GUEST EDITORIAL: PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND HOPE

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I. INTRODUCTION

Some years ago, in order to pass the time during daily visits to a radiography waiting room, and to muster up sufficient courage to face that for which I waited, along with the many ensuing uncertainties, I worked my way through every article on the subject of courage which was then available to me by means of JSTOR. Those articles were the inspiration for this special issue on Philosophy, Religion and Hope. Perhaps courage is not the same as hope, however, since one might be able to summon courage in a situation in which there is no hope, but, even in such a situation, one might argue, courage requires, and perhaps creates, a kind of hope. If courage enables us to act in a situation in which we might otherwise be paralysed by despair, we act because we hope that action is better than inaction, that action will somehow improve the situation, even if only to a very limited extent.

In asking the contributors to this special issue to write on the subject of Philosophy, Religion and Hope, I expected to receive a collection of essays on the various ways in which religion can help human beings to be hopeful, even in the most difficult of situations. In fact, two of the contributions are warnings against false hope; Michael Schrader and Michael P. Levine are concerned with the negative consequences of false hope, while Jonathan Loose is concerned with what he regards as false hope of a more specific kind – hope for resurrection of the body. These contributions are, however, balanced by more positive assessments of religion and hope – "fundamental hope" (Sarah Pawlett Jackson), hope for "real transcendent otherness" (Christopher Wojtulewicz), hope for "transcendence from within" (Anthony Carroll), hope

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derived from the experience of rapture (Christopher Hamilton), and the contribution of religion to hope in politics (Amy Daughton). In the final paper of the collection, Natalja Deng suggests that there is a form of religious practice which can be life-enhancing, even for the atheist, and does not depend upon belief or hope.

II. MICHAEL SCHRADER AND MICHAEL P. LEVINE

In their paper "Hope: The Janus-faced Virtue With Feathers", Schrader and Levine argue that hope has two faces. Religious responses to suffering are best construed not as theodicy, which takes the form of "a speculative justification of God's goodness in the face of evil", but in terms of action and emotional catharsis, and therefore of hope. Indeed, they argue, "hope functionally explains religion."

But hope has another face. Schrader and Levine draw on the accounts of religion found in the work of the anthropologist Clifford Geerz and the psychoanalyst Tamas Pataki. For Geerz, they note, the function of religion is "that of enabling people to cope with anomie by establishing a sense of order"; it therefore creates, and is created by, hope. Pataki distinguishes between the "religious", for whom religion is "a matter of opinion or belief", and the "religiose", for whom religion is "a powerful expression of conviction and character." Fundamentalism is "the most dangerous and destructive part of religion" but could not exist without the religiose. But, on Pataki's psychoanalytic account of religion, with respect to both the religious and the religiose, it is "elements of narcissism and envy, rather than logic and argument" which generate beliefs. Religious hope is therefore fundamentally concerned with "self-solicitation" since it is, in varying degrees, "an amalgam of desire, wishful thinking, belief, envy, affect, emotion and phantasy." It services our psychic needs which are "rooted in infantile phantasy and result from, among other things, forms of ego-protection related to prejudice and narcissism; needs to feel special, chosen and better than and separate from certain other individuals and groups as one conceives them." Schrader and Levine argue that the darker side of this Janus-faced virtue appears more frequently in religion than it does in everyday life and that, even if we reject this, it is naïve to assume that hope is nearly always positive. Although there are positive aspects of hope, we would be ill-advised to ignore hope's other face.

III. JONATHAN LOOSE

In "No Hope in the Dark: Problems for Four-Dimensionalism", Loose examines Hud Hudson's argument that a materialist view of persons is compatible with the Christian doctrine of resurrection. Hudson argues that objects, including persons, have temporal parts. Thus a person is not wholly present at one time but consists in a series of person-stages extending through time. The same person could therefore be temporally located at different times either side of death.

Loose argues that there are two problems with this view: the problem of counterpart hope and the problem of quasi-hope. According to the problem of counterpart hope, there is no reason why an earlier person-stage should be interested in the existence of a later person-stage – a counterpart which is not numerically identical. Loose argues that I would have reason for hope if I could know that the thing which I am now will be present at the Resurrection, but that, if I cannot know this, the Resurrection provides only a limited reason for hope.

Loose suggests that the most important problem, however, is the problem of quasi-hope. The account which claims to show that it is possible that I will be resurrected on the Last Day also makes me incapable of knowing that it will be me who will be resurrected. Loose argues that, if "Perishable" is a temporal part of two objects – both Jonathan and a human organism – it is important for him to know whether he is Jonathan or a human organism because Jonathan will have resurrection life and the organism will become a corpse. But, Loose argues, he cannot know whether his hope for resurrection is hope that will not disappoint because he is Jonathan, or quasi-hope which will disappoint because he is the human organism which will die. Although the paper ends on a negative note ["The situation for the friend of temporal parts seems, quite literally, hopeless, and this view of resurrection is at least as problematic as the other materialist views to which Hudson objects"], Loose begins his paper by noting that "[t]he dominant Christian view of human nature that has endured across the centuries has affirmed the metaphysical possibility of survival as an entailment of the claim that the bearer of personal identity is an incorporeal soul." He argues that this view is also "the default pre-philosophical human self-understanding throughout history and across societies". So, even if materialist views about human persons generate theories about resurrection which offer "no hope in the dark", this does not

rule out the possibility that non-materialist interpretations of the human self might give more reason for hope.

IV. SARAH PAWLETT JACKSON

A more positive account of hope is offered by Pawlett Jackson in her paper "Hope and Necessity", in which she offers a comparative analysis of ideas derived from Rebecca Solnit and Rowan Williams, the latter of which are illuminated by the work of Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Marion. Pawlett Jackson notes that both Solnit and Williams are concerned with the nature of human agency which responds to that which is valued but either unrealised or beyond our reach, and that both are concerned not with specific hopes but with reasons for what Joseph J. Godfrey calls "fundamental hope" – the disposition which refuses to accept that all is lost; for Pawlett Jackson, they explain "why it is sometimes worth hoping for the improbable, and why we should never succumb to fundamental despair".

For Solnit, Pawlett Jackson suggests, fundamental hope is reasonable because, although we cannot reliably calculate the probability that our hopes for political or social change will be realised, and some of the change for which we hope will not happen, reality is structured in such a way that it is probable that some of our hopes – including, as history shows, some which seem very unlikely – will come to pass, and – as history also shows – that hopeful action may contribute to the realisation of our hopes in ways which we are unable to anticipate.

Pawlett Jackson argues that, for Williams, reality is structured in such a way that hope should be understood as a "saturated phenomenon", a notion derived from the work of Marion. Just as Levinas describes an encounter with something which exceeds our concept of it as an "epiphany", so, for Marion, when we experience a "saturated phenomenon", more is "given" to us than the concept of it is able to convey. Williams claims that art endeavours to show us glimpses of an already-existing reality which exceeds human perception and comprehension – the "saturated phenomenon" – and that it is these glimpses of that which is already actual which provide a basis for fundamental hope. Pawlett Jackson notes that this should not be regarded as a proof of the existence of God, although Levinas, Marion and Williams do "understand the phenomenology of infinity in theistic terms" and the model of hope as a satu-

rated phenomenon may be identified in the Christian hope associated with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, who offers us glimpses of a divine reality which surpasses human understanding.

Pawlett Jackson observes that, for Solnit, we are free to hope for possibilities which we ourselves must turn into actualities whereas, for Williams, freedom lies in the choice of whether or not to respond to the actuality which we may glimpse in and beyond our ordinary perceptions, and which necessitates hope.

Pawlett Jackson argues that Williams's conception of hope as a saturated phenomenon rests on a foundation which is more secure than of Solnit's understanding of hope because it depends upon what is actual rather than upon our changing perceptions of what is probable. Even when our specific hopes are defeated, such defeats may lead to forms of resurrection of which we are, as yet, unable to conceive. If hope as a saturated phenomenon is also theistic, it tracks not only what is actual but also what is necessary, both in the sense that certain forms of action are necessitated by what is actual, and in the sense that there is something which is metaphysically necessary in every possible world and in every possible future. For Williams, the fundamental Christian hope that is that, even if every specific hope were unrealised, something, characterised as an "overflow of presence" or possibility of resurrection, would remain.

V. CHRISTOPHER WOJTULEWICZ

In "Truth as Final Cause: Eschatology and Hope in Lacan and Przywara", Wojtulewicz examines Jacques Lacan's rejection of truth as final cause, his conception of truth as material cause, and the implications of this for religious belief. Wojtulewicz suggests that Lacan rejects the religious person's notion of truth as final cause because there is no reason to suppose that there is a final cause which directs the life of an individual and brings a sense of harmony and the approval of others, and thereby happiness. Rather, in psychoanalysis, truth is material cause and is to be found in what is said by the analysand. Wojtulewicz argues that Erich Przywara helps us to understand that Lacan is struggling with two forms of religion – a form of theopanism in which divine revelation overwhelms the guilty subject, and his own position which may be regarded as a form of pantheism, according to which revelation is received by

means of language and the symbolic, neither of which are able completely to grasp the nature of the reality which lies beyond language. Neither theopanism nor pantheism in Lacan's thought employ the use of analogy and it is this, Wojtulewicz argues, which prevents his religious person from experiencing truth as final cause as hopeful.

Wojtulewicz argues that, in Lacan's pantheism, transcendence is found within the immanent, and every example of speech is an attempt to say that which is unsayable. For Przywara, by contrast, real transcendent otherness is found both in and beyond immanence, and can be grasped by means of analogy. Although there might appear to be similarities between the two positions – for example, we might say that the effect upon the human subject of the notion of the infinite in cosmology is similar to that of philosophical and theological exploration of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity – Wojtulewicz argues that this gives us no grounds to say that claims about the existence of real transcendent otherness are untrue, and that Lacan's agnosticism concerning real transcendent otherness may be regarded as a manifestation of hopelessness. Wojtulewicz concludes that, for Przywara, hope is only restored when religious truth is conceived analogically because it is this which enables us to understand that it is "in" earthly life that the "beyond" for which we hope is manifested.

VI. ANTHONY CARROLL

In "Between the Infinite and the Finite: God, Hegel and Disagreement", Carroll begins with a problem which is articulated by Rowan Williams and develops a solution based on an understanding of transcendence which is derived from Hegel. He argues that the differences between the religious and the non-religious do not concern matters of fact; since neither side is entirely made up of people who do not think, there is, as Williams suggests, "something else going on". Thus, there may be more than one correct interpretation of the facts, and religious commitment is therefore like a gestalt switch.

Carroll notes that modern ways of thinking about God distinguish between two realities, God and the world, but argues that they are unable to show how these realities communicate with each other. Conversely, if there is only the world, there is no place for God or values. The interpretation of religion which he therefore recommends is derived from Hegel's panenthe-

istic ontology, according to which all things have their being in God. The relationship between God and the universe is therefore both causal and constitutive; the true infinite is the essential concept of philosophy, and the finite is an essential moment of the infinite. When the nothingness of the finite is reconciled with the infinite, the finite is thereby preserved on a higher level. Carroll suggests that, for Hegel, we are frightened by the thought of our own death and nothingness when we should, instead, see ourselves as in transition to unity with true infinity; the finite is an aspect of the true infinite which is transformed and preserved in the true infinite. God is therefore that on which the existence of everything depends, and to understand this is "an experience of transcendence from within". This, Carroll suggests, offers one way in which philosophy can serve the dialogue between the religious and the non-religious.

VII. CHRISTOPHER HAMILTON

In "Philosophy and Religion, Hope and Rapture", Hamilton argues that not nearly enough philosophers take the unspeakable quantity of suffering in the world seriously. He gives as an example Richard Swinburne's claim that he feels "*considerable initial* sympathy" with the view that, in permitting evils such as Hiroshima, the Holocaust, the Lisbon earthquake, or the Black Death, God has "overdone it". But, Hamilton argues, anyone who claims to feel an "initial sympathy" with the victims of the Holocaust, a sympathy which is soon set aside, has "no understanding of the issue at all".

Hamilton argues that philosophy and religion should not focus on the formulation of arguments which fail both to take adequate account of human suffering and to alleviate it. Rather, philosophy should remind us of ways in which we can seek consolation and experience rapture, perhaps by means of relationships, visual art or music, or in the more commonplace pleasures of our daily lives. For Hamilton, the experience of rapture is religious because it expresses the sacred; it is "the *spirit* that animates a life" which, seen in others, provides hope because it shows us a genuine possibility.

VIII. AMY DAUGHTON

In "Hope and Tragedy: Insights from Religion in the Philosophy of Ricoeur", Daughton traces the relationship between hope and the tragic throughout the writings of Ricoeur, and examines their significance at both the existential and ethical levels. Daughton notes that Ricoeur regarded himself primarily as a philosopher, but that religious discourse was also important for him as its myths and reception provide the philosopher with further understanding of the nature of the human person. There is a point at which philosophical analysis ends and the religious dimension begins, the point at which one experiences transcendence, and Daughton suggests that the experience of transcendence can reveal hope, which provides a meeting point between philosophy and theology.

Daughton notes that, in "Hope as the Structure of Philosophical Systems", Ricoeur draws on Kant to argue that our knowledge and power are limited, particularly by the reality of evil, but that we can hope for liberty in the form of regeneration of the will towards goodness. It is the task of "religion within the limits of reason alone" to show how this might be possible without resorting to magical beliefs or religious authority. In Christian thinking, hope aims to address death or despair by offering a rationally chosen new way of living which asserts that, in every desperate situation, there is more sense than nonsense. In *The Symbolism of Evil*, even Dread, symbolizing the experience of fear or harm, is associated with the notion of fault, but therefore also with the freedom to make right choices. And, in *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur examines three levels of ethical reasoning in the human person in relation to others – the ethical aim, the test of the norm, and practical wisdom. The ethical aim is "the aim of the good life, living well, with and for others, in just institutions". The test of the norm is where diverse persons agree limits to moral norms and obligations. But there may be conflicts, and these may be resolved by practical wisdom which respects persons but tries to reconcile opposition; there may be no ideal solution, but practical wisdom tries to identify the best solution available. Daughton suggests that, for Ricoeur, in placing a situation against the vision of the ethical life with and for others, practical wisdom "heralds hope in that vision, and its practical outworking".

Daughton concludes that, for Ricoeur, the resources of religion may be found at and beyond the limits of philosophical reasoning, and argues that

the Christian hope of right and loving relationships can contribute to political hope by informing and transforming political discussion and action. The symbols of religion articulate existential fear, but can also offer meaningfulness and replenish the political imagination. Daughton suggests that we are responsible for rejecting fear and choosing hope, since it is hope which represents the resources of the imagination which can enable us to resolve tragic conflict.

IX. NATALJA DENG

In "Religion for Naturalists and the Meaning of Belief", Deng questions Tim Crane's claim that atheists can obtain no solace from religion and argues that it is possible for atheists to obtain solace from religion by participating in naturalistic religious practice. She suggests that a religious tradition and its texts may be regarded as a story, and that participation in a religious service constitutes immersion in a story in which one becomes an actor in the world view of the religious story. Religion is therefore a means by which we may create a sense of the sacred. Thus we may legitimately experience feelings of humility or gratitude before a fictional all-powerful and all-loving creator. There is no hope that a divine being is able to hear us and care about us in this life and guarantee an afterlife in which justice will be done, but the thought of a transcendent order can bring about a positive emotional reaction, just as negative thoughts about, for example, one's house burning down, lead to a negative emotional reaction, even when we know that such thoughts are not representative of reality. Deng argues that we can choose to create such emotions repeatedly, just as we repeatedly choose to create certain transient emotions by means of music. We are unable to understand how, if a good God exists, there is so much suffering in the world, and we are even unable to understand what it might mean for God to exist. But if God is part of a story, the value of engaging with that story does not depend upon belief or hope, especially if opening oneself to existential uncertainty by engaging with the idea of the transcendent is a key feature of religious practice.