans. O’Brien (New York: Knopf, 1961), 52–53. For the French, see Albert Camus, “L’incroyant et les Chrétiens,” in *Essais*, ed. Louis Faucon (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 371–72. Camus, in his presentation, gifts the median, the space between *limes*, in which the *limes* might be skillfully surmounted, and a *fraternité* sketched into possibility. The atheist claims the same disgust at the ignoble and confesses the *real* presence of *evil* which *risks* all innocence. Camus marks this evil, in turn, by the weight of the suffering and the dying of children. One is reminded of the remarks of Ivan Karamazov, in chapter 35 of *The Brothers Karamazov*. Cf. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov: A Revised Translation, Contexts, Criticism*, ed. Susan McReynolds Oddo, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011). In addition, Camus separates himself from his Dominican audience, by his inability to assail to the triumphant hope, that he seems to feel marks the Christian. This seems to be, perhaps, not so much contingent on Christ per se, but rather, on a certain interpretation of Christ, evidenced at times during the long Christian history.

Such a Christian (assumptive) hope is criticized openly by Kierkegaard, as one that has freed itself from the essential “offense, paradox” of Christ, and instead has introduced “probability” and “the plainly comprehensible,” and thus allowed for an elegant hope, one that can be banked on and anticipated with comfort; cf. Kierkegaard, “The Instant No. 5,” 162–63.

Martin Heidegger draws a similar distinction in his letter to Engelbert Krebs, dated January 9, 1919. In the letter, he explains his break with his Catholic faith, by drawing a distinction between “the [Neoscholastic] *system* of Catholicism,” which he finds “problematic and unacceptable,” and his “high opinion and regard for the Catholic lifeworld” which he refuses, at the time of writing, to abandon. Cf. Martin Heidegger, “Letter to Engelbert Krebs on His Philosophical Conversion,” in *Becoming Heidegger: On the Trail of His Early Occasional Writings, 1910-1927*, ed. Theodore Kisiel and Thomas Sheehan, trans. Thomas Sheehan (Northwestern University Press, 2007), 95. In his lectures on Paul during the following winter (1919/20), Heidegger will comment about *hope*. Hope, for Heidegger, “is not to be found in the boasting (*Brüsten*) but in the coping, the overcoming (*Bewältigung*), the enduring of θλίψις!” (Author’s trans.) The original reads: “*Hoffnung: nicht als sich Brüsten wird [sie] erfahren und sich dabei nicht um sich selbst kümmern, sondern gerade ἐπιδα in der Bewältigung, ὑπομονη der θλίψις!*” Cf. Martin Heidegger, “Einleitung in die Phänomenologie der Religion,” in *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, vol. 60, Gesamtausgabe II (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1995), sec. 26, “Eschatologie II (I Thess.) [zu Ab. 26],” 151. Heidegger does not translate the Greek. In the English translation of the lectures, Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei mark ἐπιδα as “hope,” ὑπομονη as “endurance,” and θλίψις as “oppression.” Cf. Martin Heidegger, Matthias Fritsch, and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei, *The Phenomenology of Religious Life* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 107. Though the first term is an acceptable equivalence, the latter two seem somewhat constricted in their implication. The noun ὑπομονη finds its antecedent in the verb ὑπομένω, which firstly means, to “*stay behind*,” but can also indicate the active state to “*remain alive*,” to “*abide or await another*,” to “*be patient under*” or to “*submit to any evil that threatens one*,” etc. Thus, the noun ὑπομονη first means “*remaining behind*,” before secondarily indicating “*endurance*.” It can also bear the sense of the “*power to sustain*” as in blows. To circumscribe θλίψις as “oppression” focuses on the metaphorical (and potentially politicized) implications found in the Septuagint (cf. LXX, Gen 35:3, al.), but misses the more general existential notion contained in the primary definitions of “pressure,” and “crushing, castration,” and the totalizing consequence of impotence. Cf. Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Thus *Bürsten*

To come together, there must first be the pre-condition of neutrality, of the aforementioned *principled distance*, a place in which, as Taylor, notes, all “families” of different “basic belief” *must*—not only “be heard,” but — *be* “included” in the shaping of the “political identity” of the place they co-inhabit.¹³¹ For Camus, this *principled distance* comes at a cost: the nonbeliever and the believer (of any and every faith) can only truly meet, under the supererogatory condition of *true* dispossession. For Camus, to intercede with indiscriminate concern for all human persons (“*pour tous les enfants et tous les hommes*”), and to have the wherewithal to do so virtually everywhere and without respite (“*un peu partout et sans relâche*”), requires that one meet each other, in full *fraternité*, and with indiscriminate ἀγάπη (*agapé*, i.e. “selfless love”). Such can only come into *be*-ing, in the meeting in the unfolding of place, constituted in the *release*. This release implies a dispossession, a moving away from (“*sans*”) a reliance on either an exclusivist position of faith (“*foi*”) or of law (“*loi*”), that either adjudicates to the exclusion of the *Other*—either the other struggling to overcome their own inhibitions and prescriptions to join and meet, or the other who is suffering and is pleading in need, and without recourse.¹³²

seems to disallow the virtue of doubt, which Cardinal Avery Dulles praises as being “often an authentic virtue.” Doubt confesses, according to Dulles, “the utter insecurity of every answer,” and thus serves as “one of the main prerequisites of faith.” Cf. Avery Dulles, *The Survival of Dogma* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971), 68, 138–39. Doubt allows for the dispossession of the old claim, to release itself to the new navigational coordinates, so as to perform the necessary correction, and return to course. To abide in the pressure of the fluxed life-ocean, to be attentive to the contingencies of the next moment, and to navigate so as to endure—this is the *lutte* (“struggle”) of which Camus makes mention.

¹³¹ Taylor, “Why We Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism,” 35.

¹³² Camus, “L’incroyant et les Chrétiens,” 375. Camus concludes his self-presentation to the Dominicans: “*Et ce que je sais, et qui fait parfois ma nostalgie, c’est que, si les chrétiens s’y décidaient, des millions de voix, des millions vous entendez, s’ajouter-aient dans le monde au cri d’une poignée de solitaires, qui sans foi ni loi, plaident aujourd’hui partout et sans relâche, pour les enfants et pour les hommes.*” Nb.—The author has translated from French the pieces nuanced above in the main argument above. For a general English translation, cf. Camus, “The Unbelievers and Christians,” 56. O’Brien’s translation reads: “And what I know—which sometimes creates a deep longing in me—is that if Christians made up their minds to it, millions of voices—millions, I say—throughout the world would be added to the appeal of a handful of isolated individuals who, without any sort of affiliation, today intercede almost everywhere and ceaselessly for children and for men.” This critique of Christian reticence echoes that made earlier by the orthodox theologian and priest, Paul Evdokimov; see pages 14–15.

By extension, this movement lies at the heart of upcoming considerations of *flesh* (M. Merleau-Ponty) and *immanence* (M. Henry), and is equally constitutive of the activity at play in Kasper’s *nihilism*.

To inhabit this *principled distance* from the claim of sovereignty and certitude takes courage. To move into the interstice goes against the force of institutional and cultural interpellation. The institution and its culture become fixed on a myopia that is engendered from its analogy to an ahistorical *essence*. For Michel Serres,¹³³ the problem stems from the absolutization of the *system*. A system allows for a momentary crystallization of the flux of the life-ocean, for a chance to capture it all in a pause, to get bearings, and thereby to choose a course, and to re-act. The problem makes itself manifest in the desire to hold onto the system, under the fiction of *a priori*, as an eternal *Ordnung* (“ordering”), as Truth with a capital “T.”

Thus every contemporary story does not begin on Page One, with the traditional solidity of *Es war einmal*—Once upon a time, there was—but rather, in the torrent of the immediate flux of the life-ocean—in the *truly* modern, fragmented midsentence rush: *riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of shore to bend of bay*,¹³⁴ et cetera, and so forth, the only caveat being that Joyce is modern, and in today’s beyond modern virtualization, there no longer are references upon references to past details, explicit or obscure.¹³⁵ Virtualization, writes philosopher Pierre Lévy, “calls into question the classical notion of identity, conceived in terms of definition, determination, exclusion, inclusion, and excluded middles. For this reason virtualization is always heterogenesis, a becoming other, an embrace of alterity”¹³⁶ — distance is gone; with a click of a mouse, or an audio

¹³³ Cf., Serres, *The Parasite*, 71–73.

¹³⁴ Cf. James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (New York: The Viking Press, 1939). It should be appreciated that what Joyce has done with this innovative novel is to start the work with the end of a sentence that ends the novel as the beginning to the same sentence.

¹³⁵ Gone is such concern for any semblance of continuum. Rather, as sociologist Zygmunt Bauman constructs in his claim of a contemporary and insouciant *liquid* dystopia, every pursuit is flattened in a “perpetual present,” which in turn entombs identity, wherein all becomes fixated on the myopic exchange of “survival-and-gratification.” Cf. Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Life* (Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005), esp. 7.

¹³⁶ Pierre Lévy, *Becoming virtual: reality in the Digital Age*, trans. Robert Bononno (New York and London: Plenum Trade, 1998), 34.

vocal command on an iPhone, “we are simultaneously here and there.”¹³⁷ The body becomes caught on the smartphone between here and there.¹³⁸ Under medical machinery, it loses its outer solidity, to encounter “other skins, buried epidermises, unsuspected surfaces that rise up from within.”¹³⁹ Thus, by the virtualizing act/acquiescence—“the body is multiplied.”¹⁴⁰ This multiplied body-into-bodies floats atop the flux of the sea that lies beneath every system founded on an ahistorical claim to transcend history.

Atop this fluidity, the impulse to control manifests itself in two uses of *limes*: (1) the employment of lines to govern, to contain, to quarantine, to control, to stabilize;¹⁴¹ and (2) the solicitation of lines to chart and to move along; lines to navigate the currents and the elemental forces in such a way as not to flounder, but to draw a balance, through constant re-negotiation, in concert with the pressures that come to be placed against one. One cannot engage with the life-ocean with absolute coordinates. In the very performativity of living, and incorporating the ever-changing technologies of the everyday in one’s life, one gives testimony to the permeability of any

¹³⁷ Ibid., 37.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 39.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 39–40.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 43.

¹⁴¹ Keeping within considerations of navigation and maritime architecture, an example of *limes* as it pertains to such may be found in Henri de Lubac’s pre-war *Catholicisme: Les aspects sociaux du dogme*, written in 1938. In Chapter 9, the Church is presented as “*Arche unique du Salut*” (“unique Ark of Salvation,” 227). An ark is built, however, in advance of a flood. An ark is built in a *Geschichte (narrative)* that begins *Es war einmal (Once upon a time)*. An ark is built without a keel and without a wheel and without a rudder. An ark is built without any ability to navigate because it anticipates no need to navigate, because it is built with the confidence of water depth as its sole *principled distance*. There are not navigational hazards because they have all been drowned. Even Everest. There are no other arks, because all other boat builders, all other passengers, and all other potential navigators, and craft, have drowned. The *Arche* is the ultimate vessel of *limes*, one that can only ultimately work within as “*la seule discipline efficace*” (“the only effective discipline,” 229) within the *Weltanschauung* of alluvial apocalypse. An *Arche* cannot maintain forever. Eventually its doors, used to exclude, to keep out, to quarantine, must be opened for life to go on. And life then begins anew, living into its performativity, and through its performativity into the diversity and complexity that is in fact Life. Henri de Lubac ends his chapter with the absolutist claim: “*Le catholicisme est La Religion.*” (“Catholicism is *the* Religion.”) It is a claim that one could possibly aver in 1938. The *Arche* failed the faithful during the alluvial deluge of the Second World War; there was no sanctuary for Edith Stein at Auschwitz. (See Greenberg, note 51.) And it is a claim that found its counterclaim in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Cf. Henri de Lubac, *Catholicisme: les aspects sociaux du dogme* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1938). Author’s translation.

border, and to the constancy of change: to the nihilistic *Zustand* (“condition”) which calls into account the systematic claim of our life’s living, and gives cause for a necessitated release, which in turn allows for a navigational re-claim and a new course, so as to maintain the constancy of life. At the heart of this navigation is the ability to dispossess.

Dispossession, apophasis, ‘the nothing of the world,’ and ‘a certain Samaritan’

At the heart of this navigation is the ability to dispossess. To dispossess is to confess, ultimately, *apophasis* at the heart of one’s relation with all that lies beyond, and with all that lies at the site that marks our incarnation within our worlds.¹⁴² Without this *apophasis*, as has been suggested, there can be no vulnerability. Without vulnerability there can be no room in place for two meanings or understanding to co-habit, and thus co-exist. Without *apophasis*, no *dia*-logue. Evdokimov writes that it is *apophasis* itself which “avoid[s] any break between the heavenly vertical and the earthly horizontal.”¹⁴³ But what is left when one moves past *foi* and *loi*? What does one possess after dispossession?¹⁴⁴ What assurances does one have before the release?

Ἔτι ἔν σοι λείπει· πάντα ὅσα ἔχεις πώλησον καὶ διάδος πτωχοῖς,
καὶ ἔξεις θησαυρὸν ἐν οὐρανῶ, καὶ δεῦρο ἀκολούθει μοι. ὁ δὲ
ἀκούσας ταῦτα περιλυπος ἐγένετο· ἦν γὰρ πλούσιος σφόδρα.

“There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” But when he heard this, he became sad; for he was very rich. (Lk 18: 22-23)

¹⁴² See page 10, in particular the remarks of Paul Evdokimov and Judith Butler.

¹⁴³ Evdokimov, *In the World, of the Church*, 187.

¹⁴⁴ The underlying anxiety (ἄνισις) - behind ‘the nihilistic question.’

Against the performative force of tradition and certitude, and the rhetorical of power and sovereignty, all constructed out of a willful claim of Christly servitude, stands the nobody¹⁴⁵ of a scandal of what can only appear as a nobody of a man, saying: trust, leave everything your culture claims of value, strip and dispossess and follow me into a new unknowing place—trust and hope in me, the one who can only seem historical and finite and human—and believe more. The scandal is an all-too-human inability to see what is really before one.

For Adi Ophir, this dispossession amounts to a “moral intentionality” (complete with “concern and interest”), to exactly what is left “intact after other concerns with self and other are subtracted or bracketed.”¹⁴⁶ For Virgilio Elizondo, theologian of the *mestizo*¹⁴⁷ experience, the irruptive force of the nothing of the incarnate God is the call that causes any such ability to bracket all away so as to inhabit the moral. “God was born among the homeless and the rejected.” Elizondo goes on to emphasize: “God became the nothing of the world, so that the nothing and everyone else may know that no one, no one human being, is inferior to others.”¹⁴⁸ By being nothing, God-as-homeless-and-rejected places the locus of significance within the center of each and every person, regardless of the *limes* set up by men, out of an attempt to arrest and systematize an identity, and the hegemonic consequence.

¹⁴⁵ Thus, Rudolf Bultmann was able to shockingly claim the Incarnation as an *offense* – “How does God’s Son come into the world? As a human being.” He goes on: “The theme of the whole Gospel of John is the statement: ‘The word became flesh’ (1:14).” Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), vol.2, sec. 46, [40]. This offense brought into being by “the assertion, ‘the word became flesh,’ comes most clearly to light in the *direct contradiction of Jesus’s claim*” i.e. “[i]t can only appear as an insane blasphemy that he, a man, makes himself equal to God, and the authorities seek to kill him (5:17f.)” (vol.2, sec. 46, [47]).

¹⁴⁶ Ophir, “Disaster as a Place of Morality,” 99.

¹⁴⁷ Despite its Spanish and Portuguese original use, *mestizo* has come to mark “any person of mixed racial origin;” cf. “mestizo,” *OED*, online, accessed May 10, 2015, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/117138?redirectedFrom=mestizo#eid>.

¹⁴⁸ Virgilio P. Elizondo, *A God of Incredible Surprises: Jesus of Galilee* (Oxford, UK and Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 38.

All become equal, leveled. From the onset, from the Magnificat: “He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty”¹⁴⁹ (Lk 1:52-53 NRSV). In the call to the certain one of the ruling class (18:22-23), the incarnate God asks all certain ones to do the same. The parables of the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, the Rich Man and Lazarus, and the account of the certain one of the ruling class, all share one common grammatical feature: key persons are called into an indeterminate existential, and are marked neither as “one” (εἷς), nor definitely using the article “the” (ὁ as in the declarative: ὁ ἄνθρωπος, “the man”); rather they are marked with the indefinite τις. Linguist Donald Mastronarde states that τις is employed to “refer to an unspecified, uncertain, or vague person.”¹⁵⁰ Marking the member of the ruling class τις (Lk 18: 18-30) creates a principled distance from an excluding claim, thereby inviting every reader into an intimate empathy. This act of inclusion is replicated explicitly in the person of the Father in the narrative of the prodigal (15:11 – Εἶπεν δέ, Ἄνθρωπός τις εἶχεν δύο υἱούς, “And he [Jesus] said, a certain man had two sons” [Author’s trans.]), and in Luke 16, both the rich man (16:19 – Ἄνθρωπος δέ τις ἦν πλούσιος “And there was a certain man [being] rich” [Author’s trans.]), and the impoverished Lazarus (16:20 – πτωχὸς δέ τις “And there was a certain beggar”) are similarly placed in an indefinite existence.

¹⁴⁹ καθεῖλεν δυνάστας ἀπὸ θρόνων καὶ ὕψωσεν ταπεινούς, πεινῶντας ἐνέπλησεν ἀγαθῶν καὶ πλουτοῦντας ἐξαπέστειλεν κενούς. (Lk 1:52-53). Note that this “bi-polar reveal” in the Magnificat “becomes explicit” in the narrative of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31). Both the explicit and implicit *Leitwörter* (theme-words) of such Lukan reversals are mapped out in John O York, *The Last Shall Be First: The Rhetoric of Reversal in Luke* (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1991), see esp. 62–71, with reference to the Rich Man and Lazarus. (Cf. Lk 16: 19-31)

¹⁵⁰ Donald J Mastronarde, *Introduction to Attic Greek* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 138, accessed May 9, 2015, <http://public.ebib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1104661>.

This leveling use of *τις* becomes most ubiquitous in its forceful presence by Luke in the parable of the Good Samaritan (10: 25-37). Jesus is not marked by *τις*. Neither are the incidental characters of robbers (10: 30) or an innkeeper (Lk 10:35). In a similar fashion the arrival of a Levite (10: 32) is not marked by *τις*. That understood, the Greek does not state literally “a Levite” but *Λευΐτης γενόμενος* – “one being a Levite,” implying a certain principled distance of specificity. Moreover, this person serves the narrative as an extension/duplication of the previous character, of the previous verse (*δὲ ἱερεὺς τις* – “and a certain priest”), underscored by both the repetition of action and by the adverbial marker *ὁμοίως* (“moreover”) which announces the arrival of the one being a Levite. The parable is called into being by the inquiry of “a certain lawyer” (10:25 – *νομικός τις*), and begins with the introduction: “A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho (10:30 – *Ἄνθρωπός τις κατέβαινεν ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλήμ εἰς Ἱεριχὼ*). He is set upon by the aforementioned robbers, and left bloodied on the edge of the way. “A certain priest” (10:31 – *ἱερεὺς τις*) went down the same route – “and having seen him, he passed by on the opposite side” (*καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτὸν ἀντιπαρήλθεν*). This willful neglect is replicated by one being a Levite. Then “a certain Samaritan” (10:33 – *Σαμαρείτης δὲ τις*) having come upon the scene, “was moved by compassion” (*ἐσπλαγχνίσθη*), and became intimately involved. The use of *τις* under-scores the freedom all persons hold in common: the freedom to test God, the freedom to desire eternal life, the freedom to walk to the other side, the freedom to be open-hearted and to act compassionately to any unspecified other, and the freedom to find oneself in the position of the unspecified victim of circumstance, in absolute dependency on help from an unspecified stranger.

In the parable, *choice* becomes paramount: choice determines the existence of “neighbour” (*πλησίον*) with respect to the immediate concrete crisis (10:36-37), and with respect to the lawyer’s question about what must be done to inherit eternal life (10:25-28). Salvation is tied to

compassion, and is loosed from the necessities of keeping pure so as to perform Temple rituals. The Samaritan, outside the *limes* of the Temple cult and Judaic culture, is the only neighbor to the certain man. A layperson, from an outcast tribe, becomes the exemplar of the parable: not the ordained, not the noble. *Loi et foi* become loosed – specificity is called into question in the supererogatory gesture. Thus, Rowan Williams writes: “The transfiguring of the world in Christ can seem partial or marginal if we have not learned, by speaking and hearing parables, a willingness to lose the identities and perceptions we make for ourselves.”¹⁵¹ Transfiguration is tied to “a willingness” to dispossess. He underscores the fact that “parables are not religious stories or expositions of a tradition, but crystalizations of how people decide for or against self-destruction, for or against newness of life, acceptance, relatedness.”¹⁵² Do such decisions come exclusively out of the rational calculation of a mind, as is averred in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*?¹⁵³ Or, as is suggested by the parable, can these decisions come in concert with a movement¹⁵⁴ of the heart?

¹⁵¹ Williams, *On Christian Theology*, 42.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁵³ Cf. CCC 1778: “Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed... Conscience is a law of the mind... Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ.” Of particular interest is both the singularity of “mind” with respect to conscience, and the heavy reliance on the language of *juris* and the institution.

¹⁵⁴ Against the notion that conscience is exclusive to performatives of *ratio*, is the verb ἐσπλαγγίσθη which betrays nothing of *ratio* but nonetheless constitutes the origin of an existential decision. In fact, the priest and the Levite passing by on the opposite side betrays, by implication, a calculation of ‘safe distance’ by which both may maintain a quality of purification necessary for their participatory functions at the Temple, dictated by the interpellation of centuries of custom and tradition and law.

Something other than *ratio* is at play. Contemporary phenomenology argues that “we do not experience the world as disinterested spectators; we find ourselves *in* it.” Cf. Matthew Ratcliffe, “The Phenomenology of Mood and the Meaning of Life,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*, ed. Peter Goldie (Oxford University Press, 2009), 354. Heidegger himself posits that mood, not mind, is constitutive and consequence of the *relatedness* that Rowan Williams points to above. He writes, in *Being and Time*: “A mood assails us. It comes neither from ‘outside’ nor from ‘inside,’ but arises out of Being-in-the-world, as a way of such Being.” Martin Heidegger, *Being and time.*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962), 176. See also, Ratcliffe, “The Phenomenology of Mood and the Meaning of Life,” 362.

For Henri Le Saux, the “primordial intention”¹⁵⁵ of the Church imitates the performative force of God’s becoming the nothing of the world. “The Church,” writes Le Saux,

is responsible for all before God. This obliges the Church to discover ever new ways for being present in all in the Spirit, and for awakening all human beings to the saving Presence, even if these new ways are apparently not of any benefit to her, that is to say, even if they do not signify any increase in membership of a reinforcement of her reputation in the eyes of the world.¹⁵⁶

Such a responsibility seems to inevitably involve risks of profit, advantage, and sovereign claim. At the heart of this responsibility is a yes/no, a for/against – “newness of life, acceptance, relatedness.” A willingness to risk moving out beyond the law and the prescriptions of the interpellations of a codified faith, and to dispossess any agenda, and to bracket back every distracting equivocation, for the benefit of another, i.e. to assist him or her in the lessening of mal-being in their existence within their worlds. Thus a mother can confess: “The Church teaches us that family is everything. And then the Church tells me that I should abandon my homosexual son. I will not do it!”¹⁵⁷ Thus His Holiness can welcome formally, for the first time, a female Archbishop into the Vatican, who heads the Church of Sweden,¹⁵⁸ which, in turn, openly sanctions marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples.¹⁵⁹ Archbishop Antje Jackelén noted, in turn, that any authentic relatedness has to do with “empowerment rather than power.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ Le Saux, O.S.B. (Abhishiktananda), “The Theology of Presence As a Form of Evangelization in the Context of Non-Christian Religions,” 58.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁵⁷ From a conversation recorded in Rodriguez, *Darling*, 115–16.

¹⁵⁸ “Catholics and Lutherans Looking Ahead to Reformation Anniversary,” *Vatican Radio*, accessed May 11, 2015, http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/05/05/catholics_lutherans_look_ahead_to_reformation_anniversary/1141789.

¹⁵⁹ “Church of Sweden to Conduct Gay Weddings,” *UPI*, accessed May 11, 2015, http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2009/10/22/Church-of-Sweden-to-conduct-gay-weddings/59671256256299/.

Kenosis in the flesh

Such a move involves living into the *kenosis* that is constitutive of an authentic human existence. For Raimon Panikkar, self-emptying cannot be tied to supererogatory status, nor tied to willed humility. *Kenosis* and openness lie at the heart of what it means to be incarnated-into-this-world, what it means to be *flesh*, what it means *to be* human. If kenosis constitutes our very being, then it, at the same time, calls into question the hegemonic claim of one person over the other.

Panikkar thus states:

The *kenosis* of the son of Man is neither his singular privilege, nor did it occur because he was humble: it occurred because he was Man. Moreover, it is perhaps one of the most pregnant manifestations of the human condition. We are all kenotic, emptied of the divinity that is lodged hidden in each one of us; we are all naked, so to speak, without our most authentic clothing. Even though we all have a divine origin and are temples of divinity, we appear, all of us, not only to others but even to ourselves, as mere individual members of a species subject to suffering and death. Jesus did not hide this situation from us—in fact, it is only a divine person who can reveal so much humanity, a humanity brimming with divinity.¹⁶¹

τῆς marks this kenotic center. τῆς welcomes any person into the parable, and calls every human heart into account. The contingency and possibility pregnant in the uncertainty of the τῆς rise up out of the movement and dispossession that lies at the heart of *flesh*. To consider *flesh* is to move into the tidal space between self and world, a place that defies any abstracted and certain delimitation of boundary. *Tidal* denotes an immediate sensible exchange, within which, according to philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, there is reversibility in every look and every touch: there is

¹⁶⁰ “Catholics and Lutherans Looking Ahead to Reformation Anniversary.” See note 158.

¹⁶¹ Panikkar, *Christophany*, 137.

τῆς. A hiatus is bridged through this “possibility for reversion, reconversion,” “transfer, and reversal.”¹⁶² As he is quick to point out, this is not a mere juxtaposition between “the little private world of each”¹⁶³ – but, instead, a kenotic, sacrificial gesture, a navigating across “straits between exterior horizons and interior horizons ever gaping open.”¹⁶⁴ He writes: “I deliver over a part of my body, or even my entire body, to this manner of vibrating and filling space.”¹⁶⁵

This dispossession marks the site of *flesh*, of the *tidal* zone of incarnation, of the point of all contact – and consideration must now turn to *flesh*, and the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and others.

¹⁶² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, 1 edition. (Evanston Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1969), 142.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 132.

¹⁶⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes (Abingdon, UK and New York: Routledge, 2012), 219.

III. FLESH AS ELEMENTAL

THE POLITICS OF FLESH — BIBLICAL CONSIDERATIONS
OF FLESH — BODY AS ABSOLUTE; FLESH AS INTERCORPOREALITY —
'TISSU' AS FIELD AND AS POSSIBILITY — FAITH — PRAYER AND POSSIBILITY —
TO SEEK VS. TO DEFEND, AND THE FREEDOM OF GOD

Body is certitude shattered and blown to bits. Nothing's more proper,
nothing's more foreign to our old world.

— Jean-Luc Nancy¹⁶⁶

[T]he event of being of Being lies in the double sense of the genitive:
the horizon is the opening belonging to Being, but it is also that to
which Being itself belongs. Being is not given as a stable and eternal
structure. Rather, Being gives itself, again and again, in its occurrence.

— Gianni Vattimo¹⁶⁷

The politics of flesh

While Vattimo's commentary on Being uses the later writings of Heidegger¹⁶⁸ as the locus
for his thought, his observation points equally well to the constructive considerations which

¹⁶⁶ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, trans. Richard Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

¹⁶⁷ Vattimo, *After Christianity*, 21.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Alfred Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). Of particular note is his essay, "The Thing" (162-184, esp. 169-172), in which he locates this reoccurrence of being in the outpouring of a jug. Heidegger writes: "How does the jug's void hold? ... The word void holds in a twofold manner: taking and keeping. The word 'hold' is therefor ambiguous... The twofold holding of the void rests on the outpouring. In the outpouring, the holding is authentically how it is. To pour from the jug is to give. The holding of the vessel occurs in the giving of the outpouring" (169)... "The gift of the outpouring is a gift because it stays earth and sky, divinities and mortals. Yet staying is now no longer the mere persisting of something that is here. Staying appropriates. It brings the four into the light of their mutual becoming... This manifold-simple gathering is the jug's presencing. Our language denotes what a gathering *is* by an ancient word. That word is: thing. The jug's presencing is the pure, giving gathering of the onefold fourfold into a single time-space, a single stay" (171).

In his later writings, Heidegger playfully destabilizes the *juris* of esse, and, drawing on his understanding of the Old German *Ding* (172), places gathering at the center of Being's be-coming. Missing from Heidegger's account is the hand which both pours into the jug, and which lifts the jug in its staying act of outpouring. In drawing out the ambiguity of 'hold,' he allows for a certain slippage between action and agency and action and agent: *Das Ding dingt* ("The thing things").

Merleau-Ponty gives to the human activities of seeing and touching, and their flotation back and forth across a chiasmic¹⁶⁹ isthmus he terms *flesh*. Vattimo writes to dislodge Being from the *juris* (laws) of its metaphysical construction, for he fears a perpetual conflict between such a construction and the very reality of the contemporary living experience. He writes: “The pluralistic world in which we live cannot be interpreted by an ideology that wants to unify it at all costs in the name of a sole truth.”¹⁷⁰ Unity, notes Charles Taylor, can be sought with respect to two

Worth of mention in this excursus is the contemporary shift in political philosophy from the nineteenth-century optimistic notion of Realpolitik to, what social theorist and philosopher, Bruno Latour, labels *Dingpolitik*. For his neologism, he obviously borrows from Heidegger, but also keeping in mind Richard Rorty’s critique of Heidegger’s *Ding*. As he puts it, this new sense of political realism, would center on the consideration that “[w]e might be more connected to each other by our worries, our matters of concern, the issues we care for, than by any other set of values, opinions, attitudes or principles... “It’s clear that each object – each issue – generates a different pattern of emotions and disruptions, of disagreements and agreements. There might be no continuity, no coherence in our opinions, but there is a hidden continuity and a hidden coherence in what we are attached to. Each object gathers around itself a different assembly of relevant parties. Each object triggers around itself a different assembly of relevant parties. Each object triggers new occasions to passionately differ and dispute. Each object may also offer new ways of achieving closure without having to agree on much else.” Cf. Bruno Latour, “From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to Make Things Public,” in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, ed. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, English. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 14–15. Latour locates the binding of meaning within the affecting self-monstration of each thing. Meaning thus is generated by the material presence. Merleau-Ponty will construct a relocation of meaning but not will not rely on the material of the thing as locus. Instead he will place it in the event: the intertwining, within the folds of the intercorporeality that binds us to world, and binds meaning up into both.

Respectfully noting the caveat above, Heidegger’s illustration can still be appropriated to the act of navigation and to the mariner, so that he, the mariner, becomes *locus* for staying the fourfold: in holding the provisional bearings – in marking these by a chiasmus, in pencil, on the paper chart – in accounting for a certain ambiguity by drawing a circle of variance around the chiasmic mark – in drawing a vector between the last chiasmus and the present – in extending the vector out, projecting it, in hope, into an unspecified future (for the expanse of a temporary duration to come) – in taking the helm, and turning the wheel – in taking the sheets and trimming the sails – the navigator calls the vessel into a new presence, and in so doing, staying the elements of the wind, the sea, the vessel’s and the crew’s own potentialities into a relation of *true* and accountable meaning. This appropriation bears relevance on the considerations that Merleau-Ponty will place, not on an object, but on the site of *flesh*, which is both the site of incarnation and the incarnated means of all that *comes* to mean, for him, *human*.

¹⁶⁹ Merleau-Ponty appropriates *Chiasmus* (χιασμός), a figure of TRANSPOSITION, from the stylistic phenomena from the classical rhetoric of the Hellenistic Period. Traditionally, notes Galen Rowe, Chiasmus is “a feature of isocolon in which the second of the two coordinate clauses reverses the order of the first.” Isocolon (ισοκωλόν, πάρισον, παρίσωσις, *parimembre*) “consists of the succession of two or more coordinate clauses, which tend to have the same construction and length (measured by number of words or syllables).” Cf. Galen O. Rowe, “Style,” in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C.-A.D. 400*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997), 137. Rowe goes on to give the following example, which contains two chiasmi arranged *chiastically* (i.e. “the order of the second (verb-noun-noun-verb) is the reverse of the first (noun-verb-verb-noun)—ABBA and BAAB.” Thus: “The light of day does not shine, shattered are the rocks; Rent is the veil, the foundations of the earth are shaken.” ἡμέρα [A] ὄν φωτίζεται [B], ῥήγνυντα [B] πέτραι [A] σχίζεται [B] καταπέτασμα [A], τὰ θεμέλια τῆς γῆς [A] σείεται [B]. (Hippol. *Haer.* 18:8:2; trans. from Rowe)

¹⁷⁰ Vattimo, *After Christianity*, 5.

dispositions: “unity-across-difference” or “unity-through-identity.”¹⁷¹ The former is what both Vattimo and Taylor believe to be the *only* possibility. As has been mentioned earlier, this unity is not one found at the end of some juridical or magisterial calculation,¹⁷² but one that must remain neutral and accommodating,¹⁷³ and in so doing bear the contingencies of the manifold Other. Though noble in intention to incarnate “the Christian nature” into “the structures, institutions, and culture” of civilization, writes Taylor, any *Christendom* is, by this very ideology, “in constant danger of turning into a parodic denial of itself.”¹⁷⁴ On principle, Christendom has a difficult time to accept full equality of rights for atheists, for people of a quite alien religion, or for those who violate what seems to be the Christian moral code (e.g., homosexuals).¹⁷⁵ And yet, paradoxically, this very freedom constitutes the *very* meaning – to the Christian – of conversion, of salvation, of love, of hell.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ Charles Taylor, “A Catholic Modernity?,” in *A Catholic Modernity? Charles Taylor’s Marianist Award Lecture, with Responses by William M. Shea, Rosemary Luling Haughton, George Marsden, and Jean Bethke Elshtain*, ed. James Heft (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 14, accessed October 5, 2014, <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10142416>.

¹⁷² See page 17, and Bellarmine’s famous calculus of exclusion. See also, on the same page, Evdokimov’s critical assessment of the Church.

¹⁷³ See pages 36-37. This rests at the core of Taylor’s argument on behalf of the necessities for democracy to truly flourish.

¹⁷⁴ Taylor, “A Catholic Modernity?,” 16.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ For Paul Evdokimov, such equality is contained within God’s gift of the freedom *to move*. Freedom is open: it can into meaning both *in* relation to something as well as *in* opposition. In fact, writes Evdokimov: “The ability to refuse God is the pinnacle of human freedom. Yet it is precisely God, who is limitless Love, who desires that it be this way. God cannot force an atheist to love him.” Cf. Evdokimov, *In the World, of the Church*, 32. Love *forces* a movement beyond *juris* – thus, writes Evdokimov: “On the Cross, it is God against God. He has taken the side of humankind, and has begun our healing” (14).

SALVATION, thus “is not the sentence of a court of law. The verb *yacha* in Hebrew means ‘to have some elbow-room,’ to be at ease”... “The substantive *yécha*, salvation, refers to complete deliverance with peace-*shalom* at the end” (12). For Karl Rahner, it is within this same freedom that *we call* into being *our* several eternity into relation. Rahner writes: “[F]reedom is the capacity for the eternal. If one wants to know what finality is, then he must experience that transcendental freedom which is really eternal because it establishes something final, and in a finality which by its very nature can no longer be other nor wants to be other... Freedom is the *event* of something eternal. But since we ourselves *are still coming to be* in freedom, we do not exist with and behold this eternity, but in our passage through the multiplicity of the temporal *we are performing this event* of freedom, *we are forming the eternity which we ourselves are and are becoming.*” Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 96; emphases added. Evdokimov is in concurrence with this sense of agent and agency, with respect to the hell-side of eternity (Evdokimov, *In the World, of the Church*, 33.)

Biblical considerations of Flesh

At the heart of any consideration of identity, difference, unity, freedom, is the *body* (σῶμα, “soma”), which is, according to Catholic convention, “the most immediate and proximate object of our experience.”¹⁷⁷ But what constitutes ‘body’? Jörg Splett notes, in the entry for “Body,” in *Sacramentum Mundi*, that body manifests a different meaning within the sphere of Semitic mapping, as found in the Tanakh, than in early Christian understandings as evidenced in Paul, and developed later on by the Scholastics. He writes of the body in the Tanakh:

The OT has no special word for the body. The whole man is “flesh” (*bāsār*); but also soul (*nefesh*, i.e. life). And in death the whole man loses his life (in Sheol, there is no thought of God, nor does God think of it, Ps 88).¹⁷⁸

For the material to move it must be called into being by the performative force of the soul.

In Paul, this complementarity is ruptured, and body and soul are placed in dialectic tension:

The σάρξ ([“sarx”,] flesh) constitutes the nature of sinful, doomed man after Adam (e.g. Rom 8:12f.). But it is not simply identical with σῶμα, even though the fleshy condition is most clearly embodied and active in the body (Rom 6:6; 7:23; Col 3:5), which is the visibility of man himself (1 Cor 5:3, 7:15f...). Hence the redemption which St. Paul preaches and hopes for is not [Gnostic] liberation from the σῶμα but its transformation into a ‘pneumatic’ body (1 Cor 15:36f), into the likeness of the resplendent body of Christ (Phil 3:21).

This understanding of flesh is perpetuated throughout the history of the Church, thus allowing Bernard Häring to pronounce moral judgment on *flesh* by means of allusion and distinction.

¹⁷⁷ Circa 1968. Cf. Jörg Splett, “Body,” in *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. 1 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), 233.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

Flesh signifies “the old man of sin” – the “carnal existence” as opposed to “a new and spiritual (*pneumatic*) form of life created and guided by the spirit of God.” This new ‘form,’ is said to be instituted by the spirit, and is initiated by the “conquest” called into being by “conversion,” which, in turn, comes out of a renunciation of the former form of *flesh*.¹⁷⁹ In this understanding, *flesh* is formal: it is carnal and, as consequence, is thus inferred to be something *not* ‘created and guided by the spirit of God.’ It is a site circumscribed by a sinful will: by a choice to turn away from Christ, and from the Truth. *Flesh* marks *un*-principled distance. Conversion¹⁸⁰ constitutes a seemingly once-and-for-all death to the ‘old man.’ Conversion converts the person from one totality¹⁸¹ (carnal, sinful) to another totality (*pneumatic*), and, notes David Tracy, “any totality demands closure.”¹⁸² Closure bars movement; closure bans contingency; conversion, therefore, comes not to denote a navigational turn in response to the contingencies of a reality-in-flux, but rather a re-binding of the individual to a unity-through-a-uniform identity. Existence, therein, does not necessitate responsibility of the human person to the relational *place* (life-ocean) in which she finds herself, but in the prescription of a cultic interpellation of an abstracted *space*. Tracy places totality’s demand against the open category of the Infinite.

¹⁷⁹ Bernhard Häring, C.S.S.R., *The law of Christ; moral theology for priests and laity*, trans. Edwin G. Kaiser, C.P.P.S., vol. 1. General Moral Theology (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1961), 390.

¹⁸⁰ Conversion, in the classic sense, is often described in language that implies a singular *metabola* – like a caterpillar into a butterfly, or from floating on the shifting sea (maritime existence) to standing on a solid shore (terrestrial existence). This is underscored by the “new” form life takes, constructed of the element of spirit versus the element of flesh. Thus the conversion seems to be more radical than merely a substitution of vessels, or nautical charts. Equally important is keeping this sense of conversion with the other sense of conversion presented in the considerations of this paper, where conversion *is* the navigational turn, and conversion *is* wound around each and every new negotiation of the contingencies of life. This conversion points to the flexibility and openness that is constitutive of any effective, safe navigation.

¹⁸¹ Since conversion occasions a complete change of form, then, in the classical sense, the identity of the person would also, as a consequence, change completely. This identity is not constructed under the force of citation and *habitus* associated with contemporary models of performativity.

¹⁸² David Tracy, “Form and Fragment: The Recovery of the Hidden and Incomprehensible God,” in *The Concept of God in Global Dialogue*, ed. Werner G. Jeanrond and Aasulv Lande (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 101.

Body as absolute; Flesh as intercorporeality

Against this sense of flesh and form and life, the phenomenological investigations of Maurice Merleau-Ponty locates *everything* – in the act of inhabiting a *body* – and thus dares to provoke, claiming: “I am the absolute source.”¹⁸³ Against the conventions of Husserlian phenomenological mapping,¹⁸⁴ Merleau-Ponty posits: “Perceptual perspective is not just sensory or intellectual, but *bodily* perspective. We have a world only by having a body.”¹⁸⁵ Conversely, to have a body “means *inhabiting* a world.”¹⁸⁶ This world, he writes, “is not what I think, but what I live [*ce que je vis*]; I am open to the world, I unquestionably communicate with it, but I do not possess it, it is inexhaustible.”¹⁸⁷ ‘I’-as-source can, at the same time, not be ‘I’-as-possessor, if

¹⁸³ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xxii. The obvious question to this pronouncement is—*absolute source of what?!* One critical concern, raised in conversation with Dr. William Cahoy, centers on “absolute.” Dr. Cahoy, asks if this source is, in fact, ‘too absolute? And, if so, how can there still be any openness for the receiving of gift, i.e. anything apart from the source? Taking ‘absolute’ to infer totality, absolute would imply such impossibility. But one can also consider absolute to name an absolute openness, or *permeability*, to borrow an existential disposition from G. Marcel; cf. Gabriel Marcel, “Concrete Approaches to Investigating the Ontological Mystery,” in *Gabriel Marcel’s Perspectives on the Broken World*, trans. Katharine R. Hanley (Milwaukee, WI, USA: Marquette University Press, 1998), accessed November 10, 2014, <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=2001869>. Source so defined would be the source of the possibility of the reception of gift.

Merleau-Ponty’s use of “absolute source” is intentionally provocative. *Source* seems to imply *exclusivity*, in a locative sense, i.e. the radix of for the phenomenological event. For Merleau-Ponty, the perspective is bodily, and everything is constituted and located in an inter-corporeality that comes to be equated with source, and so he seems to place ‘I’ upon this focal point, not unlike a mariner would place an ‘x’ or chiasmus upon the chart denoting the *where* one is. For Merleau-Ponty, the sentient being is irreducibly intertwined with the world; there is no world except through the body, and no body apart from inhabiting the world. Furthermore, by locating the absolute source in the ‘I,’ Merleau-Ponty is grounding all transcendence into a field of enfleshed immanence. Since I cannot escape the world, and the world comes to be through my body, I am the absolute source from the living vantage point of I. I am open to the world, and this openness becomes the absolute source through which all intercorporeality is made possible. Again, one could extend the model of navigation, and draw out a parallel with a sailing vessel interconnected at all times with both the winds (and other elements of the air) and the seas (and any topographical features/impediments, such as reefs).

¹⁸⁴ “[S]omething makes its *appearance* ... [which, in turn,] points back to a being (‘in itself’) which is different from the appearance, while the identity and difference which dominate this combination constitute the very nature and the problem of the [‘something’].” Cf. Karl Lehmann, “Phenomenology,” in *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. 4 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 423.

¹⁸⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xii.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, x.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, xxx–xxxI.

source does not mark *radix* but *nexus*.¹⁸⁸ The human moves within this world, and in movement, the *limes* of the world will never be reached. To be open with this world, to communicate with this world, is to touch *au regard* (“with the look”).¹⁸⁹ For the gaze to be that intimate, “the look is itself incorporation of the seer into the visible, quest for itself, which *is of it*, within the visible.”¹⁹⁰ This incorporation is not “an envelope” of one thing or another, but is in fact “a connective tissue of exterior and interior horizons—it is as flesh offer to flesh that the visible has its aseity.”¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Paul Evdokimov, in his exploration of prayer in the understanding of the Eastern Church, notes that *true prayer* is not a mechanical repetitive reproduction of formulae; true prayer, constant prayer, is rather an existential disposition (“*une attitude constante*”), which is a constitutive spiritual state of human existence. This prayerful state fashions our life into a liturgical living expression (“*un état d’esprit qui façonne liturgiquement tout notre être*”). For this transformation of being to take place: one has to *be* prayer, not simply to *have* prayer and the accompanying rules, rubric, and habit (“*/// Il ne suffit pas d’avoir la prière, de posséder les règles ou l’habitude, il faut devenir, être la prière incarnée.*”) Cf. Evdokimov, *La Prière de l’Eglise d’Orient: La Liturgie Byzantine de Saint Jean Chrysostome*, 24. Evdokimov stresses the difference between *having* (possession of object) and *being* (dispossession for purposes of metanoia). *Being* for Evdokimov, as for Merleau-Ponty marks a site for existence.

¹⁸⁹ Remigius C. Kwant, *From Phenomenology to Metaphysics: An Inquiry into the Last Period of Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophical Life* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1966), 51. Cf. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible; suivi de notes de travail*, ed. Claude Lefort (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 173. Merleau-Ponty avers that in the very palpating of the visible with our regard (“*le palpant du regard*”), we, in fact, our ‘regard’ clothes the visible with its own flesh (“*habille de sa chair*”). This immanence cannot be left. To be alive is to be embedded, inhabiting, immersing, always, in the flesh from which and of which we and our world come be; this regard or gaze or look connects each of us perpetually to our world, in our actively being caught up in it, through our *enfleshed*, yet ever-unfolding and enveloping unity.

¹⁹⁰ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 131. See also, the French original, Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible; suivi de notes de travail*, 173. In this all importance gloss/excursus at the bottom of the page, Merleau-Ponty refers to this incorporation “*du voyant au visible*” as being constitutively “*qui ENEST, dans le visible.*” The Northwestern edition translates this *ENEST* as “*is of it.*” Kwant’s exploration of *J’en suis* in the second chapter, argues for more a sense of *belonging to*, than simply *being of*. Cf. Kwant, *From Phenomenology to Metaphysics: An Inquiry into the Last Period of Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophical Life*, chap. 2. In the unfolding of Merleau-Ponty’s statement, there is a sense of an interconnectedness that implies union in such a way as to never allow for any being apart. One could read, within this intertwining, a parallel performative to that which is found in the opening verse to the prologue of John: Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. (“In [the] beginning, there was the Logos, and the Logos was towards the God, and the Logos was God;” Jn 1:1.)

¹⁹¹ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 131. In the original French, Merleau-Ponty uses alliteration to push forward a performative sense of the intertwining that runs through the very in-corporation of ipseity and aseity through *flesh*. He writes – “*le monde, la chair non comme fait our somme de faits, mais comme lieu d’une inscription de vérité: le faux barré, non annulé.*” Thus masculine world/locative (*monde*) becomes interposed by/transfigured with feminine flesh/locative (*chair*); and *comme* (as, like, analogous to) moves into *somme* (total of) and back into *comme* (analogous); and the feminine truth (*vérité*) comes to be, in the very living-into-through the γραφή – the masculine false struck through, and left relationally in tact (*faux barré*), and not done away with and cancelled out (*annulé*). Cf. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible; suivi de notes de travail*, 173.

In this later writing, Merleau-Ponty, not unlike Heidegger with his later works, is striving to create a *weak* claim to a truth, all the while understanding that language by its very nature separates this *enfleshed* relatedness into separated essences (Cf. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xxix.) For he understands that: “if one has received [the visible], one knows all there is to know, and of which in the end there is nothing to say.” To *fix* it – to *penetrate* it – will lead to an attempt to dominate it; but in so doing, argues Merleau-Ponty, the dominating gesture, in the attempt to seize, causes it to break from this intimate relation and to seemingly flee, depart and to remove itself back into, what he terms, an “atmospheric existence.” (Cf. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 131–32. For the French, see Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible; suivi de notes de travail*, 173–74.) The force of the attempt will cancel truth, for it will disturb the fragility of the participation, the communion. This fragility also rests at

In this regard—world, person, flesh—become as one unity: “not as fact or sum of facts, but as the locus of an inscription of truth: the false crossed out, not nullified.” This unity is not unlike the chiasmi¹⁹² and vectors that crisscross the nautical chart, which, in their touch, trace a relational existence of a singular (mariner, vessel) through the negotiated place (world), which never once leaves (or even can ever leave) the thickness of the flesh of the being-in-and-of-and-through-the-world. The marks mean nothing in and of themselves. Their γραφαί (markings) tattoo the contours of a being: that navigation across territory, and another navigation through the locus of truth, between interior and exterior horizons, without end whilst alive.

For Merleau-Ponty, such navigation cannot come from abstraction or *a priori* absolutes. Such knowing must start with attentiveness to the Real (all that is perception) before one, and in which one, is caught up in embodiment. Such knowing finds its locus “in experiences that have not yet been ‘worked over’ [*travaillées*], that offer us all at once, pell-mell [*pêle-mêle*], both ‘subject’ and ‘object’”¹⁹³—intertwined in the *flesh* of the situation and in intimate touch with one another. In this encounter, in which existence cannot be pulled from essence, philosophy is given again the means “to redefine them.”¹⁹⁴ Thus within the very experience, the life’s newness contains the gifts of the bearings which, in turn, allow for the navigational relationship to be *re*-constructed and for

the heart of what he posits is a touch predicated on “zero pressure”(148). This condition is elaborated on in the following pages. Merleau-Ponty is touching upon the unity, that cannot be seen, but from which all similarity and all difference issues forth.

¹⁹² See note 169, re: Chiasmus.

¹⁹³ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 130. See also Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible; suivi de notes de travail*, 172.

¹⁹⁴ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 130.

the tack to be *re*-claimed. The potency of all of this, according to philosopher Remy Kwant, rests in the declarative: *J'en suis* (“I belong to it.”).¹⁹⁵

‘Tissu’ as field and as possibility

Such a relatedness strikes fear in apologists and thinkers who “want to speak in an exact manner,” because: (1) such “notions” can come to “mean many things,”¹⁹⁶ and (2) because the “visible reality,” that an occurrence of a color may point to, is never anything more than “a momentary crystallization of colored and visible Being.” In attending to the contingent colors, one is apt “to think and speak about isolated colors”¹⁹⁷ – in abstract and in absolutes – at the cost of the real *field*. In this field, in the ‘in-betweens’ and in the surrounds of all supposed visibles (“*visibles prétendus*”), one re-encounters “*le tissu*” (tissue) that is not itself a thing (“*chose*”) but is, in fact, that which is the *flesh of things* (“*chair des choses*”) and possibility.¹⁹⁸ Flesh constitutes a continuation, in which, as Regimus Kwant summarizes:

The body is part of a perceptible reality and, at the same time, unites itself with it. We must reject the old prejudices, according to which the world enters into the body, according to which seeing is an activity which would take place within the body. There is no clear boundary between the perceiving body and the world, for the world is the continuation of our own visibility, of our own ‘flesh.’ The body is not ‘in’ the world, neither is the world ‘in’ the body. These overly material expressions make us blind to the essential togetherness and mutual

¹⁹⁵ Kwant, *From Phenomenology to Metaphysics: An Inquiry into the Last Period of Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophical Life*, chap. 2, 44–46.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁹⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l’invisible; suivi de notes de travail*, 175.

participation of body and world.¹⁹⁹

Thus for Merleau-Ponty, at the very heart of being is Flesh. Flesh is elemental (cf. John 1:14). But as Kwant's summary points to, such Flesh is not an exclusive human reality, nor does it belong to the realm outside the human subject. Rather, it is elemental insofar as it is "*un même*" in which all ipseities and all aseity is caught up, and from which all difference discovers its difference and divergence.²⁰⁰

This invisible holds onto its invisibility, even as it holds all that is visible into a field of immanent, intimate, immediate relatedness. This synthesis for Merleau-Ponty is temporal in both its gesture and its synthesis, and, as such, must forever be renewed.²⁰¹ But the impulse for this renewing of relatedness does not necessarily rest in the *will* of the perceiver. Movement can be ushered by the unanchored ambiguous of the unfamiliar. Merleau-Ponty thus describes the City of Light:

For me, Paris is not a thousand-sided object or a collection of perceptions, nor for that matter the law of all of these perceptions. Just as a human being manifests the same affective essence in his hand gestures, his gait, and the sound of his voice, each explicit perception in my journey through Paris – the cafés, the faces, the poplars along the quays, the bends of the Seine – is cut out of the total being of Paris, and only serves to confirm a certain style or a certain sense of Paris. And when I arrived there for the first time, the first streets that I saw upon leaving the train station were – like the first words of a stranger – only manifestations of a still ambiguous, though already incomparable, essence... Ambiguous perceptions are the only ones to emerge as explicit acts... ones that respond to questions that we pose.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Kwant, *From Phenomenology to Metaphysics: An Inquiry into the Last Period of Merleau-Ponty's Philosophical Life*, 59. Cf. Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible; suivi de notes de travail*, 182.

²⁰⁰ Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible; suivi de notes de travail*, 184.

²⁰¹ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 247–48.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 293–94.

For the perceptions of the person to enter a sort of colloquy with the one perceiving them into being, they must *be*, according to Merleau-Ponty, in a state of dislodgement, possessing the character of *being* ambiguous or unfamiliar. The familiar seems to be too familiar to be easily attended to – one passes over such things, *taking them for givens* i.e. a priori. Thus the mariner, arriving at an unfamiliar shore, arrives into an enigma, in which the ability to relax into the affectivity of the flesh is stilted in fragmented response. The same comes into being when the familiar shore is made unfamiliar by the contingency of fog or nightfall. In fact, night, for Merleau-Ponty, is when the “clear and articulated” is “abolished,” and our being “sketches out a spatiality without things.” Night is no object, writes Merleau-Ponty; “rather, it envelops me, it penetrates me through all of my senses, it suffocates my memories, and it all but effaces my personal identity... The night is without profiles, it itself touches me and its unity is the mystical.”²⁰³ But the night, it must be noted is not *nihil*. And, in surrounding the person, it is unable to efface completely identity (cf. Jn 1:5). An open-ness always seems to remain.

For Merleau-Ponty, the person is always “in the plenum and in being.”²⁰⁴ Therefore, freedom is “to be simultaneously born of the world and to be born into the world. The world is already always constituted, but also never completely constituted. In the first relation we are solicited, in the second we are open to an infinity of possibilities.”²⁰⁵ Thus, *I am the source*’s not a statement of fixity, but merely a crystalized confession of an intuition – in passing – of the underlying chiasm that marks the present locative along a transit.

²⁰³ Ibid., 296.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 478.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 480.

Faith

For Merleau-Ponty, faith *is* faith precisely “because it is the possibility of doubt,”²⁰⁶ and never is an encounter a message (which, if received, sums up an “all there is to know”). A particular Red, for example, is dependent on its nexus, connecting place, not only with all other possible reds, but also, according to Paul Claudel, with “that certain blue of the sea [that] is so blue that only blood would be more red.”²⁰⁷ There is in Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the reverse, an unpredictability, and an acceptance of this, that constitutes any venture of *ek*-sistence,²⁰⁸ of moving out from the domain of ego and certitude, and into “the movement which leads back without ceasing from knowledge to ignorance, from ignorance to knowledge, and a kind of rest in this movement.”²⁰⁹

Thus, faith is made manifest *in the flesh*. This flesh, this style, this chiasm: the touching and the look: is not to be misconstrued as being a simple act, but rather exists as “a being at (*être à*).”²¹⁰ Any meaning is invisible, and reveals itself only within the visible: “one cannot see it there and every effort to *see it there* makes it disappear, but it is *in the line* of the visible”—“it is inscribed within it (in filigree).”²¹¹ Θεὸν οὐδεις πώποτε τεθέαται· ἐὰν ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, ὁ Θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν μένει καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη αὐτοῦ τετελειωμένη ἐν ἡμῖν ἐστίν (1 Jn 4:12).²¹² The revelation is within the heart, through

²⁰⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 103.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

²⁰⁸ Nb.— The “*ek*” signifies the etymological thrust behind the word. In Greek, ἐκ signifies “forth.”

²⁰⁹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, ed. John Wild and James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963), 5.

²¹⁰ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 249.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 215.

²¹² “No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.” (NRSV)

the interlacing of ἀγάπη (self-emptying, self-extending love). Against “examinations of the significations” that would leave us with a totality, “reduced to our idealizations and our syntax,”²¹³ the disposed chiasm seeks an open-ended-ness that strives to maintain permeability to a temporal style that “remains the same because the past is a previous future and a recent present, the present is an impending past and a recent future, and finally, the future is a present and even a past to come.”²¹⁴ This style is fragile, because, at any moment, it can slip. Style can become *adéquation*²¹⁵ (adequacy). It can be calculated, determined, set off, bracketed for mimetic purposes. It can then be re-duplicated, again and again, and eventually turned into an ideology.²¹⁶ Style, when authentic,

²¹³ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 102.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 445.

²¹⁵ Cf. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*. In the 1969 translation, the word *adéquation* is transliterated “adequation,” and not translated as “adequacy” in the conventional manner, so as to convey, it seems, the verbal sense of the making-adequate the mind and the thing, which is the result from both the processes of realism and idealism.

²¹⁶ *Adéquation*-into-Ideology – this lies at the heart of Wittgenstein’s warning about the general form of propositions. Citing *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 4.5 – “The general form of propositions is: this is how things are” – Wittgenstein, in no. 114, *Philosophical Investigations*, notes: “That is the kind of proposition that one repeats to oneself countless times.” Cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. (Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret) Anscombe, 3d ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), 48e. Cf. page 21, re: Judith Butler’s complementary notions of *performativity* and *sedimentation*. Wittgenstein goes on to claim that whilst one confidently believes “that one is tracing the outline of the thing’s nature over and over again,” instead “one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it” (no. 114). At odds is a classic problem of figure/ground. The proclaimer of the general form uses a word (“knowledge” “being” “object” “I” “proposition” “name”) in order “to try to grasp the *essence* of the thing” (no. 116), and yet can never “get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably” (no. 115). We are, for Wittgenstein, “held captive” by this – *Ein Bile hielt uns gefangen* (no. 115). For Wittgenstein, one *must always* ask, regarding language: “[I]s the word ever actually used in this way in the language-game which is its original home?” Thus, the goal of such inquiry: to destroy “houses of cards” and to be constantly “clearing up the ground of language” (no. 118). At the heart of Wittgenstein’s critical engagement with language in general, and with the language of the philosophers in particular, is an appreciation for the nihilistic confrontation, and the need to actively address the confrontation. There is never an absolute, an eternal *a priori*. Only *there, right then*, does “This is here”—make any sense or hold any significance (no. 117). *Life flows*. And the coordinates on the chart, and the coordinates of the language-game, must always be re-negotiated in the here-and-now of existence.

The inescapable *Flesh* of Merleau-Ponty’s chiasmic matrix bears a strong semblance to the Wittgenstein’s ‘picture’ from which we can never disentangle. These posited states can be further related to Rahner’s sense of *the* Mystery – for which we are created as human beings, and against which appears everything that will ever appear, from which we can never consciously separate, which is literally all around, beyond our capacity of being conscious, and yet from which all that we are ever conscious of springs.

Paul Evdokimov, in writing of the Eucharist, makes an important distinction between the *physical* and the (literally) *metaphysical*. Unlike at Cana, where water-into-wine was still *of* the same nature of this world (“*toujours de la même nature de ce monde*”), the Eucharist marks a site and an event through which material of this world metamorphosizes into a reality not of this world (“*Dans l’eucharistie, le pain et le vin, matière de ce monde se métamorphosent en une réalité qui n’est plus de ce monde*”). The miracle at Cana is “*physique*.” The miracle of the Eucharist event is “*métaphysique*” – causing not a transformation of the limits of this world, but a unique coincidental co-existent change in the relation between transcendent and immanent. Because of the unique and

does not adopt the posture of a rival to the world; the flesh *is* the relation: it is “the sole means” by which the person can “go unto the heart of things,” and making herself “a world,” make, in turn, the things at the heart of things turn into flesh.²¹⁷ The person-as-body-interposed becomes a persistence disposed to being permeable. The reversibility is not forced upon the encounter; the reversibility occurs within the “zero pressure” that allows for two elements “to adhere to one another.”²¹⁸ The heart of this chiasm is a *serpentelement* (winding) in which we allow ourselves to be had, according to Merleau-Ponty, by that which is not us: “the things have us,” “language has us,” and, thus, it is “being that speaks within us and not we who speak of being.”²¹⁹

extraordinary excess of this event-ing, it exceeds the physical, and appears as non-apparent according to the limits of human apprehension. Cf. Evdokimov, *La Prière de l'Église d'Orient: La Liturgie Byzantine de Saint Jean Chrysostome*, 73–74. For Evdokimov, this “*antinomie eucharistique*” crucifies our reason (“*raison*”), radically altering the ‘law of identity’ without any apparent destruction (“*elle dépasse la loi de l'identité sans la détruire*”). If one extrapolates this nuanced understanding of physical/visible and metaphysical /invisible to the matrices of Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty, and Rahner, one can begin to grasp how these matrices operate *beyond* the apparent, for the apparent is founded upon the beyond-apparent. This will become important in Section V, in the discussion of the anonymous ode (cf. 79 *passim*).

‘Horizon,’ ‘Flesh’ and ‘Picture’ are suggestive at best, in trying to chart that which is, essentially, unapparent. Like a fix taken on a nautical chart, the intersection of two or more vectors circumscribed by a small circle hand-drawn to graphically confess approximation and inherent variance and error, these ‘names’ strive to push the limits of awareness asymptotically toward a revelatory event. This event affects the *physique*, gives shape and change to the *physique*, but the structure and the metanoia exists, but appears unapparent in its totality and the fullness of its effect, as essentially *métaphysique*.

The *métaphysique* is – according to its very name – *beyond*. Hence the fuzziness with *physical* terms naming the ‘beyond-physical.’ The chiasmus is not a conclusion; nor is it a point of departure; it is a convenience (a name, an appropriated term) that gives place to a *nexus*, a fix, approximate and provisional in its specificity, and yet inescapably present, at all times, as essential to the constitution of an existence (re: person). The chiasmus extends between interior and exterior, visible and invisible, extrinsic and intrinsic, self and world, between present and past. It is not a singular field but a matrix of fields that move out, and move in, allowing the unfolding of the singular, against the plurality of other singulars, all of which never escape the Infinite (viz. the One, the Life, God). Thus the chiasmus cannot be thought of as ‘release,’ nor as ‘return,’ but only as ‘release/return,’ locating existence in the very activity of the intertwining, itself an expression of the constant navigation of the waters churned up by the inherent nihilistic condition of existing.

²¹⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 135–36.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 148.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 194.

Prayer and possibility

Such a notion cuts to the heart of prayer. Prayer, for Walter Kasper, is a means of opening up room within oneself, to become permeable, and “makes room for God to be Lord and to act.”²²⁰ This chiasm is not visible in any form but allows for the *sfumato*,²²¹ the blurring, which theologian Kathryn Tanner, claims is often “a primary gambit,” when “the plasticity of human lives” opens up to the divine.²²² “God,” she writes, “is incomprehensible, beyond human powers of positive explication through concepts and speech, because God is without limits or bounds.”²²³ The human person blurs the solidity of their self-conception, and, in blurring, becomes “in a sense unlimited,” so as to be able to participate in the very becoming of *imitatio* of the divine, which is unlimited and inclusive in the bestowing of its love and grace and the affecting virtues.²²⁴ For Tanner, the human is plastic and flexible, and is susceptible to being shaped and re-shaped by outside forces.²²⁵ For Merleau-Ponty, this is only half of the movement. As mentioned above, the chiasmus marks the straits which are crossed and re-crossed between horizons of exterior and interior possibility. Thus the shaping and re-shaping betrays a *melée*, a movement constantly found within this intertwining and intertwined unity. And this occurrence is grounded on the presupposition that its very ground

²²⁰ Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 141.

²²¹ One of the four classical methods of Renaissance painting. *Sfumato* involves a “smoky” presentation of form, through the use of mid-tones that are blurred by admixtures of white or black, and, in turn, blur across sharp distinctions of line and the modeling of light and shadow.

²²² Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 51.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 52–53.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 40–41.

can vary.²²⁶ Man cannot be “absolutely good or absolutely bad,” because, according to Merleau-Ponty, he can never be “sincere, for sincerity supposes a definite nature which one can assess without ambiguity.”²²⁷ And ambiguity is that opening force which allows Being to forever come to *be* along the chiasmus.²²⁸

To seek vs. to defend, and the freedom of God

In 1946, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who had counted himself as one of the New Catholic Left in France, who had been tortured as a member of the Resistance, who had watched the Church turn on his movement, writes:

Above all, historical Catholicism is not merely a certain number of texts nor a sum of individuals; *it is a machine*, an institution or a movement with an over-all logic, which is unquestionably operating in a reactionary direction despite certain texts and individuals’ sentiments, or even with the help which these create.²²⁹

For the Jesuit philosopher Frans Vandebussche, the areligious philosophy which sprung from this suspicion became a gift to theology in the end, for it contains at its core a warning against “a God of human dimensions.”²³⁰ Such a God is nothing more than “an ideological structure,” forever

²²⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 292.

²²⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “Faith and Good Faith (1946),” in *Signs*, trans. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 176.

²²⁸ See note 159, re: Chiasmus.

²²⁹ Merleau-Ponty, “Faith and Good Faith (1946),” 172. (Emphasis added.) See Tillich, note 18; and Evdokimov’s historical reflection attached to note 45.

²³⁰ Frans Vandebussche, “The Problem of God in the Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (1967): 59.

trapped within an all-too-human “crystal-clear idea of the world,” itself entombed in “a thought world—*la pensée du monde*.”²³¹

In 1953, accepting the chair of philosophy at the Collège de France, Merleau-Ponty avers : *C'est n'est pas la même chose, c'est presque le contraire de comprendre la religion et de la poser.*²³²

God is not to be found in reified projections, but in William James' “word of the street.”²³³

Lamenting no modern day St Thomas, St Anselm, or Descartes, Merleau-Ponty notes in the same address: “[T]o philosophize is to seek, and this is to imply that there are things to see and to say.

Well, today we no longer seek. We ‘return’ to one or the other of our traditions and ‘defend’ it.

Our convictions are founded less on perceived values and truths than on the vices and errors of those we do not like.”²³⁴ Finally, he cites Jacques Maritain's ironic pronouncement of the saint as

“a complete atheist” to a God-as-guarantor of all the world, wherein “slavery, injustice, the tears of children, the agony of the innocent” are justified as “sacred necessities.”²³⁵ Against such casuistry,

Merleau-Ponty goes on to point to the One whom he would be moved to consider the God of Jesus

Christ, the One “ who redeems the world and is accessible to prayer,” the One who is “the active negation of all this.”²³⁶In this negation, God is freed by us to be able to move, and in moving to be

God. Such an apophatic declaration is in effect a confession against the inclination of perspectivism, and in so being, prevents the noun-ing of God, and his entrapment “under some descript-

²³¹ Ibid., 54–55. This is echoed in the remarks of Karl Rahner on Idea versus Reality, quoted in note 338.

²³² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Éloge de la philosophie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1953), 62. Remy Kwant's paraphrase of this sentence is particularly interesting, in its nuanced understanding of the verb *poser*. Thus, the sentence reads: “[T]o understand religion and to accept it are not the same but almost opposites.” Remigius C. Kwant, *The Phenomenological Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1963), 136.

²³³ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Modern Library, 1955), 509. Quoted in John Wild and James M. Edie, preface to Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, xiii.

²³⁴ Merleau-Ponty, *In Praise of Philosophy*, 41.

²³⁵ Ibid., 46–47.

²³⁶ Ibid., 46–47.

ion.”²³⁷ In this negation, God is free, and we are free to go out and to seek the intimate immanence of the Invisible, along the contours of the chiasmus that marks our own presence.

In the *release/return* at the heart of the chiasmic occurrence is the gifting of a new, transformative sense of flesh: constantly excessive, in its incarnational calling-into-presence. Merleau-Ponty has mapped the means of return by which Maritain’s saint need no longer adopt the stance of a complete atheist, and by which the true atheist need not pretend otherwise. He has marked the dual relations of the cyclical re-birthing – to the world, of the world – and has located, in the interstitial in-between, the grace of endless possibilities, as relatedness to and with the world, and is so re-formed.

²³⁷ Cf. Thomas, S. th., I, q. 13, a. 1.

IV.
GOD: 'BEYOND' ALL/IMMANENT TO ALL

INVISIBILITY THROUGH LANGUAGE AND SILENCE –
 T AS IMAGE: AN INCOMPREHENSIBILITY: OF GOD/OF OTHER/OF SELF –
 BEYOND TEXT-FOR-TEXT – ANONYMOUS: ODE TO THE ONE –
 INFINITE SPHERE : A NEW COSMOLOGY – DISTURBING SILENCES –
 THE NONBIOLOGICAL: LIFE, IPSEITY, GOD – IMMANENCE, SUFFERING, AND JOY –
 MERCY: COMMUNION – LIFE, MEMORY, AND THE RETURN –
 BEFORE GOD, WITH GOD, WITHOUT GOD –
 TAKING LEAVE, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT: A VERWINDUNG

གཏིག་གཏིག་སྐྱོ་སྐྱོ་གཏིག་གཏིག་སྐྱོ་སྐྱོ་

“Gone, Gone, gone beyond, gone completely beyond, enlightenment.”

– Heart-Sutra Mantra²³⁸

Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε.

“No one has ever seen God.” – Jn 1:18

He said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.

— 1 Kg 19:11-12

²³⁸ The Tibetan cited is a transliteration of the original Sanskrit: *tadyatha om gate gate paragate parasamgate Bodhi svaha*. Cf. Donald S. Lopez, *Elaborations on Emptiness: Uses of the Heart Sutra* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 109. The significance from this compact construct, from an already terse sutra, bears some consideration, as it will lend comparative interest to the anonymous hymn to appear later on in this section. Two Indian commentators, Srimahajana and Vajrapani, “writing at a time when tantric Buddhism was in full flower,” give particularly helpful insight.

SRIMAHAJANA notes that the mantra calls forth a series of “GONE.” The first “gone” marks a departure from “the state of worldly being;” the second indicates a move toward the spiritual; the “gone beyond” is the going from the accumulation of spiritual knowledge “to the path of seeing,” at the end of which “emptiness is seen directly for the first time” and “destroying the seeds for future rebirth as an animal, hungry ghost, or hell being.” Finally, the “gone completely gone,” is paradoxical, because there is nowhere further to go, and thus indicates the release, and the abiding in this seeing (111). This sense of relaxing into the process is analogous to the navigational journey, and the “rest in the movement” that Merleau-Ponty calls attention to on page 57 (see note 195).

VAJRAPANI comments on the “outer secret mantra” and the “inner secret mantra,” and how the latter “teaches the bliss of body and mind in dependence on the channels, winds, and so forth.” Again, one can draw a comparison with Merleau-Ponty’s chiasmus, the chiasmus being like the mantra, marking the straits between the inner horizons and the outer horizons and the *flesh* that touches all and calls all into being. Thus, for Vajrpani, mindfulness becomes negated, by going into illusions, which become negated, by going into emptiness, which becomes negated by going into “singleness.” It is abiding in the “singleness,” that “one transcends awareness”—and becomes enlightened (112). Again, this complements Michel Henry’s understanding of movement from a phenomenology of the world, to one of Life, which rests in the Ipseity, which is Logos—Life—and—ultimately—God.

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

— Ps 19:1-4

Invisibility through language and silence

In poetic antimony, the Scriptures declare that God waits in the invisibility and in the silence, and is proclaimed by the cosmos, which, by being cosmos, communicates in a language that defies, in its essence, any analogy of any strength to the languages that are fashioned and manipulated by man. And yet words are created to make noise everyday, in order to conjure and communicate convictions and circumscriptions, which form the *limes* that bind families, and tribes, and congregations, and nations together, and set such in opposition to others. Language serves as the conduit for human construct. It is the cause behind all things political and all things conceptual, and is the means which binds both categories to *juris* (law). *Juris*, in turn, comes as a consequence of *limes* – of lines and boundaries, which can be drawn around that which is to be protected, quarantined, examined, excluded, included, favored, rejected, i.e. is finite, in the end, and can be counted, and known, and regulated. If the human sciences are singularly human, i.e. human of origin and performance, and derive all ultimate value from such, then language becomes the ultimate means of measurement and of knowing. Humanist anthropology becomes, as notes Jean-Luc Marion, a circle – of a man by a man on man himself.²³⁹

²³⁹ Cf. Jean-Luc Marion, “Mihi Magna Quaestio Factus Sum: The Privilege of Unknowing,” *Journal of Religion* 85, no. 1 (January 2005): 1–24. Nb.— It is the intention of this author to use the gender-specific language employed by Marion, in his article, to highlight the *alienation* at the heart of the enterprise. The very use of *man* causes, by its essential determination, a separation into existence, one which employs *limes* (boundaries), and by its selection-process begins the calculus of *juris* (laws). For the implications of such, see pages 16-21.

Marion points to Kant's declaration that man, though "only one of all the creatures of the earth" and because of his faculty of reason, "serves particularly to be named *knowledge of the world*." He is "his own ultimate purpose."²⁴⁰

To achieve this purpose, he takes up language to fashion for himself a household, a marketplace, a nation, and a system. Into each of these are placed objects (inanimate, animate, human), by an agent, the core of which constitutes a presence, the *I*, which cannot be contained, nor arrived at, through the processes of knowing an object. The ability to make political proscriptions rests on the capacity of a person to mistake a circumscribable *me* for the *uncircumscribable I*. This mistake arises, for Marion, from the claim of a person to be able "to define (scientifically or ideologically) the humanity of a man [or woman]."²⁴¹ Marion goes on to argue that "every *de-finition* imposes on the human being a finite essence, following from which it always becomes possible to delimit what deserves to remain human from what no longer does."²⁴² This imposition becomes possible when the human person places his or herself (and, by extension, religion, culture, language, politics, system) at the center of the source of all referentiality, to the exclusion of the same claim for center by another.

²⁴⁰ Immanuel Kant and Victor Lyle Dowdell, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, vol. (Ak. 8:119) (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 3; quoted in Marion, "Mihi Magna Quaestio Factus Sum," 2–3.

²⁴¹ Marion, "Mihi Magna Quaestio Factus Sum," 13.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 14. Such a delimitation must find *just* cause as something neutral, freed from subjectivity, and thus transcendent. Marion writes that "in order to kill a human being, it is necessary to have the permission to kill. But in order to have that, it is first necessary to be able to deny to such and such a human being (the well-named "So and So") his or her face and thus his or her humanity; and one gets there by defining and comprehending humanity through concepts, by fixing its limits and, in this way, discovering the one who cannot claim humanity, and thus can or ought to die." Mario-Andreas von Lüttichau maps such a process of *juris*, in his writing of the development of the pathology behind concept of *Entartung* (Degeneration); cf. Mario-Andreas von Lüttichau, "'Crazy at Any Price': The Pathologizing of Modernism in the Run-up to the 'Entartete Kunst' Exhibition in Munich in 1937," in *Degenerate Art: The Attack on Modern Art in Nazi Germany, 1937*, ed. Olaf Peters (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2014), 36–51. He notes, that in mid-nineteenth century France, *dégénéré* was employed by a director of a mental asylum "with a normative and systematic intention to distinguish his patients from 'normal' people" (40). This association of the threat of de-generation with culture was developed by Max Nordau, in his two-volume work entitled *Entartung* (publ. 1896), in which he linked libertine authors and artists with "criminals, prostitutes, anarchists and pronounced lunatics" and for which he argued containment and eradication (41). The irony was that he himself was the victim of such delimitation by anti-Semites (Nordau being a Jew), and eventually became a Zionist (42). The Nazis would later appropriate his writings, and use their argument: not only to justify censorship of the arts and literature, but also to justify the extermination of the mentally ill, the sexually 'deviant,' and European Jewry and other marginalized peoples.

T'as image: an incomprehensibility { *of God*
of other
of self

To claim there to be the One, separate from Man, and the Source of all coming into being, including man, is to destabilize the legitimacy of such imposition, for in claiming there to be such a One, the human person must essentially relinquish the center. Such is the traditional Christian understanding of human anthropology: that all human persons are made, by God, in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26), and thus share in an irreducible inheritance. “By right,” writes Marion, “man [or woman] resembles nothing, because he [or she] resembles nothing other than the One who is properly characterized by incomprehensibility.”²⁴³ Marion thus locates humanity in the inability to be contained by concept or reduction. To love is to affirm this inability. Marion posits:

I can only love (the contrary of killing) another that, precisely, I do not know, at least in the sense of being able to comprehend him or her as an object and define him or her by a concept. I can only love him who remains for me without definition, and only for as long as he thus remains, which is to say as long as I will not have finished with him.²⁴⁴

In loving through the incomprehensibility of the other, the person affirms the incomprehensibility reflected within the humanity of the other: the overarching incomprehensibility that calls into being the character of the One, which no one has seen, which can only be told of and proclaimed wholly by the infinite extensions of the cosmos which extend in their entirety beyond the foreshortened understandings of the human mind caught up in the false sense of an ahistorical identity. In the silence rests the infinity of possible doxologies. In the silence, all are equal, and all come into value.

²⁴³ Marion, “Mihi Magna Quaestio Factus Sum,” 15–16.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

Through the invisibility of the *flesh*, across the straits of the chiasmus, all come into correlation, and the delimitations of interior/exterior, generate/degenerate, and all other dyadic asymmetries of determination are bracketed back.

Beyond text-for-text

Language works best in the confession. For Marion, a *theo*-logian must fashion for the church a hermeneutic that does not lose itself aiming at circular pursuits of the text-for-text, but which redirects its aim “through the text, at the event, the referent.”²⁴⁵ That said, a hermeneutic can only shine light on a textual meaning; it can only call attention to the gap, between the historical, “foreclosed” event and the present moment. All hermeneutics, in the end, confess the “babble” inherent in human words, underscoring the constant fact that the sacred text “does not offer the original of faith, because it does not constitute its origin.”²⁴⁶ Christ “abolishes in himself the gap;” he “says *himself* the Word”²⁴⁷—a living utterance that exhausts itself absolutely in its unspeakable presencing all that was given: spoken of the Father, by the Father, and “in return to

²⁴⁵ Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being: Hors-Texte* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 148. Marion spends time throughout the article italicizing ‘theology’ as ‘*theology*’ versus ‘*theology*’ to indicate two different weights to the study of God: the former: using Christ as its theologian-exemplar, and the eucharistic moment as its fulcrum, so as to orient all thought toward the God, who strikes out the vowel within His Name, “who strikes out and crosses out every divine idol, sensible or conceptual” (139); and, the latter: loosing itself in linguistic and exegetical acrobatics for its own object. Marion employs the stern pronouncement of Gregory of Nazianzus (cf., *Orations*, XXXI, 8, P.G. 36, 141b): “Some [theologians] cause trouble as if we were introducing a foreign God added by a fraud of writing [παρέγγραπτον] and battle exclusively over the letter, may they know, may they ‘fear there where there is no place to fear’ (Psalm 14:5), because their love of the letter is but the mask of their impiety” (translation is from *God without Being*, 148).

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 140.

the Father.”²⁴⁸ This Word, beyond words, which Marion names the “Said of God,” no one can hear, no one can comprehend in its absolute sonorousness. For Marion, it becomes known only by an act, where the Word in person, silently, speaks and blesses.”²⁴⁹ Marion draws from the scene on the road to Emmaus, in Luke 24, his paradigm for the structure of this eucharistic moment. Marion notes that when “the Word interprets [literally] in person,” when he breaks bread and gives thanks (Luke 24:30), the text gives way to the nontextual referent, and the Word disappears in the disciples’ sensible awareness. Marion pushes this disappearance further: he posits that it is, in fact, the disciples and not the Word who disappear; they are assimilated “into the place of the Word,” and are changed, redirected—“like him, they go up to Jerusalem” (Luke 24:33). What is important is the gesture beyond words, that cannot be misappropriated or easily circumscribed, because of its movement within the fluidity of love—the emptying, into order to be filled back up, the releasing, in order to return, the giving, in order to receive: an ebb and a flow, that circulates according to the want of the call, and not according to the equivalent of an accountant’s or scientist’s measure. It is this open movement which cannot be circumscribed. It is a movement “born of the Spirit” (John 3:8), one which moves “where it chooses,” and which cannot be tied to source or outcome.

This love points beyond calculation, beyond language, to that which waits in the “Gone, Gone, gone beyond, gone completely beyond” in the ‘singular’ non-Being from in which all beings that come into being are in unity through their differentiation, in the invisibility through which all visibility is enfleshed.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 142.

Anonymous: Ode to the One

There is an ‘anonymous’²⁵⁰ hymn from the late Hellenistic period which may help to map out this interstice between the inadequacies of the Said and the impossible excess of the Unsaid, and give a frame to the disposition of all that can possibly ever attempt to be said about that which, by its very presence, must forever remain beyond the Say-able.

The hymn is itself a bricolage of words culled from different dialects, arranged poetically around a litany of negating sentiments. The syntax is not fluid but, rather, is expressive of the stumbling of the one trying to ponder and wrestle with the divine. The opening words declare:

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 151. While Marion is explicitly delimiting the singular nature of the act to the Eucharistic site, and the agent of the act to the priest, there does not seem to be any barrier for its appropriation into any act of *agapē* (ἀγάπη) which sits at the chiasmus between the vertical and the horizontal aspects of the double commandment to love.

²⁵⁰ The complete Greek text can be found in *PG*, 37, 507ff. Another complete text with some modification, can be found in William Franke, ed., *On What Cannot Be Said: Apophatic Discourses in Philosophy, Religion, Literature, and the Arts* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), vol. 1. The same exact text and translation appears in William Franke, *A Philosophy of the Unsayable* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 257–58. A different translation of the first 10 lines (without the Greek original) appears in Deirdre Carabine, *The Unknown God: Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition, Plato to Eriugena* (Louvain and Grand Rapids: Peeters Press and W.B. Eerdmans, 1995). Each of these repositories of the hymn, assert different authorship to the hymn. Originally, the hymn was thought to be from the hand of Gregory Nazianzus, and was so catalogued by J.-P. Migne. By the middle of the last century, scholars like Werner Beierwaltes would link the hymn to Proclus, and through Proclus to originary suppositions laid out in Plato’s *Parmenides*. Cf. Werner Beierwaltes, *Proklos: Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann, 1965), 352–54. Though Beierwaltes does not present the hymn, as do the other sources, he will declare the hymn to be theological in nature, as it considers ‘the One’ (*das Eine*) through the contemplation of Negations (353). Franke (2007, 2014) will attribute the hymn to Proclus, as will Carabine (1995). Franke (2014), however, will introduce a critique of this position brought forward by R. M. van den Berg (*Proclus’ Hymns: Essays, Translations, Commentary*, Leiden: Brill, 2001, 32). Van den Berg will note that for Proclus, any hymn would have to be only silent i.e. a hymn can only consist “in becoming like a God.” Van der Berg contrasts this with the disposition of a Christian author such as Synesius, who believed hymns could be “appropriate” in both silent and verbal form. Thus, Franke will conclude: “it seems unlikely that the ‘Hymn to the Transcendence of God’ would have been composed by Proclus or by any pagan Neoplatonist.” Franke, thus, reversing his 2007 position, opens up the consideration of authorship to include Gregory of Nazianzus and Pseudo-Dionysus (cf. Franke, *A Philosophy of the Unsayable*, 258–263.) Franke will use the Greek ‘title’ provided by Migne (Ὑμνος εἰς Θεόν), but will flush it out in translation to become “Hymn to the Transcendence of God.” Carabine will omit the Migne title altogether, and substitutes the opening three words of the hymn instead (Ὡ πάντων ἐκέκρικα). Franke’s translation will honor the back-and-forth of the sequencing of negating considerations; Carabine will drop the rhetoric for the summations. This author has elected to translate directly from the Greek, as it presents itself, inclusive of the stumbling inherent to the poetic economy. This economy, in turn, underscores the grasping on the part of the person pondering. No translation can adequately incorporate the use of variants of dialect and historical lexical forms which are brought into a bricolage as if to indicate the timeless nature of the problem.

Ὁ πάντων ἐκέκεινα: τί γὰρ θέμις ἄλλο σε μέλπειν; (“O! [One who is] beyond of all things: for what other premise [exists] to sing you?”).²⁵¹ This same exact statement ends the hymn sixteen lines later. Through the intervening lines, the one pondering to this un-sing-able “beyond” as not being a beyond at all but rather, the font from which comes all that is spoken (τέχες ὄσσα λαλεῖται), and all that is known (τέχες ὄσσα νοεῖται). The one pondering confesses: the one who knows “your” [God’s] “cipher” (Σύνθεμα),²⁵² bumbles (λαλεῖ)²⁵³ “a silent hymn” (σιγώμενον ὕμνον).²⁵⁴ Theology exists in the silence of the release and in the silence of the return.²⁵⁵ Silence is all that is left when the proximity can never be escaped to create distance, and with distance phenomenological

²⁵¹ This first exclamation (Ὁ πάντων ἐκέκεινα) has neither subject nor verb given – all substantive weight is thrown onto the “beyond.”

²⁵² Franke translates this as “cipher.” It can also signify a “preconcerted signal,” thus inferring, perhaps, the weight from the interpellations of a culture or tradition.

²⁵³ This word can be used to indicate the non-verbal utterances of crickets or birds, and has a linguistic relation to the noise made by pebbles being pushed about by moving water. Cf. Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Franke’s use of “sing” is appropriate, but fails to convey this limiting quality inherent to the original Greek verb.

²⁵⁴ This phrase contains a neologism which seems to again underscore the incapacity of language to adequately describe and circumscribe definitively the One beyond, and the way to properly address/encounter/respond to it.

²⁵⁵ Karl Rahner believes that humans in general today “sense and revere the nameless and inexpressible.” Cf. Rahner, “The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology (3 Lectures),” 37. He goes on: “Men find the mystery of God so all-embracing that they cannot easily bring themselves to accept a multitude of mysteries which look very much like the complications of human reasoning which has tied itself up in knots.” For: “As long as men find it a highly complicated collection of arbitrarily linked assertions, their readiness to believe will be inhibited.” Rahner lays blame on the performative force and sedimentation of the lengthy presence of neoscholasticism. Notes Rahner (1959), “in Vatican I and current theology the criterion of mystery is the *ratio*” (40). What is mysterious is only provisionally so, due to a current deficit of rational capacity. “In light of this criterion,” Rahner states, “it is also understandable that mystery is given a purely negative definition. In his later essay, “The Hiddenness of God” (1974), Rahner challenges the notion of ‘knowing’ as primarily consisting of “‘seeing through’ an object,” by offering up instead the notion of knowing-as-opening “to the mystery itself.” Cf. Karl Rahner, “The Hiddenness of God (1974),” in *Experience of the Spirit: Source of Theology*, trans. David Morland, OSB. (Theological investigations ; v. 16) (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979), 233. For more on his notion of mystery and transcendental knowledge, see note 18.

As one contemplates the anonymous hymn noted in this section, it might be of use to reflect on the following declaration of Rahner: “The ‘gloria’ is nothing other than the loving surrender of man to the incomprehensibility of God which is now a directly present reality;” *Ibid.*, 243. For Rahner, “there is always the danger of imagining that the ‘lumen gloriae’ clarifies everything and illuminates the mystery of God in such a way that at least in this ‘gloria’ God becomes transparent to the human mind.” “[T]heologians in this world,” he avers, “need to be warned that they must be conscious in their theology of their condition as pilgrims” (243).

Underscoring the importance of such awareness, Paul Evdokimov notes that the Eastern liturgy, in all of its rites, culminates in an adoration that is totally trembling—before the mystery of the Ineffable. Cf. Evdokimov, *La Prière de l’Eglise d’Orient: La Liturgie Byzantine de Saint Jean Chrysostome*, 57.

The pilgrim, like the navigator, constantly *exists* in a state of encounter, of active nihilism.

perspective, and containment. The hymn proceeds to cross-out but not erase this One beyond all, through a stacking of contrasting declaratives, each appearing to cancel or, at least, to call into question the certitude of the last. The hymn confesses: “In you (immediately)²⁵⁶ all things remain, and together (as at once, or as in one body) all things rush” (Σοὶ ἐνὶ πάντα μένει: σοὶ δ’ ἄθρόα πάντα θοάζει). “And you are end of all things, and one, and all and nothing, being not one, not all.”²⁵⁷ (Καὶ πάντων τέλος ἐσσι, καὶ εἷς, καὶ πάντα καὶ οὐδέν / Οὐχ ἔν ἔων, οὐ πάντα). Thus by simply being alive, one gives living witness to that *beyond* in which all is, and from which all comes to be: a beyond that is beyond but never apart.²⁵⁸

An infinite sphere, a new cosmology

This is the beyond that would confront a cardinal from Cusa, on a protracted voyage from Constantinople to Venice, from November 27, 1437, to February 8, 1438.²⁵⁹ The voyage would birth the considerations, which would find force and an honored place in *De docta ignorantia*. In his authoritative survey of the metaphor, the Infinite Sphere, Karsten Harries provides a concise summary²⁶⁰ of Cusanus’ famous epiphany, discovered while out beyond the horizon, *en haute mer*.

²⁵⁶ “Immediately” here has been selected to bring forward the deictic iota, and its force of emphasis i.e. *right here, right now*.

²⁵⁷ The author’s translation intentionally reflects the absence of definite articles in the Greek original, which seems to indicate a sense of ultimate.

²⁵⁸ Thus, simply put: “the One is not a particular One, but One in the absolute sense, simply One. Everything that can be qualified is not what it is absolutely.” Carabine, *The Unknown God*, 163. In addition, confer Proclus’ *Parm.* VI 1069, 21; and VI 1096, 19-21.

²⁵⁹ For an excellent argument concerning the authenticity of the historical event behind Nicolas Cusanus’ exploration of the oxymoron – learned ignorance – see Marjorie O’Rourke Boyle, “Cusamus at Sea: The Tpoicality of Illuminative Discourse,” *Journal of Religion* 71, no. 2 (April 1991): 180–201. Of particular value are the references she assembles regarding the historical claim.

²⁶⁰ For an exhaustive account of the Infinite Sphere, before and beyond Cusanus, confer Karsten Harries, “The Infinite Sphere: Comments on the History of a Metaphor,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 13, no. 1 (1975): 5–15. Nb.— The above synopsis

Harries avers:

Perhaps no part of Cusanus' writings has been quoted and discussed more often than the twelfth chapter of the second book of *De doctra ignorantia*, 'De conditionibus terrae,' in which the reader is offered the outline of a radically new cosmology. Cusanus introduces his reflections with a simple thought experiment: he asks us to imagine someone on a moving ship, drifting in the middle of a large body of flowing water. Might such a man, unable to see the moving shores, not think his ship the unmoving center of the world?²⁶¹ And are we not like this man when, absolutizing our own point of view, we proclaim the earth the center of the cosmos? ... Rest and motion, Cusanus points out, are relative concepts,²⁶² what we take to be central or fixed depends on our point of view...

These considerations lead to others: if the cosmos has no center, if its center is in a sense everywhere, it can also have no circumference.²⁶³ The cosmos is therefore like an infinite sphere, where Cusanus is careful to distinguish the infinity of the cosmos from that of God: the cosmos is infinite in the sense that it lacks limits in which it can be enclosed, while the infinite of God precludes all indeterminacy.

If God, as Nicolas Cusanus notes, is "ineffable, because He is infinitely greater than anything that words can express," if "He is neither Father nor Son nor Holy Ghost"—"or any name that man can utter"²⁶⁴—if "God cannot be known in this life or in the life to come"—if "He is as incomprehensible to creatures as infinite light is to darkness"²⁶⁵ [τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν²⁶⁶] — then how can one 'do' theology? how can one pray? what keeps one from

may be found on page 6. Harries himself believes the best account of the history of the Infinite Sphere to rest with Dietrich Mahnke's *Unendliche Sphäre und Allmitelpunkt* (Halle, 1937).

²⁶¹ Cf. *De doctra ignorantia*, II, 12: "Si enim quis ignoraret aquam fluere et ripas non viderit existendo in navi in medio aquae navem quomodo apprehenderet moveri?"

²⁶² Ibid.: "Non enim apprendimus motum nisi per quondam comparationem ad fixum."

²⁶³ Ibid.: "Under erit machina mundi quasi habens undique centrum et nullibi circumferentiam..." Cf. *De doctra ignorantia*, I, 11.

²⁶⁴ Nicolas Cusanus, *Of learned ignorance*, trans. Germain Heron (London: Routledge & K. Paul Ltd., 1954), 60.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 61.

²⁶⁶ Jn 1:5. Trans. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." (NRSV)

atrophying into Wittgenstein's conclusion – "*Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen.*"²⁶⁷ Cusanus ends the first book of *De Docta Ignorantia* with a clue as to what a possible response might entail. Noting that any partial description of something excessive of our faculties is, at the same time, a full confession of our ultimate ignorance of any totality, Cusanus states that "amidst our gropings, we can always praise Him, the Incomprehensible, for His revelation of Himself to us" – "May He be blessed above all forever."²⁶⁸ In his optimistic offering, Cusanus echo's the Neoplatonist hymn, when its speaker offers the tentative intercession: "Ἰλαος εἶης – "May you be gracious."²⁶⁹

Disturbing silences

Against this offering lies the argument of scholar and rabbi, André Neher. Embedded in the proclamations and prescriptions of the Tanakh are disturbing silences, as evidenced in Psalm 19 and the nineteenth chapter of the first book of Kings.²⁷⁰ Such silences are not of deficit or default, as Ludwig Wittgenstein avers at the end of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (see note 267). Silence, instead, comes to mark an intentional dispossession (of agency) and disposition (of orientation), in relation to that which has, on account of its permanent immanence and absence, no distance through which it can appear. Neher writes:

As for Psalm 65, it produces, in verse 2, an expression as categorical
Isaiah's "hidden God": "To Thee silence alone is fitting by way of

²⁶⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), Proposition 7. This author's trans. "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof must one be silent."

²⁶⁸ Cusanus, *Of learned ignorance*, 61.

²⁶⁹ Cf. *PG*. 37, 507ff.

²⁷⁰ See the epigrams cited on pages 73 and 74.

praise.” The discerning have not been slow to extract the philosophical content from this proposition... Maimonides constructs on this verse an absolute criticism of vocal prayer. Prayer that is authentic and true to the landscape of the Bible can only, he says, be silent prayer [*Guide of the Perplexed* 1:59]. For the word betrays, and only silence respects the organic connection which places the Ineffable before the Infinite. In our century, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry knows that “love is first of all the exercise of prayer and prayer the exercise of silence.”²⁷¹

In the silence, the human person also becomes free. Neher goes on to point out:

Often man is silent, not because he possesses no better means of approaching the infinite than silence, but because silence offers him an extraordinary variety of approaches to his own human finiteness.²⁷²

Silence allows for the weakening of thought and loosening of the delimitations and prescriptions of language and its forced interpellation in culture and over time. Silence breaks the Word, and the dyads named in words.

Nonbiological: Life, Ipseity, and God

The philosopher Michel Henry, in his Christian philosophy, pushes this consideration further, by grounding it in a nonbiological (non-Aristotelian) concept of life. For Henry, Christ is a phenomenon that does not take its meaning in opposition to an other entity, but self-reveals and self-generates. Drawing heavily on Johannine Christology, Henry constructs a contemporary Christian philosophy, in which God is not transcendent but radically immanent, for God is Life and God is Love and the Incarnation becomes, consubstantially, the original Ipseity through which Life self-reveals itself to itself, and through which every self in the cosmos comes to be.

²⁷¹ André Neher, *The Exile of the Word, from the Silence of the Bible to the Silence of Auschwitz*, trans. David Maisel (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1981), 11–12.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 12.

Thus, Jean-Yves Lacoste writes, “In thinking Life, Henry thinks life in its foundation. And the foundation of life is divine. The one who lives is not one who exists.”²⁷³ For Henry, there is an insurmountable difference between the phenomenology of the world, and its notion of subject as determined “by reference to a content foreign to it.” Such phenomenality supposes a distance between subject and appearance. By contrast, Henry avers “that the subject is first affected by its own content, by itself.”²⁷⁴ Such ipseity is able to speak itself to itself through Life and Life’s original Ipseity. All lives live in Life. All ipseities hold ipseity in the Ipseity through which they are called into living (John 1:3). For Michel Henry,

The gate of the shephold ... provides access to all transcendental living me’s, not to only one of them, to the one I am myself... In fact it is impossible to come to someone, to reach someone, except through Christ, through the original Ipseity that connects that person to himself, making him a Self, the me that he is. It is impossible to touch flesh except through this original Flesh... It is impossible to strike someone without striking Christ.²⁷⁵

Christ is immanent. As a Christian, writes Henry, “I am not my own flesh,” “my flesh, my living flesh, is Christ’s.”²⁷⁶ Michelle Rebidoux notes that the self, for Henry, is in a fallen state, “a state of forgetfulness of its essence.” The task, then, “is one of remembering.”²⁷⁷ Because of this gap of memory of true essence, a person moves through time-space “feeling himself as the source of all his

²⁷³ Jean-Yves Lacoste, Preface to Michel Henry, *Words of Christ*, trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2012), x.

²⁷⁴ Karl Heft, Introduction to the English Edition, Henry, *Words of Christ*, xiii.

²⁷⁵ Michel Henry, *I Am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 166–67.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 116.

²⁷⁷ Michelle Rebidoux, “C’est Moi Le Principe et La Fin: The Mysterious ‘Middle’ of Michel Henry’s (Christian) Phenomenology of Life,” *Analecta Hermeneutica* 3 (2011): 5.

powers, and all his sentiments, especially his pleasures, someone who lives in the permanent illusions of being a self-sufficient ego.”²⁷⁸

Immanence, suffering, and joy

Words are powerless, because words are of the world: they perform speech acts in mimesis of the dyadic shortcoming of the phenomenology of the world. They cannot span the hermeneutical divide. They can point to the Ipseity: they cannot serve as the Ipseity. This powerlessness has provoked an *ethic*—“from word to deed, to deeds foreign to language and outside it but immersed in life, whose action coincides with the very moment of this life.”²⁷⁹ The deed is immanent. The deed participates in immanence, in a way that reflects, in its finitude, the Word [*Parole*], which speaks about itself to itself in its infinitude. *Immanence*, for Michel Henry, “*is neither a signification nor a concept, similar to those of which human language makes use...* It is only because it [as primitive affectivity] experiences itself and reveals itself to itself in a way filled with pathos, in the immanence of this primitive affectivity, that Life is a Word [*Parole*] and a Word [*Parole*] which speaks about itself.”²⁸⁰ Henry draws on suffering as an example of such immanence. He avers “only suffering permits us to know suffering. *It is only in this way that suffering speaks to us; it speaks to us in its suffering.* In this way a word uncovers itself to us.”²⁸¹ It is not born of itself; it is born through Life, and in speaking of it in its suffering, it speaks wholly of Life. “It is only in the self-revelation of life

²⁷⁸ Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 207.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 215–16.

²⁸⁰ Henry, *Words of Christ*, 78.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

that suffering is experienced and speaks to us thus of itself, in such a way that its word does not differ from what it says. The possibility of the word of suffering is contained in the Word of Life. This is why Life speaks to us in the joy of efforts as much as in anguish or despair, or in whatever other tonalities we experience.”²⁸²

Mercy: Communion

For Henry, to remember the essence of Life which grounds us, and which gives birth to our ipseity, we must forget the ego-self and its illusions of autonomy. Such forgetting is practiced only through “*the work of mercy*”—“*in which, all interest for the Self (right down to the idea of what we call a self or a me) now removed, no obstacle is now posed to the unfurling of life in this Self extended to its original essence.*”²⁸³ The commandment of love *is* “because Life is love. Life is love because it experiences infinitely and eternally. Because it is Life, “God is love,” as John says (1 John 4:8). It is because God (as absolute Life) is love that he commands Love. He commands it of all the living by giving them life.”²⁸⁴ Henry concludes that “*far from resulting from the Commandment, love is on the contrary the presupposition of it.*”²⁸⁵ In the act of loving with mercy, one releases all interest for the Self. In the performative act, one makes empty space, space in which, in forgetting one can move to begin to remember the feeling of one’s essence. The movement becomes an ontological act, although the ontology cannot be stretched conveniently

²⁸² Ibid., 77.

²⁸³ Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 170.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 186.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

along easily defined vertical and horizontal axes. The radical absolute immanence of Life offers up a field²⁸⁶ that moves out and up in all directions, but which never separates out from the wholly immanent Life. Life cannot be escaped.

Life, memory, and the return

In Henry's understanding of Life as the essence of all living in life, the memory of the suffering of Jesus is the memory of the incarnated Logos in all of its fullness. The memory is a performative that calls our own suffering and our own joy back into the gift of Life into which we all were born. The commandment of love is not a moral oblation but is a communal response to the self-revelation of Life, one that allows for the forgetting of one's Self (in-the-world, in opposition-to-others), so as to allow one simply to be, again, in one's ipseity, in the original Ipseity of Life. And the aforementioned movement, which Chauvet places at the heart of the anamnesis prayer,²⁸⁷ is exactly this giving out of self, of all of self, so as to receive *the* Arch-Self of Christ.

It should be noted that Henry's Christian philosophy is primarily predicated on the Gospel of John, a gospel that does not fixate on the Last Supper, as do the synoptic gospels. Michel Henry, in his later Christ-centered writings, does not elaborate on the Eucharist. He does however write of faith. In his elaboration of faith, a sense of communion can be intimated. For Henry, faith is not to be understood "as a form of thought but as a determination of Life." Faith rests not in "the realm of consciousness, but rather of feeling. It comes from the fact that nobody ever gave himself life, but rather that life gives itself, and gives itself to the living, as what submerges him—from the fact that in

²⁸⁶ Or: a stratum of fields.

²⁸⁷ Cf. Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan, S.J. and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995), esp. 275–76.

life he is totally living, as long as life gives him to himself.”²⁸⁸ Thus, “[f]aith is within the life of each transcendental me as the feeling it has of absolute Life. From this comes its irrepressible power, not that of the transcendental ego placed in itself and in its I Can in absolute Life’s self-giveness, but the power of this self-giveness, its invincible and eternal embrace.”²⁸⁹ This embrace is the movement in which the absolute Life reveals itself to itself, “by joining the ego to itself;”²⁹⁰ this is the movement that, in the joining, is also the releasing of the ego from its Self into the greater Self-revelation of the absolute Life’s revealing itself to itself. In this *work of mercy*, the taking comes to be in the giving, and the phenomenality of Life is felt.

“Before God and with God we lived without God. God lets himself be pushed in the world, and that is precisely the way, the only way, in which he is with us and helps us.”²⁹¹ These words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, written whilst alone in a prison cell, at the hands of the Gestapo, facing only a future painted over in tones of black, give testament to Henry’s sense of affectivity, in which all of life affirms Life, and in affirming life affirms God. Bonhoeffer goes on to warn against the systematic and the conceptual. “Man is summoned to share in God’s sufferings at the hands of a godless world. He must therefore really live in the godless world, without attempting to gloss over or explain its ungodliness in some religious way or other. He must live a ‘secular life, and thereby

²⁸⁸ This inseparable dependency on absolute Life (read God) is brought to the forefront in the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, when the priest, in his offering up to God, states: “Offering you, your own, from your own. Always and everywhere.” Cf. *The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*, printed by St. Basil Press, Miami (no date; translator unknown), and used by the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic, New Jersey. The French translation, referenced by Paul Evdokimov, differs slightly, but underscores the same ultimate indebtedness to God for everything, including every offering up to God: “EN TOUT ET POUR TOUT, NOUS T’OFFRONS CE QUI EST À TOI DE CE QUI A TOI.” Cf. Evdokimov, *La Prière de l’Église d’Orient: La Liturgie Byzantine de Saint Jean Chrysostome*, 129. Ultimately everything is God’s; ultimately all life belongs to Life.

²⁸⁹ Henry, *I Am the Truth*, 193.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 194.

²⁹¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge, Enlarged. (London: SCM Press, 1973), 360–61.

share in God's suffering."²⁹² Here, in very different language, is traced *the central point* – the cusp between the urge that comes with being caught up in the phenomenology of the world (including religion) and its dyadic impulses, and the metanoia that comes into possibility with the immersion into Ipseity and into Life (inclusive of all of its joys and sufferings). *One must choose, and turn the tiller accordingly.*

The return into Life comes at the release from the world. Within this place of Life rests an *invincible* hope, writes a young Avery Dulles, “because it is not founded on creatures but on God. We cannot entrust ourselves with total confidence to any created agency... Of Jesus himself it is written that he did not entrust himself to those who believed in him, ‘for he himself knew what was in man’ (Jn 2:25).”²⁹³ *God is neither abstract, nor concept, nor particular.* Immanence cannot be given form, for form requires the distance of space to allow for perspective, and there is no space when place is deictically everywhere at once. In the radical immanence of Life-Ipseity-God (ζῶη–λόγος–θεός), there is an irreducible unity. The human person has within herself the experience of an inescapable, irreducible immanence, that points to the Immanence, which through its Ipseity, her ipseity comes to be within its immanence. Michel Henry writes: “[M]an among men, things among things, man doesn’t relate himself to anything. *To surpass oneself toward, in the sense of transcendence, to relate oneself to, is to be himself the surpassing, a surpassing which does not surpass himself and which is possible as such, as that very thing which does not surpass but remains rather in itself, as immanence.*”²⁹⁴ Immanence is the silence of Kings 1, and is in the silence testimony of the cosmos in Psalm 19. Immanence is that in which all abide and all rush about in it at

²⁹² Ibid., 361–62.

²⁹³ Dulles, *The Survival of Dogma*, 69.

²⁹⁴ Michel Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation*, trans. Girard Etzkorn (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1973), 257.

once (and can never escape). Immanence is the before God and with God and without (a construct of God). Immanence is the unifying *flesh* that grounds all of the visible in its visibility. It is the silence, to borrow from Naher, that breaks the Word (when limited to the circumscriptions of language). It is the silence that is before and beyond every word, and holds all language accountable to finitude; and this silence endures long enough to lead all absolute claims, through its openness, to a reoccurring and inevitable, nihilistic confrontation.

Taking leave, taking into account: a Verwindung

If “religious experience is an experience of leave-taking,”²⁹⁵ as Vattimo avers, the person finds her sense of this experience as she navigates out in the direction of *aggiornamento*,²⁹⁶ and then tacks, and moves in the direction of *ressourcement*,²⁹⁷ back and forth, over and over, finessing course upon course, across the straits of the chiasmus of her existence, sheeting in and out the sails as conditions dictate, and never once escaping the vessel of her immanence.

Each return, thus, is not a classic telos (with the force of an anticipatory unidirectional presumption), but rather, as Vattimo suggests, “something we had thought irrevocably forgotten is made present again, a dormant trace is reawakened, a wound re-opened, the repressed returns and what we thought to be an *Überwindung* (overcoming, realization and thus a setting aside) is not more than a *Verwindung* [a twisting of hard thought into a softer, weak thought, into an openness

²⁹⁵ Gianni Vattimo, “The Trace of the Trace,” in *Religion*, ed. Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 79.

²⁹⁶ The updating of an institution, tradition, or system of thought to better meet with the times and persons it encounters.

²⁹⁷ The returning to the sources of an institution, tradition, or system of thought to find focus and refinement.

to further navigation].”²⁹⁸ *Überwindung* involves the metaphysical claim (judgment, force, stasis, strict structure). It is an overcoming of either the status quo or the oppositional force, setting either aside, and replacing the claimant, the opponent, with oneself. It involves the employment of equal or greater force. It is always binary/dyadic. It is the means by which identification is unfolded—in opposition. It is the act at the conclusion to any syllogism.

Verwindung involves the kenotic act and the open stance. In *Verwindung*, there is no claim of exclusive authority, no objectivism, no need for a circumscribed totality. There is no need for models. The ethical gesture of philosopher Luce Irigaray embodies *Verwindung*. Like Henry, Irigaray seeks a place *beyond* the totalitarian threat of the binary based on biological conceptualization. To flip the binary, as if to exchange places of power, does not offer Irigaray any hope. Force is force. “Alternatives, oppositions, choices, bargains,” writes Irigaray, “these have no business between us.”²⁹⁹ To restage the disorder of the oppressor is to remain still within disorder. “We can do without models, standards, or examples,” she concludes. “Let’s never give ourselves orders, commands, or prohibitions. Let our imperatives be only appeals to move, to be moved, together.”³⁰⁰ *To move and to be moved together* – this intimacy betrays a principle distance in which movement is free to take place. Such distance is not asymmetrical as in a hegemonic dyad.

Immanence calls the circumscribable into account. For the heart of any kataphatic claim about self, reality, cosmos, God, rests within silence that cannot be contained. The immanence of that ever-present Other is both that in which all comes into being and Life—Logos—God (Henry et al.). It is a life-giving, life-supporting Infinity, that is always infinite from any point, and thus can

²⁹⁸ Vattimo, “The Trace of the Trace,” 79.

²⁹⁹ Irigaray, *This sex which is not one*, 207.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 217.

never be escaped, nor can it be encircled and claimed. In its resistance to strong thought, it calls the strong to be weak: to dispossess: to relax and rest into a reality of perpetual movement, that moves to navigate its way, through the constant responding to the never ceasing call: to share in the immanence of all of Life – in the joys and in the suffering. In the flux, there is always the movement away and the return to re-claim.

By reconstituting flesh as elemental for all Being, and by extension for all incarnation: *sarx* (*flesh*) becomes the locus for the sacramental event, an event tradition purports to be intimately tied to considerations of salvation and the eschaton. By discovering *flesh* to be thus immanent within the world, and by discovering this immanence to be intertwined with the Immanence that is Life and the Ipseity through which all lives come into life, and from which all ipseities discover both their ipseity and the immanence, the boundaries of *juris* (used by the sovereign to control access) seem porous and able to be potentially breached. The nonspecific, uncircumscribed τῆς (“anyone”) returns, and it is time to turn back upon the consideration of salvific possibility for the τῆς (“anyone”) *beyond* the boundaries of human interpellation and proscription, and upon what the gifting of such a consideration would cause for the Church, in terms of singular identity and reason to be. Such a consideration should not be approached as an undertaking, the intent of which is to overcome or cancel-out (*Überwindung*), but rather as a consideration that will not go away; that demands access, while, at the same time, refusing to deny anyone else the same, as if some form of exchange (*Verwindung*). In the refusal to die or to be exiled, and the refusal to destroy or to push away, a *weak* soteriology comes to be.

This weakness asks us to return to “a certain man,” and to bracket back all suppositions, in attending to “a certain Samaritan.” On the road to Jericho, there wait these final considerations.

V.
THE ROAD TO JERICHO

LOVING FOR NOTHING — A CERTAIN SAMARITAN (THE VERB ‘TO DO’ AND ACCESS TO ETERNAL LIFE) —
CONSEQUENTIAL RECONSIDERATIONS: OF SACRAMENT, OF THEOLOGY, AND OF CHURCH —
LOVE AS PRINCIPLED DISTANCE

Since the resurrection, the meaning of human community has been Christ. Whenever two or three are gathered together, in a pub or discussion group or works committee, Christ is the ground of their communication, the living principle of their community. Christ assured us that whenever a genuine act of human communication and thus of community took place he would be involved in it: when we love each other we love him.... This does not only apply to the Christian either: to be human now, with a physical body, is to be in some kind of relationship to Christ, even if it is a relationship of ignorance or hostility, and all human life is therefore towards or away from Christ: all human life shares in the Christ-reality of the universe, and to build community is to build Christ, irrespective of the conscious belief and commitment of the builder.

— Terence Eagleton³⁰¹

We can't say why God loves, except that he *is* Love itself... Jesus let himself be crucified for nothing. He had no plans either, nor did he know of any grand blue-prints drawn up by his Father. Jesus obeyed because he loved the Father above all... Love does not calculate... God shows mercy for nothing, and his grace goes before everything.... God has loved you first, so go out to *other men and women* and love them in turn, with no aim, no goal, no purpose (not even to convert them); love them because you are love.

— Jacques Ellul³⁰²

Loving for nothing

Eagleton and Ellul are radical Christians. In their writings they force a Leftist (Eagleton) or anarchistic (Ellul) take-away from the storytelling and prescriptions from and concerning Jesus Christ. Against the Scholastic systematic enterprise, Ellul posits: “There is no objective reason for

³⁰¹ Terence Eagleton, *The New Left Church* (Baltimore and London: Helicon, 1966), 142–43.

³⁰² Jacques Ellul, *Living Faith: Belief and Doubt in a Perilous World*, trans. Peter Heinegg (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 164–65.

believing; you have to live it.”³⁰³ This ‘*you*’ of Ellul lives it, in the aimless (no agenda), directional act of loving ‘for nothing.’ The *nothing* is itself confessional: it testifies to the ontological relation between the human person and the divine Infinite. It releases itself from itself, that is from the ego, driven and self-defined by the binaries which it processes within a worldly phenomenological rubric. Ellul points into the salvific implication of such a lived-in aimlessness. He writes:

Faith has no origin or objective. Furthermore, the moment it admits of any objective, it ceases to be faith. If you believe in God in order to be protected, shielded, healed, or saved, then it’s not faith, which is gratuitous... If God loves and saves human kind without asking any price, the counterpart to this is that God intends to be believed and loved without self-interest or purpose, simply for nothing.

In this love without aim, there is faith: there is communion; therein dwells God (1 Jn 4:12). The ‘*without aim*’ is contingent for Ellul. For Eagleton, all rests on the genuineness of the ‘act,’ of the communication, of the building of a communion between two or more (Matt 18:20). For Eagleton, belief is not contingent on a conscious commitment or public pronouncement. The act of “building” relatedness in which a principled distance is engendered allows for the freedom of all voices to enter respectfully into colloquy: for a politic that strives to rest solely on the welcome contained in the aforementioned precepts of Taylor and others. In the gifting of the democratic, one empties any claim to autarky and exclusivity. One struggles in the re-creating of identity against an ever-growing inclusivity. The circumscription must be erased, and redrawn, and erased, and redrawn. And in this gesture of release/reclaim, a new identity is forever born. In the performativity of the democratic claim, the expanse of *flesh* is stretched within the perceptions of the embodied. The body is touched and touches in ever-new configurations, and the body’s sense of itself is forced to re-examine old claims from other epochs and other constructions.

³⁰³ Ibid., 163.

As was previously shown, ipseity is experienced in the very radicality of its immanence in the occasion of, what M. Henry terms, *works of Mercy*. This experience is felt, according to M. Merleau-Ponty, *bodily*. It is not out of a syllogism, but out of a *living* faith, an openness, that is open, in its remembering, in gratitude for the gift of life, given and re-given, which the person, the body, is not ever, nor ever will be, the source. In forever being in receipt of this gift, this love, from a Life and an Ipseity, that is forever invisible and forever immanent, the person, in body, *lives* believing. Believing, the person, believes within the love that she senses, from the Ipseity that gave and continues to give her ipseity, from the Life, that is a nonbiological, cosmologically encompassing, infinite Life.

Behind such considerations rests a simplification that, in turn, points to a simplicity: God is love, God loves, God reveals his immanence in the immanence of Life (beyond Bios) which is his gifting of life into creation, and through creation into the unique, finite and incomprehensible person that constitutes each of us being into our existence, intertwined through and with all that is sensible and or to be imagined. God loves out of nothing because God is infinite and God loves. This simplicity marks the Ipseity present M. Henry's phenomenality of life, that which reveals the ipseity of the subject to the subject without the separated object. This simplicity is the radical immanence of Life. To love is to love out of such affectivity.

Such love is not a love of preference i.e. one that the subject has exclusively for the object of its love against all other possibilities. Long before Ellul and his notion of loving-for-nothing, Søren Kierkegaard wrote –“*the task is not to find the lovable object, but the task is to find the once given or chosen object—loveable, and to be able to continue to find him lovable no matter how he is*

changed.”³⁰⁴ Such love is not an abstract, absolutized concept of love – it is, as its presentation in the New Testament avers, a command: to be Christly: to be known as such: one is to love God and love neighbor. As noted, Kierkegaard places the neighbor as the very next person who crosses one’s path. There is no slippage; there is no adjudication.³⁰⁵ This neighbor itself confesses a radical inclusion. Kierkegaard lays this out, in the follow manner:

The distinction *friend* or *enemy* is a difference in the object of love, but love for the neighbor has the object that is without difference. The neighbor is the utterly unrecognizable dissimilarity between persons or is the eternal equality before God—the enemy, too, has this quality. People think that it is impossible for a human being to love his enemy, because, alas, enemies are hardly able to endure the sight of one another. Well, then, shut your eyes—then the enemy looks like the neighbor. Shut your eyes and remember the commandment that *you* shall love; then you love—your enemy—no, then you love the neighbor, because you do not see that he is your enemy.³⁰⁶

Kierkegaard sets this love into the commandment commanded by Christ. Henry sets such love as the only means by which one can remember the Ipseity and Life through which one comes into life and ipseity, and through which one is able to reach out and touch any other ipseity at all.³⁰⁷ To not love in such a manner is to not imitate the manner of Life and Love that is God and which God gives freely-for-nothing. For Ellul, one loves *all*, because one is loved as all. For Eagleton, when one loves in open communication, i.e. conversation, and not through advantaged discourse, when one rests in the open communion of two or three, one rests in the love and the presence that is Christ,

³⁰⁴ Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of love*, trans. Howard V Hong and Edna H Hong, XVI (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995), 159. (Emphasis is original.)

³⁰⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 166. Kierkegaard drills this point home: The person “must root out all equivocation and fastidiousness in loving them [the people he sees] so that in earnestness and truth he loves them as they are and in earnestness and truth takes hold of the task: to find the once given or chosen object lovable.” The person does not choose; he or she acts, accordingly, in obedience to the commandment. Choice is a matter of contingency or God; at any rate, it is not, by virtue of the command, a matter for him or her.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 67–68.

³⁰⁷ See the block quotation from Henry’s *I Am Truth* that spans pages 80-81.

and through Christ, in God. Eagleton adds that “to build community is to build Christ” and this is beyond explicit bonds to a public faith tradition.

Such a dispossession is found also in the sentiments of Karl Rahner, who provocatively asserts: “A person is always a Christian in order to become one.”³⁰⁸ For Rahner, as with Eagleton and Henry, every human person cannot live apart from the Ipseity of Christ because of their living, i.e. participating in Life. Rahner locates God and Christ “as the secret essence of every reality we can choose.”³⁰⁹ Framing the commandment of love against such immanence, Rahner writes:

Consequently, anyone who, though still far from any revelation explicitly formulated in words, accepts his existence in patient silence (or, better, in faith, hope, and love), accepts it as the mystery which lies hidden in the mystery of eternal love and which bears life in the womb of death, is saying ‘yes’ to Christ even if he does not know it. For anyone who lets go and jumps falls [sic.] into the depths which are there, and not only to the extent that he himself has fathomed them. Anyone who accepts his humanity fully, and all the more so of course the humanity of others, has accepted the Son of Man because in him God has accepted man. And if it says in scripture that whoever loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law, then this is the ultimate truth because God himself has become his neighbor, and hence He who is at once nearest to us and farthest from us is always accepted and loved in every neighbor.³¹⁰

Rahner titles this loving-the-neighbor as ‘ultimate truth,’ insofar as he sees this love of neighbor and of God, of the immediately visible and the impossibly invisible, as held together, one and the same, in the act of *agapé*. In this simple act of loving the neighbor, any person (τις), anyone has fulfilled the law. In the merciful work of such selflessness, Life and Love and God are loved, and are

³⁰⁸ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 306.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 228.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

given glory. This soteriological argument is laid out explicitly in the parable of a certain Samaritan.³¹¹

A Certain Samaritan

Compassion breaks open the ecclesial circuitry, which revolves around the liturgical cult (the priest; the Levite). It redirects the response of the faithful, from the circuitry outlined by Cavanaugh. It puts into play a concrete, immanent account (a certain man, robbed, beaten, left injured and in terrible need). What to *do*? The response is further liberated, insofar as the “good is not accomplished” by those purified according to rite, and not by those included in the chosen

³¹¹ Lk 10:25-37 (NRSV). Note: the Greek original immediately follows this translated pericope:

²⁵ Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he said, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ ²⁶He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What do you read there?’ ²⁷He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.’ ²⁸And he said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’ ²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbour?’ ³⁰Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.’ ³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ ³⁶Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ ³⁷He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’

25. Καὶ ἰδοὺ, νομικός τις ἀνέστη, ἐκπειράζων αὐτόν, καὶ λέγων, Διδάσκαλε, τί ποιήσας ζωὴν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω; 26. Ὁ δὲ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτόν, Ἐν τῷ νόμῳ τί γέγραπται; Πῶς ἀναγινώσκεις; 27. Ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν, Ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου, ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου, καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου, καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος σου, καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς διανοίας σου· καὶ τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν. 28. Εἶπεν δὲ αὐτῷ, Ὁρθῶς ἀπεκρίθης· τοῦτο ποιεῖ, καὶ ζήσῃ. 29. Ὁ δὲ θέλων δικαιοῦν ἑαυτὸν εἶπεν πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν, Καὶ τίς ἐστίν μου πλησίον; 30. Ὑπολαβὼν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν, Ἄνθρωπος τις κατέβαινεν ἀπὸ Ἱερουσαλὴμ εἰς Ἱεριχώ, καὶ λησταῖς περιέπεσον, οἱ καὶ ἐκδύσαντες αὐτόν καὶ πληγὰς ἐπιθέντες ἀπέληθον, ἀφέντες ἡμιθανῆ τυγχάνοντα. 31. Κατὰ συγκυρίαν δὲ ἱερεὺς τις κατέβαινεν ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ ἐκείνῃ· καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτόν ἀντιπαρήλθεν. 32. Ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Λευΐτης γενόμενος κατὰ τὸν τόπον ἐλθὼν καὶ ἰδὼν ἀντιπαρήλθεν. 33. Σαμαρεῖτης δὲ τις ὁδεύων ἦλθεν κατ’ αὐτόν, καὶ ἰδὼν αὐτόν ἐσπλαγχνίσθη, 34. καὶ προσελθὼν κατέδησεν τὰ τραύματα αὐτοῦ, ἐπιχέων ἔλαιον καὶ ὄϊνον· ἐπιβιάσας δὲ αὐτόν ἐπὶ τὸ ἴδιον κτῆνος, ἤγαγεν αὐτόν εἰς πανδοχεῖον, καὶ ἐπεμελήθη αὐτοῦ. 35. Καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν αὔριον ἐξελθὼν, ἐκβαλὼν δύο δηνάρια ἔδωκεν τῷ πανδοχεῖ, καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ἐπιμελήθητι αὐτοῦ· καὶ ὃ τι ἂν προσδαπανήσης, ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ ἐπανέρχεσθαί με ἀποδώσω σοι. 36. Τίς οὖν τούτων τῶν τριῶν πλησίον δοκεῖ σοι γεγονέναι τοῦ ἐμπεσόντος εἰς τοὺς ληστὰς; 37. Ὁ δὲ εἶπεν, Ὁ ποιήσας τὸ ἔλεος μετ’ αὐτοῦ. Εἶπεν οὖν αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Πορεύου, καὶ σὺ ποιεῖ ὁμοίως.

according to tribe and theocratic precept, but by a person who, as biblical scholar François Bovon reminds us, is “associated with evil.”³¹² If the evil-one becomes the agent of all good in the situation, and becomes the one who honors Leviticus 19:18, and thus, by extension, and by coupling, the one who honors Deuteronomy 6:5, what is being said about the boundaries of *orthodoxy*?

Bovon also reminds us: “The parable is caught up in a debate the stakes of which are access to eternal life. Jesus and the man with whom he is in dialogue agree on appealing to Scripture and on linking eternal inheritance with the practice of the Law.”³¹³ Such agency is stressed by the predominance of the verb “to do” (ποιέω). The verb appears four times, in two identical pairings: the first at the beginning of the pericope in the give-and-take that sets up the parable; the second at the end during the final give-and-take that draws out the relevance of the parable. In the first situation, the lawyer asks *what must I do to inherit eternal life?* (10:25) – thus tying the verb (ποίησας³¹⁴) with salvation (ζωὴν αἰώνιον). Jesus then asks him as to what is written in the Torah. Having answered in a way which links the obligation to love God with the obligation toward one’s neighbor, Jesus commands him “Do!” (ποιεῖ; 10:28) Jesus thus links selfless love (ἀγάπη; cf. the verbal form in 10:27). In the second situation, ποιήσας is now linked to concrete affectivity – ἔλεος (“compassion”), pulling forward the exemplary praxis of the Samaritan, and tying it exclusively to “neighbor,” raising Samaritan in stature above the priest and the Levite. The lawyer, in the end,

³¹² François Bovon, *Luke 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 9:51-19:27*, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. Donald S Deer (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 57. Bovon points out that the Jew’s general animosity toward the Samaritans “was well known,” referencing Jn 4:9. For a contemporary Jewish perspective on Samaritans, in the greater context of *goyim*, see Rosen-Zvi and Ophir, “Paul and the Invention of the Gentiles,” 1–41, esp 12ff.

³¹³ Bovon, *Luke 2*, 51.

³¹⁴ The use of an aorist indicative participle could be read as an indication of completion, hence potentiality, i.e. punctiliar activity (a life well-lived).

explicitly performs the inversion of the Magnificat. Salvation (i.e. the inheritance of eternal life) is bestowed upon the evil who is judged by interpellation to be evil. Salvation seems to be beyond the priest and the Levite, on account of their active choices. And Jesus seals the conclusion with a reiteration of the imperative: ποίει! Bovon is quick to call attention to Jesus' question, which sets up this conclusion put forth by the lawyer. He writes that, as a result this question, "it is no longer a question of a neighbor who stood a chance of becoming an object, but rather one of someone who was becoming (γεγονέναι) the wounded man's neighbor, as the active subject of a relationship."³¹⁵ Rowan Williams's constellation of *newness of life—acceptance—relatedness* is made manifest in the presencing of neighbor by the one considered evil.

The status of 'Samaritan' did not inhibit this τις from being "moved with compassion" (10:33). In this kenotic act, the Samaritan is able to share in God and in Christ. Bovon explains:

The Greek verb σπλαγγνίζομαι, literally 'to be moved in one's entrails,' in other words 'to be moved with compassion,' used elsewhere by Luke to speak of God's and Christ's compassionate love, here designates a type of conduct representing the gospel-message (vv. 33-35), which the expert in the Law was going to be called to imitate (v. 36). The Samaritan understood the situation, approached the wounded man, suffered with him, and took steps to relieve his suffering.³¹⁶

The Samaritan is caught in a relationship, he is moved; he is not clouded by the stumbling block (or scandal, σκάνδαλον) brought on by the fictions of identity and perception, that Williams notes, "we make for ourselves," and which Jesus himself terms "judgment by appearances" (Jn 7:24) or on account of being enfleshed (Jn 8:15). The priest and the Levite are caught with the all-too-human calculus of *juris* brought on the sensory intake of ἰδὼν ("having seen"), which in turn calls *choice*

³¹⁵ Bovon, *Luke 2*, 59.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

into play. The result, “passed by on the other side” (10:31,32), seals their trajectory. The Samaritan, who also sees with the same participle (ιδών), does not judge by appearances, but by right judgment, thus moved into an alignment of love, which, in turn, is in a complementary alignment with the divine.

How does this understanding of salvation, being tied intimately to the proximity of compassion, inform alternative considerations of sacrament, theology and church?

Consequential reconsiderations – of Sacrament

Matthew O’Connell writes, as Vatican II was unfolding, that the sacrament fundamentally signifies “a direct meeting in intimate knowledge and selfless love between God and [the human person].”³¹⁷ In such a moment, God calls out to the person; she hears; and she reaches to touch God, “reaching out in the darkness.”³¹⁸ This perspective does not do away with traditional concerns of Catholic sacraments, such as the objective factors in such events, or the ritualistic markers of site and agent, but it lays open ground for the encounter, which in its openness, honors the Spirit, τὸ πνεῦμα, and the freedom for God’s Spirit to be wholly unpredictable in movement, revelation, and grace—the πνεῦμα *blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes* (Jn 3:8). “God,” claims John Caputo, “is not the

³¹⁷ O’Connell, “New Perspectives in Sacramental Theology,” 197. Bernard Häring writes of the conventional claims the Church has historically placed upon the seven sacraments it venerates: “here truly is the holy place! Here God works! Here the Holy One lays hold on me, He who heals, saves and sanctifies!” Bernhard Häring, C.S.S.R., *The law of Christ; moral theology for priests and laity*, trans. Edwin G. Kaiser, C.P.P.S., vol. 2. Special Moral Theology: Life in Fellowship with God and Fellow Man (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1961), 153.

³¹⁸ O’Connell, “New Perspectives in Sacramental Theology,” 198.

uncaused cause but the call without causality.”³¹⁹ The hearing and the touch, central for O’Connell, in response to God’s call, point to a sensual embodiment at the crux of this intimate event. For feminist theologian Susan Ross, “the corporeal dimension of human life is the basis for all sacramental activity.”³²⁰ In claiming *corpus* as *locus*, Ross pushes to the forefront the issue of matter and form, in the unfolding of the sacramental contact. How this *corpus* is disposed, will determine not only the event-ing of the sacramental, but will have impact on the life of this human person. The Samaritan shows the way to reach out into the darkness of the gap which verily separates every *τις* from every other *τις*, and how to be willing to lose identity and perceptions, in the act of wholly loving another in need. In the intimate knowledge mediated by selfless love between us – us taking either the disposition of the ‘certain’ Samaritan or the ‘unspecified’ “Man” left half-dead on the road – “God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us” (1 Jn 4:12). In ‘doing’ through the verb *σπλαγχνίζομαι*, we are moved in our “entrails,” and we conform to the loving movement that is complementary to God. We have access to the ‘direct meeting,’ which O’Connell considers to be at the heart of the sacramental event.

Michel Henry, with his contemporary employment of phenomenality, again outlines the sacramental access of the person who has been denied access, for whatever apperception, to the traditional sacramental event. In living out of self and into the Arch-Ipseity, into the divine condition of compassionate movement (*σπλαγχνίζομαι*), the person returns to the intimate phenomenality of Life (God).

For Michel Henry, all depends on the movement from the phenomenology of the world back into the phenomenology of Life, and this movement is, in turn, dependent on *religio*—“the

³¹⁹ Caputo, *The Weakness of God*, 123.

³²⁰ Susan A Ross, *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1998), 97.

mysterious and interior bond which makes it so that there is no living without life—a life that is its own and more than its own.” The Christian aspires, according Henry, to make this bond a *living* presence, such that this bond, forgotten by Christian and non-Christian alike, can again be readily reclaimed, in the experiencing of its return.³²¹ Given Henry’s sense of a radical immanent Christ, the compassionate giving-over becomes the site of the sacramental event, an event beyond the powerlessness of words, an event from words into deeds, in which the gift of radically immanent incarnate Logos, in flesh and in blood, can be touched.

— *of Theology*

For theologian and ethicist Clemens Sedmak, theology “looks at our lives from a point of ultimate concern, *as if how we live makes a difference.*”³²² To be attentive, one must “do!” theology “from a village and not from the clouds.”³²³ Sedmak goes on to write:

Doing local theology is a service, like washing feet. You have to be close to the ground to do that. Local theologies are village theologies, theologies that are created within a village, using the available material. Local theologies, however, are also constant invitations to leave the villages, to think beyond the village traditions and rules. Theologies that simply conform to the local rules are not doing justice to the local context.³²⁴

Thus in the split second of the aorist participle of “having seen” (ἰδὼν; Lk 10: 33), the Samaritan moves beyond his cultic culture and the cult of Jerusalem, and in “the hour comes and the hour is

³²¹ Cf. Michel Henry, *Phénoménologie de la vie: Tome 3, De l'art et du politique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France - PUF, 2004), 296.

³²² Clemens Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology: A Guide for Artisans of a New Humanity* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2002), 7.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 16.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

now” of the unanticipated encounter, he lives into “spirit and truth” (cf. Jn 4:23), and gives praise to God, in his wholly emptying into service for the half-dead other. In his do-ing, he does theology. He converts his body into a means of pointing to the nontextual referent of God’s radical immanence: his love points to a reverence for the Logos, through which all comes to be, and of which all reflects in all ipseities.

For the Israeli secular philosopher Adi Ophir, this dispossession amounts to a “moral intentionality” (complete with “concern and interest”), to exactly what is left “intact after other concerns with self and other are subtracted or bracketed.”³²⁵ He does not locate this potentiality in a cultic practice or a theo-ideology. Instead, he writes: “It is not by chance that the gift, the acts of giving and forgiving, reception, hospitality and responsibility (understood as response-ability) have gained such prominence in the recent moral thinking of Levinas, Derrida, and their followers. For these are specific modes of speech, social practices, gestures, and attitudes in which it is possible to show phenomenologically the persistence of a residual moral intentionality.”³²⁶ What this maps is a site for doing theology. In such a sacrament beyond text and beyond cult, in the kenotic display of compassion, a recognizable agency and effect can be communicated to those within and beyond the boundaries of Faith and Law. In performing the living sacrament of selfless compassion, the Samaritan calls into presence the love that reflects the love that reveals Life that is God. The living sacrament becomes a theological statement that can bridge the ubiquitous chasm, which extends between each and every person.

If such becomes the event-ing of sacrament: what becomes of Church?

³²⁵ Ophir, “Disaster as a Place of Morality,” 99.

³²⁶ Ibid.

— *of Church*

Explicitly marked membership within the Church has been historically viewed by the Church as the primary condition for communion with the divine, and of access to salvation.³²⁷ Such absolute, objectivist claims maintain the force of their interpellation, in a constricted hierarchal hegemony. The problem, writes philosopher and Catholic Gianni Vattimo, rests with what he terms *strong* thought. The political becomes wrapped around the hegemonic claim towards access to ontology, and its soteriological and eschatological extensions. For Vattimo, politically secular, religiously Catholic, and sexually homosexual, “the Christian inheritance that ‘returns’ in weak thought is primarily the Christian precept of charity and its rejection of violence.”³²⁸ This hermeneutical understanding comes at a cost. Vattimo confesses: “But in the end for me, and for others like me, to have lived my condition of sexual alienation as one that is bound up with other

³²⁷ It should be mentioned that this hierarchy of significations has been inverted, in principle, by the re-ordering suggested in section 14 of the constitution *Lumen gentium*: “The bonds which bind men to the Church in a visible way are profession of faith, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical government and communion. He is not saved, however, who, though part of the body of the Church, does not persevere in charity. He remains indeed in the bosom of the Church, but, as it were, only in a “bodily” manner and not “in his heart.” All the Church’s children should remember that their exalted status is to be attributed not to their own merits but to the special grace of Christ. If they fail moreover to respond to that grace in thought, word and deed, not only shall they not be saved but they will be the more severely judged. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Lumen gentium* (Dogmatic constitution on the Church, 1964), sec. 14, official English trans., Holy See, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html. Hereafter, the constitution will be cited simply with an acronym of its initials and the relevant section number, e.g. *LG* 14.

In addition, it should be kept in mind that *Nostra Aetate* puts an end to the justification against the Jews, applied by the Church from time to time throughout its history, and succinctly made explicit in the citation from Florence, in 1442. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Declaration *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions, 1965), see esp. sec. 3, 4, and 5, official English trans., Holy See, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html. Such a dispossession calls into question the need/necessity for any absolutism based on sovereignty and the primacy of a static sense of institutional identity and identification.

³²⁸ Vattimo, *Belief*, 44.

forms of racial or class alienation or exclusion has been of decisive significance: it has led me to discover an interpretative key that I would never renounce.”³²⁹ For the Italian philosopher, the alienation is the opening for compassion – it is the starting-point for salvation. Stripped of access to sovereignty and any stake in the hegemonic hetero-sexed patriarchal claim, he can move past the fear of losing that which he, in reality, does not possess, in order to give comfort to any *τις* that he might come upon his way. Bending to the wisdom of St Isaac the Syrian, and abandoning even the Kingdom of Heaven, he can simply love.

Abandoned and denied, he chooses not to do the same in kind.

Theologian Raimon Panikkar reiterates Origen’s and Cyprian’s claim: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (there is no salvation outside the Church), noting, “*Ecclesia* was understood as *locus salutis*, so that wherever salvation happens, there is church” – “throughout the universe.”³³⁰ By extending any potential sacred site to include the entirety of the universe, Panikkar performs a *weak* ecclesiology, thus it bringing into an explicit correlative the earlier implications of Vattimo and Le Saux. *Where there is salvation, there is Church*. When the Samaritan performs the selfless act of true *agapé* (ἀγάπη), he brings Church into be-ing – for there, in his movement, exists proximity to eternal life (salvation). And the Church comes into be-ing out of the coming of the living sacrament into relation with an indiscriminate other.

Philosopher John Caputo underscores the risk involved with such a performance.

“Hospitality arises,” he writes, “in response to a call we did not expect, coming from I know not

³²⁹ Ibid., 74.

³³⁰ Panikkar, “A Christophany for Our Times,” 19. Panikkar draws specifically from Origen (PL 12, 841) and Cyprian (PL 4, 503).

what or where, whose outcome we cannot know in advance. This could be trouble, and the ‘could be,’ the ‘perhaps,’ is irreducible.”³³¹ Caputo “is not interested in ‘religion’ but in God.”

He then pushes against even this thought:

I am not interested in God but in the name of God. I go still further: I am not interested in the name of God but in the event that is harbored in the name of God.³³²

God is not a pure act but a pure interruption, not pure perfection but pure provocation, not a being but an event, the name of an event whose name I do not know, the name of a secret, of the secret sources and resources of life. The name of God is the name of a stranger who seeks a room in our home, of a coming, an advent, which we are called upon to welcome.³³³

Church and sacrament come unanticipated, and intertwined, down along the road. Whether they blossom into be-ing or not becomes contingent upon our choosing ‘to do,’ in a manner not unlike the Samaritan. Their contingent claim waits for us, in advent, and in ambush, beyond the gates of the holy city, before the site marked off as ‘adyton.’ It waits for us in the gutter, in the disco, in the jungle, in the dirt.

Love as the principled distance

In his commentary on the parable, François Bovon notes that the Samaritan allows himself to be taken off course out of compassion for the immediate need of his neighbor – he took care of

³³¹ Caputo, John D., “Hospitality and the Trouble with God,” in *Phenomenologies of the Stranger: Between Hostility and Hospitality*, ed. Richard Kearney and Kascha Semonovitch (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 85.

³³² *Ibid.*, 89.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 96–97. Paul Evdokimov echoes this ‘call’ when he describes the essential state of prayer is to simply be attentive to the presence of the other person—including, and especially, the one in whom Christ questions one (“*L’essentiel de l’état de prière est justement de « se tenir là »: d’entendre de la présence d’une autre personne, celle du Christ, celle de l’homme rencontré aussi, en qui le Christ m’interroge.*”) Cf. Evdokimov, *La Prière de l’Eglise d’Orient: La Liturgie Byzantine de Saint Jean Chrysostome*, 23. Such a state of living allows for the real possibility of the ‘principled distance’ necessary for any maintenance of equity in coexistence.

him (10:34), and took him to an inn, and exhorted the innkeeper to do the same (10:35). In this way, writes Bovon, the Samaritan was “specific and judicious” – he “did what was needed to be done without overdoing it.”³³⁴ He did all he could, to arrange for the health of the man, and then he returned to his life, on his way, navigating his own business. He loved his neighbor, limiting his neighbor’s dependence on him,³³⁵ and returning to his neighbor, over time, his ability, to move, to navigate, to be free. A mariner, like a certain Samaritan, makes his or her way across the sea, all the while open to the contingencies that come across his or her way. And the mariner always operates according to the first rule on the seas: *one comes to the assistance of any mariner in distress*. To the best of one’s ability, one assists any other in their moment of need, the intent being to give succor and to make sure the distressed, if necessary, find sanctuary, before returning to the sea and to the journey.

Bovon further understands *neighbor* has come into being (γεγονέναι; 10:37) – “as the active subject of a relationship” – forged from a contingent proximity “and on the nature of the link that is made.” *Neighbor* is neither an abstract concept, nor an object. Thus neighbor (πλησίον) is not a direct object, an “object of the thing affected,” i.e. *external*. Rather, the accusative can be considered as *internal* or *cognate*, such that it “is brought into existence by an action and the existence of which is coextensive with the action (that is, the object has no existence external to the action of the verb).”³³⁶ ‘Neighbor’ does not exist apart from the coming into being, i.e. into a particular nature of relating (in love).

³³⁴ Bovon, *Luke 2*, 58.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 59.

³³⁶ Cf. Mastronarde, *Introduction to Attic Greek*, 139–40.

As such, identities are not overturned (*Überwindung*) as much as twisted in tensive relation (*Verwindung*): they are weakened, within a new, and temporal, communion. They are brought into this being of *neighbor*, through a proximity that is given value through the selfless act of true *agapé* (ἀγάπη), which, in turn, has, for a heart, a *principled distance* (one governed by a condition of not turning into a love of preference). The implication being: the inheritance of eternal life seems to be linked to making neighbor into one's identity: a happening, that as an event, must be made/done (ποιέω refers to both) again and again, and through such repetition, gains the force of *habitus* from such performativity. It is through this performativity, that *neighbor* gains its lingering affectivity and ipseity, and lends, in turn, a disposition to all navigational negotiations.

Similarly, the re-considerations of sacrament, theology, and church, should not be seen as a threat to the traditional notions of each: but as a way of making 'elbow-room,' principled distance, that would graciously allow all men and all women the freedom to navigate their way, inclusive of the freedom to fail, to fall, to turn to God, to turn away from God, to return to God, and to do likewise with their neighbors.

Such considerations are not brought forward as a way in which to scandalize the beliefs and allegiances of the faithful; they are not meant to cut all that binds the faithful to their Church. They are raised, however, only in the hope of honoring the dispossession necessary for any true ecumenism, any true dialogue, to take place.³³⁷ They are raised, as a possible gift or sign, that the Church could give to the world, that the Church loves the world 'with nothing' (without agenda, without judgment), with a Christly love. For in the ever-stretching diversity that marks the multiform of humanity, the Church sees the face of Christ in every neighbor she meets upon its way, in every

³³⁷ Though cited earlier (see note 89), it would be fitting to quote again from article 28 of *Gaudium et spes*: "article 28: "Respect and love ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political and even religious matters. In fact, the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them."

friend and every enemy, and it puts into practice the indiscriminate loving it has been commanded to do.

Such a gift would honor the disposition of the Second Vatican Council, one which Paul VI termed “deliberately optimistic;” one which allowed the Church to greet the modern world with a “wave of affection and admiration,” in which the “modern world’s values were not only respected but honored, its efforts approved, its aspirations purified and blessed.” Paul VI reminded the council, during his closing speech, that “the old story of the Samaritan has been the model of the spirituality of the council.”³³⁸

³³⁸ Cf. Paul VI, Address of Pope Paul VI During the Last General Meeting of the Second Vatican Council (Holy See, Vatican Archive, December 7, 1965), accessed April 1, 2014, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651207_epilogo-concilio.html.

Karl Rahner calls attention to this honor given to the ‘modern world’ from the Second Vatican Council, by its acknowledgement of salvific possibility in the existences of persons beyond the boundaries historically set up by the Roman Catholic Church. Cf. Rahner, “The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation,” 222. See also note 18. For Rahner, salvation hinges on “the demand for an absolute love of neighbour, in the form presented in Mt 25.” For Rahner, this demand must be honored – integrated into one’s very constitution – “with radical seriousness” (222). For it is “the real experience of love” of Jesus in the real loving of the neighbour, in his or her particularities, imperfections, failings, finitude, that “a man makes an implicit act of faith and love in Christ.” This radical unity – love of God and love of the particular other in front of one – allows love to find “its full realization” – “not as an idea but a concrete reality” (223). “Ideas,” Rahner notes, “cannot be loved: it is the reality which is desired.” One being “both finite and unreliable, cannot rationally justify from [one’s] own resources the offer of absolute love in which a person dares to commit [his or herself] without reserve of qualification to another” (222).

Such love-without-rational-justification could be seen as an “action and event” that *is* both REVELATION (cf. Rahner, “The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology (3 Lectures),” 38) and SALVATION (cf. Mt 25:31–46; Lk 10: 25–37). It is important to note, that whilst Mt 25 does carry in its narrative an explicit divine and external judgment, one should also remember that neither the sheep (v. 37–39) nor the goats (v. 44) ever saw the Lord before his coming “in his glory” (v. 31). The sheep simply loved with “an absolute love” that did not discriminate. The goats never loved, because they were solely looking to love the Lord, but never found him, and so excused themselves of any compulsion towards loving. One might wonder if *thinking* about the consequences of loving/not loving, i.e. about judgment and eternal life, might limit one’s freedom to fully commit to an absolute *loving*. See note 20, and the quotation of St Isaac.

Paul Evdokimov believes this antinomy between loving and thinking to be emblematic of the “modern.” Cf. Evdokimov, *La Prière de l’Eglise d’Orient: La Liturgie Byzantine de Saint Jean Chrysostome*, 24. According to Evdokimov, the ancient tradition does not have the problem of separation: each morning it exhorts the Christly person to place their intelligence in their heart and, in such a fashion, to remain throughout the course of the day in the company of God (“*« Le matin pose ton intelligence dans ton cœur et reste toute la journée en compagnie de Dieu »*”).

Thus, Evdokimov’s Pantocrator (‘ruler over all’) is actually the manifestation of an inversion the earthly anticipation. The triumphant God shows a face of celestial philanthropy; the Servant of YHWH reveals the simple, evangelizing face of tenderness and humble of heart (“*« doux et humble de cœur »*”) (42).

For a philosopher, like Hannah Arendt, this separation is not ‘modern.’ Citing Hugh of St. Victor, Arendt notes that the active life “is devoted to ‘the necessity of one’s neighbor,’” whilst on a higher, rarefied level, the life in the proverbial desert, focused solely on contemplation is *the* life devoted “to the ‘vision of God.’” (“*Duae sunt vitae, activa et contemplativa. Activa est in labore, contemplativa in requie. Activa in publico, contemplativa in deserto. Activa in necessitate proximi, contemplativa in visione Dei.*”)

Two years later, Paul VI would write, in *Populorum progressio*, of the need to build a human community, thus echoing the sentiments of lay Catholics like Terrence Eagleton. Such a community would constitute a *place* “where men [and women] can live truly human lives, free from discrimination on account of race, religion or nationality, free from servitude to other men [and women] or to natural forces which they cannot yet control satisfactorily. It involves building a human community where liberty is not an idle word, where the needy [(τῆς)] Lazarus can sit down with the [(τῆς)] rich man at the same banquet table.”³³⁹ (Cf. Lk 16:19-31) This inclusion lies at the heart of the secularism of Charles Taylor and others.

To allow for Lazarus and the rich man to dine together, neither can claim autarky to the exclusion of the other. Both must live democratically. Lazarus and the rich man dine together as equals only in their selfless welcome for each other, through the merciful gesture, which marks both the loosing of the ego’s sovereignty, and the return of both ipseities back into concord with the Ipseity, from which both come into their unique and distinguishable identities. Lazarus and the rich man dine together in proximity, according to a principled distance of neutrality.

Cf. Hannah Arendt, *Thinking*, 1st ed., vol. 1, The life of the mind (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 6. In this historical calculation, the love of neighbor is devalued over the simple *thinking*—act of contemplation, for contemplation is offered as the sole portal (and means) to the ‘beatific vision’ (i.e. salvation, as scholastically defined).

Correcting this *dis*-valuation, notes Rahner, theological intellectualism “cannot deny that in Christianity the last word is with love and not knowledge. For we are not saved by knowledge but by love, and this can only mean that the act of loving can be the entrance-fee to a life whose essential perfection is centred on something else than that by which it was attained” (Cf. Rahner, “The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology (3 Lectures),” 43–44.) This is a most apt description of the existential character of the sheep in Mt 25. Mt 25 could be read reflectively as an examination of two tendencies in the human condition, and their possible subsequent consequences: (1) to know, and thus, to regulate; and (2) to love, to lose all sense of perspective in the immersion of presence. Furthermore, by extrapolation, one of these tendencies seems to illustrate the principle of “judg[ing] by appearances” and the other tendency, ultimately, “right judgment” (cf. Jn 7:24; 8: 15). Such a standard – the necessity to judge by the limit-value of ‘appearance’ – becomes impossible, when pushed into an encounter with that which, essentially, must forever resist appearing, according to the value of *appearance* – as conventionally defined according to human sensory capacity. This capacity in turn requires *distance* between subject and object in order to be effective. And distance is denied – by the Mystery which surrounds the human person and is at the very heart of her being.

³³⁹ Paul VI, “Populorum Progressio” (Holy See, Vatican Archive, March 26, 1967), sec. 47, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_26031967_populorum_en.html.

VI. CONCLUSION

(CONSIDERATION OF THE GIFT OF THE CHURCH GIFTING FREEDOM
AND SALVIFIC POSSIBILITY TO THOSE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH; AND THOSE,
IN TURN, COMING BACK TO GIVE TO THE CHURCH THAT OPENNESS
NECESSARY SO AS TO BE READY FOR THE INEVITABLE AND RECURRING NIHILISTIC
CONFRONTATION THAT IS A CONDITION FOR ALL AUTHENTIC EXISTENCE)

First of all, it is the *freedom* of the other... that is a burden to Christians. The freedom of the other goes against the Christian's high opinions of themselves, and yet they must recognize it. Christians could rid themselves of this burden by not giving other persons their freedom, thus doing violence to the personhood of others and stamping their own image on others. But when Christians allow God to create God's own image in others, they allow others their own freedom. Thereby Christians themselves bear the burden of the freedom enjoyed by these other creatures of God. All that we mean by human nature, individuality, and talent is part of the other person's freedom—as are the other's weaknesses and peculiarities that so sorely try our patience, and everything that produces a plethora of clashes, differences, and arguments between me and the other. Here, bearing the burden of the other means tolerating the reality of the other's creation by God—affirming it, and in bearing with it, breaking through to delight in it.

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer³⁴⁰

Theology is a theology that can be genuinely preached only to the extent that it succeeds in establishing contact with the total secular self-understanding which man has in a particular epoch, succeeds in engaging in conversation with it, in catching onto it, and in allowing itself to be enriched by it in its language and even more so in the very matter of theology itself.

– Karl Rahner, S.J.³⁴¹

For Bonhoeffer, there are only two choices: gifting freedom to the others that constitute the every-expanding diversity of God's creation, or restricting the others under the stamp of one's own sense of what it means to be human. Bonhoeffer pushes the endurance of the other's freedom into an eventual "breaking through to delight in it." Where Bonhoeffer ends, Rahner begins. To be authentic, theology must engage with the all that surrounds it in the Real of this here and this

³⁴⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life together: Prayerbook of the Bible*, ed. Geoffrey B. Kelly, trans. Daniel W. Bloesch and James H. Burtness (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 101.

now. Theology must not only be vulnerable to the consequences of dialogue, but theology must actively seek to be changed according to the total secular self-understanding of the epoch which marks both the world and the flesh in which, and to which, the theologian, and by extension the Church, is intertwined.

The ‘certain’ person outside the Church gains access to the inheritance of eternal life. In her loving authentically the neighbor, God comes to dwell in the communion between she and the neighbor. Her love opens up into a sacramental event: *direct meeting in intimate knowledge and selfless love with God*. All of this is possible outside the boundaries of Church. All of this is contingent on the freedom³⁴² of the person outside the Church, a God-given freedom inherent in the *flesh* that marks the chiasmus of her personhood. The person does not need the gift of the Church to be.

So, what might the Church gain giving this person her freedom? In gifting the gift of freedom ‘without aim,’ the Church complements the gift of freedom that God gives to all of humankind. In so gifting the gift of freedom, the Church loosens the circuitry of the sovereign claim. Such a release, allows the Church to return. In the exhale of the release and the inhale of the return, the Church breathes in new air. This air is the authentic air of the world which surrounds and supports and intertwines with the Church, and without which the Church would cease to be.

³⁴¹ Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, 7–8.

³⁴² Karl Rahner speaks to this notion of freedom, when he writes: “The person who redeems himself in freedom, i.e. places God in the centre of his own free existence, is a creation who is constituted by the creative freedom of God and is therefore given the capacity to accept God’s self-communication.” Cf. Rahner, “The One Christ and the Universality of Salvation,” 206. Though Rahner’s process follows a Thomistic understanding of grace and makes use of formal distinctions between “uncreated grace” and a “supernatural capacity” arising from Grace, he arrives at a conclusion pointedly similar to that of Michel Henry. “God,” concludes Rahner, “is himself the condition of possibility of human salvation from which man freely realizes his salvation” (206). For Paul

This air holds the possibility of inhaling new theological understandings: imperfect, flawed, speculative – but authentic. Authentic in their exigency, in their questioning, in their examining the suppositions and prescriptions from previous epochs, and striving to find what is relevant, and what is not. Authentic in their goal: to make the radical Word relevant, right here and right now, within the political sphere of life, contingent and fragile.

How might Christly love from the actions of a ‘certain’ person deemed inferior (a modern-day Samaritan) exhort the Church into a deeper understanding of the theological coordinates with which it navigates its pilgrim journey? The following anecdote, excerpted from an interview of a middle-aged woman, a Catholic, and a physician, might offer a glimpse of the gift back upon the Church:

One of the defining experiences that I had as a physician taking care of people with HIV was back in the early days of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Back in the 1980’s, it was a disease primarily of young gay men, men who should have been at the peak of their life, and, instead, were being given a diagnosis that surely meant that they were going to die, and usually within two years of the diagnosis. What I saw, in those experiences, were men who would sacrifice themselves to take care of other men, who were worse off. They would do whatever was necessary to make someone comfortable, and to allow them as much dignity as possible. They had a tremendous sense of generosity in giving of themselves, and gratitude, and of true self-sacrificing love for each other, in providing for those basic needs.

I always felt that I was in the presence of something holy. That God was there. That Grace was present there.³⁴³

These latter day Samaritans (sites of contagion and of ‘disordered’ mortal sin) contain the capacity, at the same time, of emptying into a sacrificing selfless love, into a mercy for nothing, that unfolds

Evdokimov’s observations on freedom see note 176. Also in note 176 is Rahner’s consideration of freedom as a state of evolution: a transcendental, i.e. always new *coming-to-be*.

³⁴³ Mary Ann Kish, M.D., videotaped conversation, January 15, 2015, Collegeville, Minnesota.

into the *Zöe* – that is Life that is the merciful God who is Love. The love from the Samaritan, the one disparaged as unfit or worse, becomes the place in which dwells God.

In the tension between being stigmatized by the judgment of other men, and being a site worthy of direct, intimate knowledge between person and God, the Samaritan becomes catalyst for a nihilistic condition of confrontation. The Samaritan calls into account the navigational coordinates employed by the sovereign to be questioned in relation to an objectivist stance. In this regard, the Samaritan can be seen to fulfill, in the very tensive stance as Samaritan, an essential rôle with respect to the ever-evolving self-understanding of the Church.

In gifting the freedom back to the Samaritan (a freedom the Samaritan intrinsically always had, but was not always honored as possessing), the Church releases itself from any latent force aimed at domination and the necessity for a totality at any expense. The Church traces by its very act of gifting the principled distance, foundational for any authentic participation in democracy, and one which, in turn, allows the Church to (re-)discover the momentum and possibilities for the Church that are coextensive with her own freedom.

In the gifting the freedom back to the Samaritan, the Church unfolds a space beyond *Loi et Foi* (the interpellations of law and faith), a space which signifies the *beyond* at the heart of any honest, apophatic confession. In gifting of freedom to the Samaritan, the Church unfolds, in explicit gesture, the mystery of the Spirit, which no human construct can circumscribe. Such gifting of freedom frees the pronouncements, contained in the command to love, from the nihilism of tautology. The gifting of freedom to the Samaritan underscores the Real, the living immanent presence of a love that is Christly. The giving of freedom to the Samaritan, attends to the Samaritan, in the Real beyond the imaginary or the symbolic. Real attention to the Real offers us, as the Church, the opportunity to attend to the dissonance and the strange within our own selves.

This attention is put into play in the willingness to give freedom (‘for nothing’) to all of the ‘Samaritans’ who come to be before us through the gift of Life given by the Father and the gift of ipseity grounded in the Son.

In gifting freedom to the Samaritan, the Church may find itself finally standing before God, with God,³⁴⁴ without the clinging impulse to need to be – *the*.

³⁴⁴ Near the end of the Divine Liturgy, during the final litany, God is asked to “sail with those who sail.” Cf. *The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom* (Miami: St. Basil’s Press, n.d.). In the French translation, offered by Paul Evdokimov, God is asked to: “*Navigue avec ceux qui naviguent*” – to navigate: [to be immanent so as to be] with those who navigate [this metabolic existence]. Cf. Evdokimov, *La Prière de l’Église d’Orient: La Liturgie Byzantine de Saint Jean Chrysostome*, 135–36.

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