EUROPEAN JOURNAL FOR PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

VOLUME 11 NUMBER 3 AUTUMN 2019

THEME: PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND HOPE

RESEARCH ARTICLES

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

GUEST EDITORIAL: PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND HOPE

Elizabeth Burns
University of London

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

PP. 1–9
DOI: 10.24204/EJPR.V11I3.2988
AUTHOR: ELIZABETH.BURNS@LONDON.AC.UK
EUROPEAN JOURNAL FOR
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION
Vol 11, No 3 (2019)

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.

HOPE: THE JANUS-FACED VIRTUE (WITH FEATHERS)[1]

Michael Schrader and Michael P. Levine
University of Western Australia

"And sore must be the storm; that could abash the little bird; that kept so many warm"
- Emily Dickinson

"Hope doesn't pay the bills"
- The Indian Detective (Netflix, 2017)

Abstract. In this essay we argue for the Janus-faced nature of hope. We show that attempts to sanitise the concept of hope either by separating it conceptually from other phenomena such as wishful thinking, or, more generally, by seeking to minimise the negative aspects of hope, do not help us to understand the nature of hope and its functions as regards religion. Drawing on functional accounts of religion from Clifford Geertz and Tamas Pataki, who both—in their different ways—see the function of religion in terms of its capacity to satisfy deep psychological needs, we demonstrate that religion uniquely positions itself with regard to hope's two faces, simultaneously exploiting positive and negative aspects of hope.

I. INTRODUCTION

If hope is a virtue, with attendant vices rooted, as Aristotle would have it, in excess or deficiency, it is a Janus-faced one. This is not only because of hope's associated vices (hoping at the expense of doing; hoping for morally repugnant things; unreflectively catering to unworthy — and worthy — desires), but also because of hope's functions and nature. As a virtue, hope is necessary for living even minimally well. As with other abilities, dispositions and strengths of character, it often eludes us when we need it most. Nevertheless, if one can muster

1 Emily Dickinson, "Hope is the Thing with Feathers (254)", accessed September 5, 2017, https://poets.org/poem/hope-thing-feathers-254.

PP. 11–30
DOI: 10.24204/EJPR.V11I3.2935
AUTHOR: MICHAEL.SCHRADER@RESEARCH.UWA.EDU.AU
AUTHOR: MICHAEL.LEVINE@UWA.EDU.AU

EUROPEAN JOURNAL FOR
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION
Vol 11, No 3 (2019)

enough of it, hope lets us makes the best of bad situations, and helps us to go on not only in the midst of tragedy, but also in the face of the lesser difficulties that constitute much of the quotidian. As with other virtues, hope forms and moderates our characters, thoughts, actions, feelings and emotions. In its religious dimension, it may serve as a response to evil or the problem of evil (two quite different things). This is different from regarding hope as essential to a theodicy since theodicies, as justifications of God's goodness in the face of evil, rarely rely on hope even though the justification of God's goodness in some way or another is the object of much of the hope associated with religion.

But there is a quite different, though not necessarily opposing, aspect to hope; one that sees it rooted not only in our moral natures, but as much, if not more, in our orectic natures. This aspect of hope is grounded in our mental states as governed by desire, wish-fulfilment and phantasy. Unlike Walker[2] and Day,[3] who are at pains to distinguish "hope" proper from wishful thinking and phantasy, as we see it, there is no clear demarcation between hope and wishful-thinking because in varying degrees the two are connected. There would be no hope apart from wishful-thinking and little or no wishful-thinking apart from hope.

Religion uniquely positions itself with regard to hope's two faces. And it is necessary for religion (and so for the religious), to simultaneously exploit these two aspects of hope. This essay argues for the Janus-faced nature of hope, and explains why it is essential to religion and how it functions. Section II looks at definitions of hope. Section III examines hope as a virtue. Section IV looks at how hope functions positively and negatively on two different functional accounts of religion.

II. WHAT IS HOPE?

What is striking about analytic definitions of hope is not merely that they are essentialist — seeking and often stipulating necessary and sufficient conditions. Rather, it is that such definitions tell us very little about the function or even the nature of hope. How insightful is it to discover that we generally hope for what we (i) desire, (ii) think "good" and hence desirable, and (iii) believe to be at least remotely possible? How significant is it for understand-

2 Margaret U. Walker, "Hope's Value", in *Moral Repair*, ed. Margaret U. Walker (CUP, 2006).
3 J. P. Day, "Hope", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (1969).

ing hope if it turns out that hope is not an emotion *per se* but a psychological attitude — one that, like love, is individuated "by the character of the subject, the character of the object, and the relation between them"?[4] And suppose hope, like love, is also constituted by a set of various dispositions, attitudes, feelings, and desires that are at times accompanied by predictable actions?[5]

Walker says, "we look at our concept of 'hoping' as ascribing an emotional stance or 'affective attitude,' a recognizable syndrome that is characterized by certain desires and perceptions, but also by certain forms of attention, expression, feeling, and activity."[6] This is similar to Wollheim's psychoanalytic account of emotion as that which attitudinally orients us to the world. He describes the role of emotion as providing one "with an orientation… an attitude to the world. If belief maps the world, and desire targets it, emotion tints or colours it: it enlivens it or darkens it as the case may be."[7] For Wollheim,

> that emotion rides into our lives on the back of desire is a crucial fact about emotion, as well as a crucial fact about us. The colour with which emotion tints the world is something to be understood only through the origin of emotion in desire.[8]

Much the same can be said of hope. Hope too, "rides into our lives on the back of desire," and, like emotion, the way in which hope "tints the world" is to be understood "through the origin of [hope] in desire." If this is so, then the way hope functions in our lives — as with desire, emotion, and even love — must be both positive and negative.

This may strike some as strange. It is easy to be sentimental about hope — the "thing with feathers" — and to want an unproblematic conception of hope as

4 Amélie Rorty, "The Historicity of Psychological Attitudes: Love Is Not Love Which Alters Not When It Alteration Finds". In *Mind in Action: Essays in the Philosophy of Mind* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1988), 121.

5 Walker, "Hope's Value", 44 describes hope as a "powerful and pervasive emotional attitude." But she then adds (2006:44) — referring to Day, "Hope": "Hope is a 'state of mind.' Is it an emotion or feeling, a state of belief, or a combination of belief and desire?" In any case, unlike Day, "Hope", her concern is less definitional and more about the nature and function ("efficacy") of hope: "I want to look at the nature, role, and value of hope in its elements of *futurity*, *desire, belief in possibility*, and, above all, its *efficacy*, hope's dynamic tendencies to move us in feeling, thinking, expression, and action toward what it seeks, sometimes in surprising and improbable ways… [hoping] is as basic to us as breathing…, and basic in the same way: it is something we must do to live a human life."

6 Walker, "Hope's Value", 48.

7 Richard Wollheim, *On the Emotions* (Yale Univ. Press, 1999), 15.

8 Wollheim, *On the Emotions*, 16.

a force for good, one clearly distinguishable from related psychological phenomena (i.e., wishful or magical thinking). In a sentimental mood, it might be tempting to agree with Kierkegaard who thought that, "if one hopes for something for which it is a shame to hope… one really does not hope."[9] For Kierkegaard, to call such things "hope" is a "misuse" of a "noble word."[10] Nonetheless it is a truism that we are often led astray by hoping. We counsel against "getting one's hopes up," and we criticise others (and ourselves if we are self-aware) for *vain* hopes, *idle* hopes, *false* and even *immoral* hopes. Yet for Kierkegaard and for others, the very idea of an immoral hope involves a confusion, for hope (as he hopes it to be) "is essentially and eternally related to the good."[11]

In "The Right to Hope" Tillich complained that "philosophers and theologians… devaluate hope by calling it wishful-thinking or utopian phantasy."[12] When applied to more recent treatments of hope by analytic philosophers the complaint is groundless. What is more common are analyses that shadow Tillich's and that are similar in spirit to Kierkegaard's. Their interest is not so much in exploring the nature of hope, but of trying to find ways of distinguishing "genuine hope" from "foolish hope"[13] — which, as it turns out, is not hope at all. Even Walker, who sets out in earnest to "look at the nature, role, and value of hope in its elements of *futurity, desire, belief in possibility,* and, above all, its *efficacy,*"[14] devotes pages of argument to a distinction between hope and wishful or magical thinking. Her purpose is to show that certain dangers others have identified in hope[15] are in fact not problems with *hope* at all. Properly conceived, these are dangers that attach to wishful and magical thinking. They are "not, so to speak, hope's problem."[16]

Is it unfair to call this sentimental? Seen in a different light, what Kierkegaard, Tillich, Walker and others share is not a blind spot, but rather the idea that hope is a normative concept. This is a point that Nicholas H. Smith makes explicit. In Smith's view, that the concept of hope "would contain a

9 Soren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love* (Harper Collins, 2009), 244.
10 Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 244.
11 Ibid.
12 Paul Tillich, "The Right to Hope", *Neue Zeitschrift Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 7, no. 3 (1965): 371.
13 Tillich, "The Right to Hope", 373.
14 Walker, "Hope's Value", 44.
15 See Luc Bovens, "The Value of Hope", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 59, no. 3 (1999).
16 Walker, "Hope's Value", 53.

standard in relation to which the worth or significance of actual particular instances of hope could be assessed,"[17] is precisely what we should expect, and he sees it as the job of philosophers to spell out what this standard consists in. We have no quarrel with the project of articulating a normative conception of hope *per se*. If we are interested in the question of the value of hope, there is, in a sense, no important difference between, on the one hand, constructing a normative conception of hope, and on the other, defining hope in such a way that one must go on and distinguish "good" hopes from "bad" hopes.

But here's the rub. If we want to understand the nature and function of hope as it pertains to religion, we need to be able to take religious hopes at face value. That is, we need to be able to understand certain characteristically religious hopes as *hopes*, and this involves affirming that "bad" hopes are still hopes — something Smith and Walker seem to deny. Consider the following from Kierkegaard:

> A vindictive individual says sometimes that he hopes to God that vengeance will fall upon the hated one. But, in truth, this is not to hope, but to hate, and it is impudent to call this a hope; it is blasphemy to wish to make God an accomplice in hating.[18]

Kierkegaard is offering a theological view disguised as a definition. He is trying to say that vindictive hopes have no place in the life and character he recognises as "Christian," thereby imploring his reader not to hope vindictively. While in many cases there is only a rhetorical difference between saying "to hope for *that* is not hope" rather than "you should not hope for *that,*" what is crucial for present purposes is that hopes relating to beliefs about (divine) justice are an important part of many religions and that many of these beliefs are morally dubious.

To understand the relationship between hope and religion, we need to understand how religious beliefs can become the objects of hope. Often, it is our hopes and desires that shape our beliefs rather than vice-versa. As Walker says, "the ability to imagine and embody imagination seems profoundly intertwined in the human capacity to hope."[19] But she is mistaken in distancing embodied imagination from magical thinking. Isn't embodied imagination

17 Nicholas Smith, "From the Concept of Hope to the Principle of Hope", in *Hope after Hope*, ed. Rochelle Green and Janet Horrigan (Rodopi, 2010), 16.

18 Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 245.

19 Walker, "Hope's Value", 59.

a form of magical thinking? How could it be efficacious if it was not? As we see it, there is no clear line between magical thinking and embodied imagination in hoping, and so Walker's distinction between hope and wishful thinking is artificial rather than conceptual as she claims.[20] A great deal of hoping — actual cases of hoping — are indivisible, in the act, from wishful thinking — which is itself a form of magical thinking.

No essentialist account of hope in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions is going to be satisfactory. Such accounts are invariably prescriptive, and we see no need to decide upon a categorisation of hope as either an attitude, an emotion, an activity, or a disposition in some exclusive sense. Hope is all these things. For this reason, a Wittgensteinian "family resemblance" account would be a step in the right direction, though it hardly gets to the heart of the matter — that is, if we are wanting to explore how hope functions, and not merely when and where the word can be applied. Instead, we recognise that no single account will suffice. What is needed are accounts of the varieties of hope (much like the varieties of love), as well as of the many functions — positive and negative — hope plays in our lives. While stories help contextualise and illustrate the varieties and functions of hope, theorising (a variety of theories) about hope's role and nature is also needed.

III. HOPE AS VIRTUE

We have just noted that the concept of hope picks out a number of different things; that hope may accurately be thought of as a psychological attitude, an emotion, an activity, or disposition of character. McGeer has argued that this is not simply a consequence of "ordinary language looseness with the term," but rather, it is because hope is "a unifying and grounding force of human agency … a condition for the possibility of leading a human life."[21] As McGeer characterises it, hope involves the "imaginative representation of future possibilities,"[22] and it is easy to see why such a process might be thought of as essential to effective practical reasoning. It is through the activity of hoping

20 Walker, "Hope's Value", 53.

21 Victoria McGeer, "The Art of Good Hope", *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 592, no. 1 (2004): 101–2.

22 McGeer, "The Art of Good Hope", 105. Cf. Bovens on "mental imaging." Bovens, "The Value of Hope", 674.

that we set goals for our future, explore the options for their achievement, and muster the willpower to pursue them. To the extent that this is so, hope is necessary, as we have said, for living even minimally well.

Just as important however, is the experience of hope in situations where we understand our own agency as being limited in regard to the fulfilment of some desired future good. As McGeer observes,

> hope signifies our recognition that what we desire is beyond our current (or sole) capacity to bring about — and in the limiting case, it is beyond our capacity *tout court*: We hope for something that could not be in any way affected by our efforts to bring it about.[23]

It might be thought that this observation undermines the connection between hope and agency just asserted, or, at least, reduces its significance. However, as Bovens notes, even in the limiting case where our own efforts can have no effect in bringing about whatever it is that we are hoping for, hope maintains an "aura of agency."[24] This is insightful, and it need not be understood — as Bovens himself tries to explain it — in terms of a "mistaken generalisation" about hope *as such* from those situations where it may be true that "hoping makes things so — or, at least, helps make things so."[25] Bovens thinks that much like prayer, hope "builds on an illusion of causal agency,"[26] where we imagine that merely by hoping we are having some causal effect on the way things turn out.[27] Contrary to Bovens, McGeer argues that,

> hoping is … a way of actively confronting, exploring, and sometimes patiently biding our limitations as agents, rather than crumbling in the face of their reality. Thus, hope in the limit case is still about taking an agential interest in the future and in the opportunities it may afford. It is about saying the following: although there may be nothing we can do now to bring about what we desire, our energy is still oriented toward the future, limitations notwithstanding.[28]

The scope of these remarks ought to have been restricted to something like "hoping-well", and not allowed to range over hoping *as such*. It is just as likely

23 McGeer, "The Art of Good Hope", 103.
24 Bovens, "The Value of Hope", 679.
25 Ibid., 680.
26 Ibid., 679.
27 Compare the "thoughts and prayers" routinely offered in response to gun violence in America in place of real action in legislating gun control.
28 McGeer, "The Art of Good Hope", 103.

that the "imaginative representation of future possibilities" which McGeer takes to be constitutive of hope may lead to the ignoring or downplaying of agential limitations, or conversely, a "crumbling in the face of their reality." Though McGeer does assert that "hoping is essentially a way of positively and expansively inhabiting our agency, whether in thought or in deed,"[29] that comment, and those quoted above, suggest a sanitised normative conception of hope that conflicts with the main thrust of her argument — that hoping well is an art. More than most, McGeer is alert to the liabilities of hope in excess, and she does not conceive of them, as Kierkegaard does, as "misuses" of a "noble word." McGeer acknowledges that too much hope can lead to "increased vulnerability or despair"; that it can compromise "one's ability to think about … one's situation or one's own capacities realistically"; that it often supports "self- and other deception"; and she points out that through hoping, "one may become so fixated on the hoped-for end that one may cease to think sensibly or morally about the means one employs to achieve it."[30] In this way, along with the very real possibility of hoping for morally repugnant things, the list of vices associated with hope must also include the unreflective catering to both unworthy and worthy desires.

Vices of hope notwithstanding, it is still possible to regard hope as a virtue. There is no need to adopt the Socratic view that virtues can never be misused. Hope is a virtue not only because of the essential and constitutive role that it plays in the lives of agents (all of us) who must live with an eye toward (and a plan for) the future, but because of the orientation and the colour with which it "tints the world." Adam Kadlac has argued that hopefulness as a general quality of character should be understood in terms of the nurturing of "a specific hope, namely, the hope that the future will be good."[31] In a slightly different way than Kadlac explicitly intends, this remark can be taken to mean that insofar as hope is a virtue, it is a disposition involving the cultivation and maintenance of hope that the future will be good.

This is not to say that hope as a virtue involves a belief that the future will be good. That would be to confuse hope with optimism, and to deny the obvious truth that hope is — thankfully — quite compatible with pessimism.

29 Ibid., 104.

30 Ibid., 102.

31 Adam Kadlac, "Hope(s) and Hopefulness", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 54, no. 3 (2017): 209.

One can be altogether convinced that things will turn out poorly and yet remain resolutely hopeful for the future. Indeed, this is one of hope's greatest strengths, and for the hopeful person it is made manifest in every area of life. From mundane events and everyday challenges, through to the extremes of tragedy, in its steady anticipation of a future that is good, hope enables us to make the best of bad situations. Like other virtues hope forms and moderates our characters, thoughts, actions, feelings and emotions. We hope that the weather will be fine on the day of a celebration, and when things turn out otherwise we think nothing of it and enjoy ourselves regardless. We hope that the workday won't be swamped by unforeseen difficulties, and, when it is, we rise to the challenge. The terminal cancer patient may be full of hope for recovery or a cure, but when it becomes clear that illness will have its way, rather than clinging to false hopes, her focus shifts to the task of meeting death with courage.[32] McGeer articulates this general point with clarity. Hope need not degenerate into a "rosy-hued delusion" that "makes the impossible seem possible, and the possible seem more desirable than it often really is."[33] Rather,

> it is characteristic of those who hope well to resolutely shift their target of hope when the world proves adamantine with respect to some hoped-for end. Under particularly difficult circumstances, when choices of ends are highly restricted, this may even involve shifting the focus of our hopeful energy onto the manner with which things are done.[34]

As regards religion, we can see this aspect of hope at play in attempts to deal with the problem of evil and suffering. Geertz writes that, "as a religious problem, the problem of suffering is, paradoxically, not how to avoid suffering but how to suffer, how to make of physical pain, personal loss, worldly defeat, or the helpless contemplation of others' agony something bearable, supportable — something, as we say, sufferable."[35] What we have in mind is not the kind of response that takes the form, as in theodicy, of a speculative justification of God's goodness in the face of evil. Responses to the religious dimension of the problem have much more to do with "action and the catharsis of

32 The example is McGeer's.

33 McGeer, "The Art of Good Hope", 110.

34 Ibid., 109.

35 Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System". In *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books, 1971), 104.

feelings and emotions,"[36] and so, much more to do with hope. Even though belief in some theodicy is the object of much of the hope associated with religion, strictly speaking, those who affirm a theodicy have no need to rely on hope. Their psychological state is much closer to optimism. For others who are less impressed by the logical possibility of a given justification, theodicy appears to deal with the problem of evil only by explaining it away, and taking refuge in a "transcendental illusion."[37]

IV. HOPE'S OTHER FACE

Although theories concerning the function of hope in one aspect of our lives may overlap with its function in other areas, no reductive (prescribed) theory is likely to suffice. Thus, even for religion, it is unlikely that a comprehensive account of the varieties of hope and its functions can be given. Nevertheless, what we intend to do here is to give an account of what we take to be the central roles that hope plays in religion — so much so that, in part, hope functionally explains religion. To do this, we need to first give an account of what we take religion to be. The accounts we adopt are those of anthropologist Clifford Geertz,[38] and a recent psychoanalytic account by Tamas Pataki.[39] Either account can be seen as essentialist and reductive, but they need not be. And while we regard these accounts as insightful, we do not regard them as exhaustive. In doing so we think we are in line with Geertz's and Pataki's own thinking.

Both Geertz and Pataki see the function of religion in terms of its capacity to satisfy deep psychological needs. For Geertz, following Weber, this is largely framed in terms of the Problem of Meaning. On Geertz' account, our very "creatural viability" depends upon the capacity of our "symbols and symbol systems" to cope with "bafflement, suffering, and [the] sense of intractable ethical paradox."[40] Pataki instead emphasises the needs of desires and phantasies — those that, in the interest of ego-protection, serve to appease, at least

36 Paul Riceour, "Evil: A Challenge to Philosophy and Theology", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53, no. 4 (1985): 644.

37 Riceour, "Evil: A Challenge to Philosophy and Theology", 642.

38 See Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System" in *The Interpretation of Cultures*.

39 See Tamas Pataki, *Wish-fulfilment in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2014); Tamas Pataki, *Against God* (Scribe Books, 2007).

40 Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System" in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 99-100.

temporarily, fundamental needs and wishes generated by narcissism, envy and guilt. Both accounts support the view that religion is a self-solicitous response not only to how we would like the world to be, but also to what we need it to be. Rather than our emotions and desires being determined by what we believe, as noted earlier, it is often the case that beliefs about ultimate reality (including religious beliefs) are determined by wishes, desires, phantasies and emotion.

From Geertz, we extrapolate an account of the role that hope plays in mediating "worldview" and "ethos". As a "dynamic force," capable of "recharging or rearranging our larger picture of what we desire, including the nested goals and goods that make it up,"[41] the way hope functions in religion is in part to align our conceptions of reality with our attitudes toward life and how we live in view of these. As such, hope helps us cope, as we must, with "chaos" (meaninglessness). But on Pataki's psychoanalytic account, as with Freud's, hope's rootedness in our orectic/ self-protective natures implies that the impact of hope in religion is largely negative and predominantly serves our darker side. In thinking about hope it is important that this side of hope be acknowledged. One misses half of what is important about hope and of what it is to understand hope if one minimises its negative aspects.

IV.1 Clifford Geertz on religion: Hope's mediation between belief and ethos

Geertz defines religion as "a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive, and longlasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic."[42] For Geertz, religious symbols function so as to,

> ... synthesize a people's ethos — the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood — and their world view — the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive idea of order. In religious belief and practice a group's ethos is rendered intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life ideally adapted to the actual state of affairs the world view describes, while the world

41 Walker, "Hope's Value", 51.

42 Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System" in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 90. We note that Geertz's use of the term 'man' is an unfortunate anachronism and wish to register that our preference is for a more inclusive expression such as 'humankind.' Nonetheless, here, and in subsequent passages where reference is made to 'mankind,' we ask the reader to bear in mind that we are directly quoting Geertz.

> view is rendered emotionally convincing by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs peculiarly wellarranged to accommodate such a way of life. This confrontation and mutual confirmation has two fundamental effects. On the one hand, it objectivizes moral and aesthetic preferences, by depicting them as the imposed conditions of life implicit in a world with a particular structure ... On the other, it supports these received beliefs about the world's body by invoking deeply felt moral and aesthetic sentiments as experiential evidence for their truth…[43]

Though the role that religion once had of explaining and controlling nature may have been relinquished to science by modern religion, for Geertz, this role is just part of the function, more broadly construed, that religion and culture necessarily retain even in the modern world. The distinction between traditional and modern religion should not obscure the fact that religion retains the same basic functions it always had; that of enabling people to cope with anomie by establishing a sense of order. Geertz observes that, "bafflement, suffering, and a sense of intractable ethical paradox are all, if they become intense enough or are sustained long enough, radical challenges to the proposition that life is comprehensible and that we can, by taking thought, orient ourselves effectively within it."[44] In the face of these challenges, religion creates meaning and maintains a sense of order through an alignment of cognitive beliefs about the nature of things (a "worldview") with affective attitudes towards them (an "ethos"). Geertz's key insight is that these two elements are dynamically interactive. What a particular cultural system (i.e. religion) sees as morally right and wrong reflects — and in turn sustains — the way in which the nature of ultimate reality is understood (i.e. how things really are).

Geertz's account is focused on the nature and function of religion, but, with some extrapolation, an account of hope's role in religion can be inferred. Where Geertz sees religion as concerned with various threats to "our powers of conception,"[45] in part, "hope" addresses such threats by wishfully and imaginatively allowing us to cope with, if not disarm them. Each of us has a deep need

43 Ibid., 89–90. The similarities between Geertz's anthropological view of religion and Peter Berger's sociological account are significant. In Berger's account "humanly constructed *nomoi* are given a cosmic status" which promotes the legitimation of social institutions and "world-maintenance.", Peter L. Berger, *Sacred canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Doubleday, 1990), 36.

44 Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System" in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 100.

45 Ibid., 99.

to be right about our worldview and ethos, because we need the order, meaning and direction that comes with the feeling we (and the world) are right. Hope services this need. We hope our beliefs about the nature of things to be true because we have a need to believe and feel that they are. Thus, we see hope at work in religion through the dynamic interaction of worldview and ethos.

The role we are attributing to hope is revealed through Geertz' account of ritual:

> In a ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be the same world ... any religious ritual ... involves this symbolic fusion of ethos and world view… religious performances ... for participants ... are ... not only models of what they believe, but also models for the believing of it. In these plastic dramas men attain their faith as they portray it.[46]

Religious hope, and much non-religious hope, is expressed by means of such religious symbols; and hope employs, manipulates and is manipulated by them.

Geertz's account also goes a long way toward explaining why religion is arguably universal in terms of its function. In contrast to many contemporary accounts of religion, Geertz's account does not require a belief in a God or Gods because such belief is not essential to its function. To be sure, Geertz does explicitly distinguish the religious perspective (a perspective being that "in terms of which men construe the world"[47]) from scientific and aesthetic perspectives.[48] Nonetheless, it seems that religion, as Geertz defines it, subsumes the rest. Scientific, aesthetic or indeed any other kind of perspective presupposes both a world-view and symbiotic ethos. If this is so, Geertz's account also implies that religion is universal.[49] Everyone — atheist, theist, scientist, Marxist,

46 Ibid., 112–14.

47 Ibid., 111.

48 "… to speak of the 'religious perspective' is, by implication, to speak of one perspective among others. A perspective is a mode of seeing, in that extended sense of 'see' in which it means 'discern,' 'apprehend,' 'understand,' or 'grasp.' It is a particular way of looking at life, a particular manner of construing the world, as when we speak of an historical perspective, a scientific perspective, an aesthetic perspective, a commonsense perspective, or even the bizarre perspective embodied in dreams and in hallucinations." ibid., 110.

49 Ibid., 109, n. 33 denies that religion is universal: "The oft-heard generalization that religion is a human universal embodies a confusion between the probably true… proposition that there is no human society in which cultural patterns that we can… call religious are totally lacking, and the surely untrue proposition that all men in all societies are, in any meaningful sense of the term, religious."

whatever — must (though not explicitly) "formulate conceptions of the general order of existence" and address the problem of "meaning." They must do so by means of a cultural system to which symbolisation is essential. Worldviews are strategies for interpreting and controlling the world that enable people to believe and feel they are living in accord with reality. In Geertz's terms this makes everyone "religious." In the context of his theory, this is not a trivialisation of the term "religious," but its most important sense. It explains the need for, and universality, of hope and its function; that we are getting things right — understanding the world, and living and feeling more or less as we should. This is as true of the miscreant as it is of the saint and intellectual.

IV.2 Tamas Pataki: Religion and the orectic

As Geertz describes it, religion is necessary to humans, to culture, and so too are the beliefs, hopes and desires at its core. But Geertz's account seems neutral with respect to the question of whether such desires are good or bad. They can after all be necessary — even in the service of a necessary wish-fulfilling illusion — and still unfortunate.[50] Pataki takes a different view. Sure, there are many good actions (and people) attributable to and bound up with religion. Overall however, religion manifests much of the negative aspects of our wish-fulfilling, phantasising orectic natures.

It may seem odd to call religion a prejudice; nevertheless, religion functions in ways that make it analogous to prejudice. This is not an attempt to define religion, but a claim about the fundamental character of religious (particularly "religiose" — see below) conviction. The needs that religion responds to are identical or similar to those that other prejudices temporarily assuage. Religious conviction functions as a kind of ego defence, at the heart of which is an attempt to recover the narcissistic ease of early childhood in symbolic form. But unlike other prejudices, because religion feigns to regard itself as socially respectable — and is generally taken to be so — it is able to mask certain reprehensible attitudes and behaviours that may be more difficult for other prejudices to sustain.[51]

50 Freud sees religion as a detrimental illusion, but not a necessary one. He thinks it can and should be replaced by science. See Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (W.W. Norton and Company, 1961).

51 See Damian Cox, Michael Levine, and Saul Newman, *Politics Most Unusual* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009), 24–42; Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *The Anatomy of Prejudices* (Harvard

Religious conviction is reinforced and legitimated at the levels of discourse, practice, community and institution. It manages this through every means at its disposal: self-deception, mendaciousness, hypocrisy, manipulation, force and others. But of course, not all religious people are violent, and religion does not always function in prejudicial or immoral ways. For some people, religion may be an overall positive feature of their lives. To make sense of this, Pataki distinguishes between what he terms the religious and the religiose: "between those for whom religion can be conceived, approximately, as a matter of opinion or belief; and those for whom it is a powerful expression of conviction and character."[52]

> The religiose are people for whom the relationship with God … and with their religion is an intense and deep engagement. Their belief is tenacious, rooted deeply in the personality, and influences remote aspects of their lives. The religion of the religiose is driven by intense need articulated in rigid unconscious phantasies and dispositions, and this explains why their religious attitudes are, as a rule, mirrored in other attitudes — to politics, nationalism, gender issues, and so on.[53]

On a psychoanalytic account, the most prominent needs that religion phantastically satisfies are those generated by narcissism, envy and guilt. The psychoanalytic idea of narcissism is of a "self-reflexive libidinal relation" that serves to satisfy needs and protect one's fragile ego. It often does so by means of phantastic representation and the construction of prejudices. Such needs are present to a degree in all people, but they are prominent in the religiose, and religion finds special ways of satisfying them. As with other prejudices, the modes of satisfaction the religiose obtain are attuned to their character types and individualized in respect to each person's psychic history and constitution. The religiose may think they believe what they do on the basis of reason, experience and evidence, but on a psychoanalytic account of religious conviction they do not.

Pataki sees a close connection between the religiose and fundamentalism — which refers, in his usage, to the ideological or belief component of religion. Religious fundamentalisms tend to be assertive, are often violent, and are fiercely controlling with regard to the expression of religious conviction and

---

Univ. Press, 1996); Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2006); Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford Univ. Press., 1997); Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*.

52 Pataki, *Against God*, 15.

53 Ibid., 34–35.

group membership. Fundamentalists are characterized by dogmatic assertion of God's law (to which their group has special access) over secular law. As a rule, fundamentalists find it very difficult to accept something like the principle of secular reason, according to which public debate must be wholly carried out through the exchange of a common currency of non-religious reasons.[54] To the fundamentalist, the principle of secular reason appears, rightly, to be a flat denial of (their) God's sovereignty. With their penchant for Manichean world views (we are good and the "other" is evil), their suppression of sexuality (particularly female sexuality) and their revelling in the ersatz superiority conferred by the membership of an elected or a chosen lot, fundamentalists are the most dangerous and destructive part of religion. But there would be no fundamentalists without the religiose; and it is the psychological vulnerability of our species to religiose character formations that is of concern here.

Religion caters to the intense unconscious hopes, needs and desires of people for self-esteem, superiority, belonging, relief from guilt, envy and shame. If this is so, it suggests that the quest for ecumenicalism, tolerance or the acceptance of religious pluralism is far more difficult than is often realized. But it also shows that Freud's hope, in *The Future of an Illusion,* that one day people would psychically outgrow the need for the satisfactions that religion delivers is itself illusory — driven by wish fulfilment and accompanied by hopes. In the case of both the religious and the religiose, elements of narcissism and envy, rather than logic and argument, tend to generate beliefs. No doubt many see religion as one of the most valuable and profound aspects of humankind. But on psychoanalytic accounts of religious conviction, such as Pataki's, this too is explicable. The idealizing of religious leaders involves projective and/or introjective narcissistic identification. Those kind priests in the Hollywood movies of the forties are motivated by narcissism and a need to feel superior, as are we who identify with them and love them to pieces. So too, with the kind old learned or imperious rabbis or imams. What we perceive are our own projections.

Once religion is seen as a prejudice rooted in narcissism, envy and a compelling need to feel special, the connection between religion and violence (and hope) is easier to explain. Religion's connection to violence can be as direct as that of any of the other prejudices. Motivationally speaking, hatred of what is

54 On the principle of secular reason, see Robert Audi, *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason* (CUP, 2000).

alien is only part of this. As Pataki puts it, "Religion becomes especially dangerous and violent because of its deep roots in narcissism and omnipotence, in the frustrations and rage of relinquishing narcissism, and in the distorted and uncompromising internalized object-relationships in which these things are consolidated."[55] In an effort to re-establish satisfying relationships with objects symbolically representative of important early relations (usually one's parents), violence is not only seen as unproblematic, it may also come to seem necessary.

One crucial way of restraining the religiose which is essential to democracy in a pluralistic society is the upholding of a principle of separation of church and state. Pataki explains the motives, predominantly fear, behind the refusal among the religiose to adhere to so sensible and necessary a principle:

> For all their front and bellicosity, the narcissistic states we are considering are, at bottom, frangible, precarious, and fearful. They are essentially states of withdrawal in which goodness is phantastically assigned to the self and the group with which it is identified, and most badness to the others. For this reason, amongst others, those of the religiose in whom narcissistic trends predominate are driven by fear: fear of autonomy and fear of other people. The only acceptable political organization in this circumstance is one governed by subjection to the authority of God, and under law proclaimed by God ... the idea of being ruled by divine law excludes the possibility of being ruled by other people; the religiose fear others because unconsciously they expect retribution for the effects of their own unconscious aggression, envy, and devaluation of others.[56]

In practice, the attack on the separation clause of the US constitution seeks to legally enforce what the religiose take to be moral, even though they do not agree among themselves about what is moral. They insist that everyone must live, legally and morally, as they do — in accordance with their divine scriptural injunctions. They collapse any distinction between the legal and moral, insisting on a theocentric account of both ethics and law. We must do as their God tells them to do. For the religiose, politics is a "plastic drama" that presents an opportunity for the ritual enactment of hope's mediation between worldview and ethos through the reshaping of institutions.

If the account of religion sketched here is right, then it is not just the violence associated with terrorism and war that is sourced from religion, but so too much of what has come to be termed institutionalized violence associated with our so-

55 Pataki, *Against God*, 82.
56 Ibid., 57.

cial and political fabric. Religion is not a source only of what is good or just or valuable, nor are the overall effects of religion predominantly good. However, it would be a mistake to conclude that per impossible, were religion to be eliminated, all would be socially, personally and politically well. There is every reason to believe that were religion not an obstacle to self-understanding and peace, various other psychological constructs and prejudices would rush to fill their place.

Where does "hope" stand — what is its role, given the account of religion, and its broader account of human nature sketched here? There is much to say. First and foremost, the account suggests that hope in relation to religion — where hope is understood in varying degrees as an amalgam of desire, wishful thinking, belief, envy, affect, emotion and phantasy — is fundamentally about self-solicitation. Hope services one's psychic needs. These 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. Religion's very nature is to be divisive and without being so it could not effectively function as it does and as we need it to do.

Unsurprisingly, on Pataki's account much of what is true about hope with regard to religion is also true about hope generally. Hope is at least very often (if not more) about self-solicitation and ego-protection, and self-solicitiousness (a form of preservation) and ego-protection are ubiquitous. It is part of who we are and could not be any other way given our natures. Being self-solicitous is just an aspect of our orectic selves. It is not a negative or demeaning view of who we are. It is simply who we are. Nevertheless, it is in religion, more than in quotidian life, that the darker side of Janus-faced hope makes an appearance. But even if one rejects this, to accept the idea that hope is virtually always positive is to submit to a naïve account of what it means to hope. And the positive — even wonderful — things about hope and its functions are not well served if they fail to take into account hope's other face. We think that even Kierkegaard would agree with this much. Though we earlier painted him as an exemplar of a sentimental naivety about hope, Kierkegaard is an author with many faces. We conclude with a passage published under one of his pseudonyms that expresses the same ambivalence about hope we have tried to articulate throughout this essay:

> It is indeed beautiful to see a person put out to sea with the fair wind of hope; one may utilize the chance to let oneself be towed along, but one ought never have it on board one's craft, least of all as pilot, for it is an untrustworthy shipmaster.

> For this reason, too, hope was one of Prometheus's dubious gifts; instead of giving human beings the foreknowledge of the immortals, he gave them hope.[57]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Audi, Robert. 2000. *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Berger, Peter L. 1990. *Sacred canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Doubleday.

Bovens, Luc. 1999. "The Value of Hope". *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 59, no. 3: 667–81. doi:10.2307/2653787.

Brown, Wendy. 2006. *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press.

Butler, Judith. 1997. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press.

Cox, Damian, Michael Levine, and Saul Newman. 2009. *Politics Most Unusual*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Day, J. P. 1969. "Hope". *American Philosophical Quarterly* 6, no. 2: 89–102.

Dickinson, Emily. 1830-1886. "Hope is the Thing with Feathers (254)". Accessed September 5, 2017. https://poets.org/poem/hope-thing-feathers-254.

Freud, Sigmund. 1961. *The Future of an Illusion*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company.

Geertz, Clifford. 1971. "Religion as a Cultural System". In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 87–125. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Kadlac, Adam. 2017. "Hope(s) and Hopefulness". *American Philosophical Quarterly* 54, no. 3: 209–21.

Kierkegaard, Soren. 2000. "Either / Or, A Fragment of Life, I". In *The Essential Kierkegaard*, edited by Hong, Howard V., Hong, Edna H. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press.

—. 2009. *Works of Love*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.

57 Soren Kierkegaard, "Either / Or, A Fragment of Life, I". In *The Essential Kierkegaard*, ed. Hong, Howard V., Hong, Edna H. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2000), 56.

McGeer, Victoria. 2004. "The Art of Good Hope". *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 592, no. 1: 100–127. doi:10.1177/0002716203261781.

Pataki, Tamas. 2007. *Against God*. Melbourne: Scribe Books.

—. 2014. *Wish-fulfilment in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Riceour, Paul. 1985. "Evil: A Challenge to Philosophy and Theology". *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53, no. 4: 635–48.

Rorty, Amélie. 1988. "The Historicity of Psychological Attitudes: Love Is Not Love Which Alters Not When It Alteration Finds". In *Mind in Action: Essays in the Philosophy of Mind*, 121–34. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Smith, Nicholas. 2010. "From the Concept of Hope to the Principle of Hope". In *Hope after Hope*, edited by Rochelle Green and Janet Horrigan, 3–22. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Tillich, Paul. 1965. "The Right to Hope". *Neue Zeitschrift Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 7, no. 3: 371–77.

Walker, Margaret 2006. "Hope's Value". In *Moral Repair*, edited by Margaret Walker, 40–71. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press. doi:10.1017/cbo9780511618024.002.

Wollheim, Richard. 1999. *On the Emotions*. New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press.

Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth. 1996. *The Anatomy of Prejudices*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.

NO HOPE IN THE DARK: PROBLEMS FOR FOUR-DIMENSIONALISM[1]

Jonathan J. Loose
University of London[2]

Abstract. If Christian hope is to be held coherently then life after death must be a metaphysical possibility for the one who holds it. Materialist accounts of human persons face serious problems in establishing this possibility. Hudson has defended a four-dimensional solution: If persons are a series of temporally scattered, gen-identical object stages then a living human organism could be a shared temporal part of *two* persons: one with a corpse as a further temporal part, and another with an imperishable body extending eternally from the Last Day. This solution suffers from the general problem of *counterpart hope*: that gen-identity does not provide sufficient unity to ground prudential future concern, and the specific problem of *quasi-hope*: that as a living organism I cannot know whether death is a metaphysical possibility for *me*, and I thus cannot possess coherent Christian hope.

I. INTRODUCTION

The New Testament concept of hope has been summarized as "trust in God, patient waiting and confidence in God's future."[3] It is an important philosophical question whether such hope is veridical; whether placing confidence in God's future is a coherent thing to do. The future in question is one in

1 This paper develops and extends the first section of Jonathan J. Loose, "Hope for Christian Materialism? Problems of Too Many Thinkers", in *Christian Physicalism*: *Philosophical Theological Criticisms*, ed. R. K. Loftin and Joshua R. Farris (Lexington, 2018), see 257-261. Some limited parts of that text are included by permission and with grateful thanks to the publisher.

2 School of Advanced Study, University of London; Margaret Beaufort Institute, Cambridge; and Roehampton University, London.

3 J. M. Everts, "Hope", in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Ralph P. Martin, G. F. Hawthorne and Daniel G. Reid (IVP Academic, 1993).

PP. 31–47
DOI: 10.24204/EJPR.V11I3.2958
AUTHOR: JON.LOOSE@LONDON.AC.UK

which death need not be the end of existence and so hope cannot be veridical if the survival of death is in fact a metaphysical impossibility.

The 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.[4] The soul view[5] can also be reasonably considered the default pre-philosophical human self-understanding throughout history and across societies[6] and if it is incoherent or implausible then the survival of death becomes a serious problem: How can a human person survive the death and dissolution of that very material body with which he or she is identical?

4 Christian materialists typically accept this point. For example, van Inwagen writes, "I have to admit that God has allowed dualism to become the dominant view of human nature among Christians. An essential part of my own contrary view of human nature and the afterlife — that "death is but a sleep" — was condemned at Trent, but no ecumenical council or denominational synod or inquisitorial office or faculty of theology, no Pope or archbishop or reformer, has, to my knowledge, condemned dualism *per se*." Peter van Inwagen, "Dualism and Materialism: Athens and Jerusalem?", *Faith and Philosophy* 12, no. 4 (1995); and Hud Hudson articulates a common view when he writes that: "Historically, the Church has been unwaveringly dualist." Hud Hudson, *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person* (Cornell Univ. Press, 2001), 172. Both authors accept the common view that this dualism is the result of early Greek philosophical influence, but see Paul L. Gavrilyuk, "The Incorporeality of the Soul in Patristic Thought", in *Christian Physicalism*: *Philosophical Theological Criticisms*, ed. R. K. Loftin and Joshua R. Farris (Lexington, 2018), for the view that there was no monolithic Greek dualism and the Fathers thus had to evaluate a range of corporeal and incorporeal Greek views, each with its attractions for the church. According to Gavrilyuk, the Fathers' view is the product of careful and challenging theological and philosophical reflection within a diverse intellectual milieu.

5 The soul view refers to the generic view that there is a non-material substantial self (or soul) that is the bearer of personal identity. This view is compatible with various substance dualist views in Cartesian, Thomistic and emergentist traditions. See Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J.L. Menuge, and J.P. Moreland, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism* (Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 1.

6 Evidence of the ubiquity of soul-belief includes: (i) experimental work of cognitive scientists such as Jesse M. Bering, "The Folk Psychology of souls", *The Behavioral and brain sciences* 29, no. 5 (2006) and Paul Bloom, "Religious Belief as an Evolutionary Accident", in *The Believing Primate*: *Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Reflections on the Origin of Religion*, ed. Michael J. Murray (OUP, 2009). (ii) The extent to which the afterlife beliefs of adherents of major world religions entail dualism. (iii) The assumed coherence (rather than truth) of claims of veridical out of body and near-death experiences. See Gary R. Habermas, "Evidential Near-Death Experiences", in *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, ed. Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J.L. Menuge and J.P. Moreland (Wiley Blackwell, 2018) and Michael N. Marsh, "The Phenomenology of Near-Death Experiences", in *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, ed. Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J.L. Menuge and J.P. Moreland (Wiley Blackwell, 2018).

Today, materialism is as popular inside the academy as it is unpopular outside it. Unsurprisingly, therefore, some Christian philosophers have departed from the ordinary person's long-standing belief in an immaterial soul and have embraced materialism about human persons,[7] generating a significant dispute. The centerpiece of this dispute has been the question of whether materialism can accommodate the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body.[8] As would be expected, Christian materialists have offered a number of accounts of the possibility of surviving death given materialism. These accounts typically entail the possibility of survival for *all* human persons, but a further problem would exist for any version of materialism on which the possibility of survival for one human entailed the impossibility of survival for another. This problem would be particularly acute if the question of who is in the privileged group of potential survivors is a question that no human person is in a position to answer. Such a view would be inconsistent with any individual having confidence about his or her post-mortem future and would thus be inconsistent with Christian hope. Hope requires more than knowing that survival is a logical possibility for an unidentifiable subset of human beings; it requires knowing that survival is a logical possibility for *me*.

Hud Hudson is one of those who has offered an account of the consistency of a materialist view of persons with the Christian doctrine of resurrection.[9] His sophisticated materialist metaphysic involves the controversial claim that objects, including persons, have temporal parts. This implies that objects are not wholly present at a time, but rather consist in a series of object-stages extended over time. Hudson argues that by embracing temporal parts his account of the possibility of resurrection resolves issues that plague alternative versions of materialism such as animalism or the constitution view. This purported benefit might be thought sufficient to justify the controversial com-

7 This is a "local" materialism, since no orthodox Christian theist would be a "global" materialist given belief in an immaterial personal God.

8 Hudson, *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person*, 148.

9 Important examples of Christian materialist accounts of resurrection include Lynne R. Baker, "Constitutionalism: Alternative to Substance Dualism", in *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, ed. Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J.L. Menuge and J.P. Moreland (Wiley Blackwell, 2018); Hudson, *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person*; Peter van Inwagen, "The Possibility of Resurrection", in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology, Volume 2*, ed. Michael C. Rea (OUP, 2009); Dean Zimmerman, "The Compatibility of Materialism and Survival: The 'Falling Elevator' Model", *Faith and Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (1999).

mitment to temporal parts. However, I will argue that it does not and Hudson's view suffers from two fatal problems of its own when accounting for Christian hope. I call these the problem of counterpart hope and the problem of quasi-hope. The problem of counterpart hope is a general consequence of Hudson's four-dimensional view (explained below), and it serves to illustrate a general problem for the four-dimensionalist. The problem of quasi-hope goes further, being a particular problem for the four-dimensionalist wanting to accommodate Christian hope. The problem of quasi-hope increases significantly the implausibility of Hudson's controversial view. Seemingly uniquely among metaphysical positions, four-dimensionalism leaves us incapable of hope even if it is able to explain how some people might survive death.

II. THE APPEAL OF FOUR-DIMENSIONALISM

Various reasons have been given in favor of adopting the view that material objects (and not just events) have temporal as well as spatial parts (a four-dimensionalist ontology, explained in more detail in the next two sections).[10] Hudson focuses specifically on the way in which four-dimensionalism can resolve certain paradoxes that seem intractable given a more commonsense, three-dimensional view.[11] The puzzles he highlights include thought experiments involving the removal and transplantation of brain hemispheres. The challenge in these fission scenarios is to determine whether or not a pre-transplant human person would survive the (physically successful) procedures they involve.[12] Hudson shows that by understanding a person as a se-

10 For a helpful introduction to four dimensionalism, see, e.g. Eric T. Olson, *What Are We? A Study in Personal Ontology* (OUP, 2007), chap. 5.

11 Thus Hudson is not motivated by the problem of how identity is preserved through change; the so-called Problem of Temporary Intrinsics, see David Lewis, *The Plurality of Worlds* (Blackwell, 1986), 202–5. Nor is he motivated by compatibility with Special Relativity, or considerations about vagueness.

12 For the problem of fission, see Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity", in *Personal Identity*, ed. John Perry (Univ. of California Press, 1975); David Lewis, "Survival and Identity and Postscripts". In *Philosophical Papers Vol. 1* (Oxford: OUP, 1983). The other important puzzle that Hudson discusses is Wiggins' case of Tibbles and Tib. See David Wiggins, "On Being in the Same Place at the Same Time", *The Philosophical Review* 77, no. 1 (1968). If two objects cannot be co-located without being identical then consider Tibbles the cat and Tib. Tib is a proper part of Tibbles consisting of all of Tibbles except her tail. If Tibbles loses her tail, Tibbles and Tib are now co-located and both seem to survive. Are Tibbles and Tib identical after all? The

ries of person-stages (temporal parts) each of which is not identical to but closely related to the others, these puzzle cases can be resolved. In order to address further puzzle cases, Hudson adds to four-dimensionalism a counterpart theory of *de re* modal relations.[13] These are controversial metaphysical commitments because of their counter-intuitive consequences, as we will see. Hudson nevertheless considers these commitments worth making because they offer solutions to problems that seem intractable otherwise, such as the problem of accounting for the possible survival of death. In what follows I outline the temporal parts view and these purported benefits before arguing that they are in fact illusory.

III. FOUR-DIMENSIONALISM

The idea that *events* have temporal parts is uncontroversial (a soccer match is literally a game of two halves), but the central and controversial claim of the temporal parts view is that objects have them too. On this view, *objects* have temporal location and extension in virtue of having temporal parts spread out across regions of time in the same way that they have spatial location and extension in virtue of having spatial parts spread out across regions of space. A temporal part incorporates all of an object's spatial parts at the times that it exists. Hudson explains the principal idea that:

> necessarily, for each way of exhaustively dividing the lifetime of any object, *x*, into two parts, there is a corresponding way of dividing *x* itself into two parts,

four-dimensionalist says that Tibbles and Tib are four-dimensional continuants that overlap by sharing a temporal part that begins at the point that the tail is lost.

13 Hudson asks how two objects — such as a particular statue "David" and the lump of clay from which it is formed, "Lump" — that are perfectly coincident at every moment of their existence can be distinct without accepting that they are co-located objects. See Allan Gibbard, "Contingent Identity", *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 4, no. 2 (1975). Four-Dimensionalism allows that two objects can be distinct in virtue of having one or more non-shared parts. However, if all parts are shared then another way to accommodate the distinctiveness of the objects is required and this is why Hudson turns to a counterpart theory of *de re* modal properties. See Lewis, *The Plurality of Worlds*. According to this, Lump and David are labels that pick out distinct sets of counterparts (distinct counterpart relations) reflecting distinct *de re* modal properties (e.g. Lump could survive being re-shaped into a sphere, David could not). The labels thus refer to a single object in the actual world but distinct sets of counterparts in other possible worlds. The distinctiveness of these sets grounds the distinction between the terms.

> each of which is present throughout, but not outside of, the corresponding part of *x*'s lifetime.[14]

On this view, objects (including human beings) may be visualized as space-time worms and therefore it is important to note that persons do not exist as wholes at any given moment. Those who adopt the temporal parts view of human persons typically agree with Hudson that we are wholly material; that extended temporal parts are fusions of momentary ones; and that a universalist view of composition is correct.[15]

It is important to see that person-stages (the temporal parts of human persons) are distinct entities so that an individual existing at a particular moment is a person-stage associated with a large number of other person-stages that are its counterparts located at other times. Just as one spatial part is not numerically identical to another, so one temporal part is not numerically identical to another. On this view, then, there is not a single continuant; a self-identical person who continues to exist from moment to moment (that would be to return to three-dimensional endurantism) but a series of person-stages existing at different times. To the extent that these person-stages are unified, they are connected not by a relation of personal *identity* but by a weaker relation of *gen-identity.* Hudson adopts the common view that gen-identity is a relation of psychological continuity grounded in "similarity of mental content including facts about memories, beliefs, desires, intentions, and goals; or perhaps it would also invoke certain facts about basic mental capacities, dispositions, and character."[16] He rightly makes the important point that:

> …it is somewhat misleading to engage in the practice of referring to analyses of this relation as discussions of the relation of identity.[17]

Persons are not identical over time on this view. In short, Hudson believes that an individual human person consists in a number of non-identical, psychologically continuous person-stages. With this view of material human persons in mind we must clarify the problem of fission that Hudson takes to

14 Hudson, *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person*, 58.

15 The universalist accepts that, as David Lewis put it, "any old class of things has a mereological sum. Whenever there are some things, no matter how disparate and unrelated, there is something composed of just those things" Lewis, *The Plurality of Worlds*, 211.

16 Hudson, *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person*, 131.

17 Hudson, *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person*, 130, n18.

be an important reason for its adoption, and which has a direct consequence for his account of resurrection and Christian hope.

IV. FOUR-DIMENSIONAL FISSION

Imagine that my brain is removed from my skull and the hemispheres are separated (fissioned). The rest of my body is then destroyed. Now compare two alternative scenarios: In the first, *non-branching* scenario just one hemisphere is successfully transplanted into a waiting, brainless body while the other hemisphere is destroyed. One living human person results. In the second, *branching* scenario, both of the hemispheres are transplanted into different brainless bodies and two living human persons result.

The puzzling question is what happens to *me* in each case? First, consider this question from a three-dimensionalist's perspective. The intuitive answer in the non-branching fission case is that I would survive. However, the branching fission case is more difficult. It can be understood as two parallel instances of the intuitively survivable non-branching case and so the difficulty arises from the fact that the result of branching fission is *two* human persons each equally qualified to be me. Since identity is a transitive relation I cannot claim to be identical with two persons (since in that case the two distinct individuals would need to be numerically identical with each other, which they clearly are not). Furthermore, since the two persons resulting from the fission are equally qualified to be me, there is no non-arbitrary way to distinguish them and thus to hold that I survive as one rather than the other. The reasonable conclusion seems to be that in the branching case I do not survive; I fission out of existence. However, even this conclusion is not trouble free. If non-branching fission is survivable while branching fission is not, and given that branching fission is simply two cases of non-branching fission, it seems that whether or not I survive depends not only on whether or not one of my hemispheres is successfully transplanted into a waiting brainless body but also on whether or not the same happens to my other hemisphere and thus whether or not there is a competitor for my identity. However the identity of one hemisphere cannot be dependent on the presence or absence of another. So the situation is reduced to absurdity.[18]

18 See Harold W. Noonan, *Personal Identity* (Routledge, 2003).

Four-dimensionalism offers a new and different way to resolve the puzzle of fission that does not deny classical identity or hold that the identity of two things depends on the presence or absence of a third. Nor does it require arbitrary decisions about which of two equally qualified fission products is me. Instead it explains the situation in a wholly different way, by holding that there were two persons present all along.

Recall that on four-dimensionalism objects do not endure from moment to moment as wholes but are space/time worms spread across time and composed of temporal parts. Temporal parts, like spatial parts, can be shared between objects. Since the whole is spread across time, two temporally extended objects that share a temporal part remain distinct at all times but they will nevertheless be indistinguishable within the temporal region in which that shared part is located. Hence, branching fission simply reveals that I have a temporal part that is shared with another person, being located temporally from the moment I began to exist until the moment of fission. The other person and I each have later temporal parts that we do not share and so at later moments we are observable as the distinct individuals that in fact we are at all times. Visualized as space/time worms, the two persons are clearly distinct objects that share parts at one point, just as two different railway lines might share a single piece of track for part of their length. Given that these fission puzzles are now puzzles about two persons from start to finish, the problems faced by the three-dimensionalist do not arise.

V. FOUR-DIMENSIONAL RESURRECTION

Turning to the possibility of resurrection, Hudson argues that materialism does not rule out the possibility that the same person could be present at different times that are temporally located on opposite sides of the bridge of death.[19] He argues that the doctrine of temporal parts enables this in a way that avoids the difficulties faced by three-dimensionalist alternatives.

The problems for three-dimensional accounts of resurrection are by now well known. Constitution views seem to run into difficulty well before an ac-

19 See Trenton Merricks, "There Are No Criteria of Identity Over Time", *Noûs* 32, no. 1 (1998); Dean W. Zimmerman, "Criteria of Identity and the 'Identity Mystics'", *Erkenntnis* 48, no. 2/3 (1998).

count of resurrection is considered[20] and more immediately appealing animalist views seem to face intractable problems in accounting for resurrection as divine reassembly.[21] However, of most interest to Hudson is van Inwagen's animalist alternative to reassembly. Van Inwagen holds that resurrection is a metaphysical possibility on animalism, since God could preserve corpses for the Last Day by instantaneous body-switching at the moment of each person's death so that what is buried or cremated is not a corpse but a simulacrum. The oft-repeated objection to this view is that it is unacceptable that God should be the systematic deceiver of the bereaved and so an alternative has been offered by Zimmerman that seeks to avoid this consequence.[22] Zimmerman suggested that the simples that compose a body might have the power to *fission* (or to "bud") at the last moment of earthly life so that the body becomes immanent-causally connected with two others: a fission product that leaps the temporal gap to a subsequent embodied afterlife and another fission product (which is truly one's corpse) left on earth.[23] The question of whether I remain on earth as the corpse or continue to exist in the next life is determined by a closest-continuer account of personal identity. However, it is a significant weakness of closest-continuer accounts of personal identity that, as in the fission case considered above, the identity of "two" things is dependent on the non-existence of a third. On this view I am identical to the person who is my "closest continuer". Thus, whether or not a particular person in the next life who is similar to me is also identical to me will depend on the absence of any other person in the next life whose similarity to me is even greater. The implausibility of making the identity

20 Hudson argues that the Constitution View is "insufficiently motivated, its commitment to co-location an impossibility, and its constitution relation a mystery." Hud Hudson, "Multiple Location and Single Location Resurrection", in *Personal Identity and Resurrection*: *How Do We Survive Our Death?*, ed. Georg Gasser (Ashgate, 2010), 91; see Baker, "Constitutionalism".

21 If the same matter is shared by successive individuals, most strikingly by the cannibal and his victim, then this ensures that the raw materials are unavailable for God to reassemble everyone on the Last Day.

22 van Inwagen, "The Possibility of Resurrection"; Zimmerman, "The Compatibility of Materialism and Survival". For a detailed review, see Jonathan J. Loose, "Materialism Most Miserable: The Prospects for Dualist and Physicalist Accounts of Resurrection", in *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, ed. Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J.L. Menuge and J.P. Moreland (Wiley Blackwell, 2018).

23 For the claim that Zimmerman's model merely changes the method of divine deception rather than removing it, see William Hasker, "Materialism and the Resurrection: Are the Prospects Improving?", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 3, no. 1 (2011).

of "two" things dependent on the non-existence of a third is a significant weakness of closest continuer views. Thus, one advantage of four-dimensionalism is that it offers a materialist account of resurrection that does not require either van Inwagen's divine deception or Zimmerman's closest-continuer theories. (It also avoids the need to claim that constitution is not identity or that resurrection requires reassembly.)

What, then, is this four-dimensional account of resurrection? It follows from the solution to the branching fission problem described above. In order to accommodate resurrection, the four-dimensionalist "simply applies his solution to standard fission cases by recognizing overlapping (but non co-located) continuants."[24] Resurrection becomes possible since the resources of four-dimensionalism allow us to consider three entities: (i) a human organism, which includes both the *living* human organism that we will name "Perishable", and the corpse that exists from the moment of death until its dissolution; (ii) an imperishable spiritual body, "Imperishable", which extends eternally from the Last Day, and (iii) a human person (me) composed of both Perishable and Imperishable. Since Perishable is a temporal part of a larger human organism, I am a *human* person and since Imperishable does not exist before the Last Day I am composed of temporally scattered parts. (This latter point is unproblematic given a universalist view of composition.) I am "an extended (earlier) temporal part which mereologically overlaps a human animal and an extended (later) temporal part which, in the words of St Paul, is a new and imperishable spiritual body."[25]

The result of all this is something like Zimmerman's fissioning account, but without a problematic closest-continuer theory of personal identity. To hold that Perishable and Imperishable are parts of me such that I can exist in the next world we need only establish that they are linked by a psychological gen-identity relation in the way that temporal parts should be if we are to understand them to compose persons.[26] Many of the difficulties faced by other views then simply fail to apply. Reassembly of the same thing at a later time

24 Hudson, *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person*, 189.

25 Hud Hudson, "The Resurrection and Hypertime", in *Paradise Understood*: *New Philosophical Essays About Heaven*, ed. T. R. Byerly and Eric J. Silverman (OUP, 2017), 266; see also, Hudson, "Multiple Location and Single Location Resurrection", 94–95; Hudson, *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person*, chap. 7.

26 See Hudson, "Multiple Location and Single Location Resurrection", 94–95.

is meaningless on the temporal parts view, and given the possibility of shared temporal parts we can explain co-extensive entities at a time while holding that constitution *is* identity.

A word about the corpse: This view seems to be an improvement over van Inwagen's because it does not involve body-snatching and so there is no divinely introduced artificial corpse to deceive the bereaved. Nevertheless, the absence of an artificial substitute does not mean that what remains is *my* corpse in the way it would be on a three-dimensionalist animalist account without body-switching, or on a dualist view. This is because, on the temporal parts view, the body that is buried or cremated is not that which previously embodied me. Instead it is a temporal part of an organism that is distinct from me and a temporal part that that organism does not share with me. So, if I survive, then that dead body is not my body, since there is no dead body that is a (temporal) part of me. Thus, although this view offers the advantage that the bereaved do not grieve over a simulacrum, it remains the case that they do not grieve over the body of the deceased either.[27]

Hudson believes his view stands "head and shoulders above" the others.[28] However, without rehearsing serious objections to four-dimensionalist metaphysics and counterpart theory *per se,*[29] or the likely inadequacy of Hudson's theological account of the intermediate state and resurrection in comparison to the most authoritative treatments,[30] we can consider what relation his account of afterlife has to the possibility of Christian hope.

Two questions must be distinguished as we consider the possibility of hope given this four-dimensional understanding of resurrection: First, is the nature of a human person as described by the temporal parts view consistent with the possibility of hope in post-mortem existence? Second, is an individual human person capable of possessing the requisite knowledge in order

27 The reason that Hudson cannot simply hold that the organism's corpse is also a temporal part that is shared with me is that presumably a psychological gen-identity relation cannot be established between a living organism and a dead one because the latter has no psychological life.

28 Hudson, *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person*, 189.

29 For example, Hudson notes that the theory of temporal parts has been charged with "incoherency, declared unmotivated, and criticized for the company it keeps (i.e., for its close association with counterpart theory Hudson, "The Resurrection and Hypertime", 266–67.

30 See Hudson, *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person*, chap. 7; cf. John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul and the Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Eerdmans, 2000); N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (SPCK, 2003).

to have hope in this future possibility? I will argue that the answer to both of these questions is "no" because the first faces the problem of counterpart hope and the second the problem of quasi-hope.

VI. TWO PROBLEMS: COUNTERPART HOPE AND QUASI-HOPE

VI.1 Counterpart Hope

The first problem derives from a general concern about the claim of four-dimensional metaphysics that a person is a gen-identical set of numerically non-identical person-stages. Given this, if Christian hope in the present depends on the possibility that a numerically identical individual could exist on the Last Day then such hope is a metaphysical impossibility.

A space-time worm is a series of interconnected but non-identical person-stages and the psychological gen-identity relation that holds them together is neither numerical identity nor a unity relation of equivalent depth. On this view, for me to care today about what will happen to me on the Last Day is for one of my temporal parts (person-stages) to care about another in virtue of the links of psychological continuity that exist between them. There is, therefore, a distinction between the extent to which a person-stage can rationally have concern for itself (an instantaneous thing with which it is self-identical) and the extent to which it can have concern for other person-stages (counterparts with which it is not identical and to which it is related by gen-identity understood as psychological continuity). This, then, is a general concern about whether the temporal parts view can accommodate prudential concern for a future self.

To continue the analogy between spatial and temporal parts, consider two spatial parts of a body at a particular time, *t*. These parts are united to one another because they are members of the same body, but they occupy different spatial regions and are not numerically identical. Each body part has an essential interest in events that occur to it at *t* because it is numerically identical to the subject of those events. For example, the right big toe has an essential interest in the event of its being stubbed at *t*. The interest a given part has in events happening to other, non-numerically identical parts is insignificant by comparison. For example, it is of no obvious interest to the right big toe at *t* that its counterpart on the left foot is not stubbed at *t*.

Since what is hoped for is the future of the one who hopes, veridical hope depends on numerical identity. Just as in the spatial case there is limited reason for the right toe to have an interest in the fact that its counterpart on the left foot is not stubbed (even though they are spatial parts of the same human being), so in the temporal case there is little reason for an earlier person-stage to have an interest in the fact that there will exist a particular person-stage later on. It is important to reiterate that this depends on the two person-stages not being numerically identical, which must be the case on the temporal parts view (even though these stages are temporal parts of the same person understood as a space-time worm united by gen-identity). If the thing that I am today will be present at the Resurrection (and if I can know that), then I have every reason for hope, but if not then the Resurrection gives at best a limited reason for the thing I am today to have hope. Since numerical identity is a relation of maximal unity it thus offers a deeper unity than gen-identity, which consists in a desire for the flourishing of a future counterpart with which I am gen-identical. It is a desire for the flourishing of the thing with which I am numerically identical that properly reflects Christian hope.

The serious problem of counterpart hope has been recognized by others who reject four-dimensionalism.[31] However, the problem is unlikely to trouble those already committed to the existence of temporal parts since the problem of counterpart hope applies throughout earthly life and not only across the bridge of death. The committed four-dimensionalist believes it is reasonable to understand persons as a series of gen-identical counterpart person-stages and to understand hope as a reaction to a confident belief about what will happen to a future counterpart person-stage. Thus the committed four-dimensionalist does not have a further difficulty to face before accepting the possibility that resurrection can be understood as the existence of a counterpart in the future. Hope for resurrection is in this respect no more difficult to accept than hope for a happy retirement. The four-dimensionalist believes that *both* of these objects of hope can be accommodated on his view, while his opponent adopts what is a more reasonable position — given the argument above — that *neither* can be. However, there is another problem — the

31 For example, see R. K. Loftin and R.T. Mullins, "Physicalism, Divine Eternality, and Life Everlasting", in *Christian Physicalism*: *Philosophical Theological Criticisms*, ed. R. K. Loftin and Joshua R. Farris (Lexington, 2018).

problem of quasi-hope — that applies only across the bridge of death and thus does present a further, significant problem even for those already comfortable with a commitment to four-dimensionalism.

VI.2 Quasi-Hope

The most important question to ask of the four-dimensionalist's account of resurrection is not whether it can provide for the existence of the future circumstances that might legitimately be hoped for, but whether it entails that one is always fully in the dark about whether or not those circumstances will arise. More specifically, the question is whether the person who experiences hope can be confident that she is experiencing something more than *quasi-hope*, where quasi-hope is an experience of hope in a future that belongs *not to the experient but to another*. Can I know whether or not the object of my hope is my own future or whether it is a future belonging to someone else?[32] If I am necessarily in the dark about this then I cannot have veridical confidence in God's future and hence my experience of hope cannot be genuine. This unlikely question presents a serious problem for Hudson's view of resurrection.

The four-dimensional account that purports to demonstrate that it is *possible* that I will stand again on the Last Day also renders me incapable of knowing if it will be *me* who will do so. To understand why this is the case, first consider again the puzzle of branching fission. Given Four-Dimensionalism I know prior to fission that I will later be one of the fission products (and that I cannot be both), but I do not know *which* of the fission products I will be and thus which of the two persons I presently am. This is because *I am entirely indistinguishable from the other person during the period in which we share a temporal part.* It is not only that others cannot distinguish me from the organism with which I am sharing a part, but I also have no way to know which I am "from the inside". During this period neither I nor anyone else can know if I am Jonathan or someone else. This matters greatly if the futures of the two persons are to be significantly different post-fission. For example, if Jonathan is to be rewarded while the other is to be tortured then it will be a matter of great concern to me to know who I am. The reason I cannot know this is clarified by the illustration of two railway lines that share a piece of track for part of their length. While it is

32 It is important to see that we are not now talking merely about distinct person-stages, but two distinct persons.

on the shared *track*, we have no idea on which *line* an unmarked train is traveling (and thus what its destination will be). For that information we must wait until it reaches a location at which the lines are once again on separate tracks.

Next consider the resurrection case, noting that the two objects of which Perishable is a temporal part — me and the larger human organism — are both *thinkers*. If Perishable thinks and is a temporal part shared by both a human organism and a person (Jonathan) then both Jonathan and the human organism think.[33] Furthermore, the futures of Jonathan and the human organism could not be more different. The human organism will become a corpse, while Jonathan will go on to resurrection life. So it should be a matter of serious concern to me as I write these words to be able to answer this question: Am I Jonathan or the thinking human organism with which Jonathan currently shares a temporal part? Given the ontology of temporal parts, I simply cannot know and thus cannot know whether what I experience is hope that will not disappoint (because I am Jonathan) or quasi-hope that will (because I am the human organism). I cannot know the answer to this troubling question until I am located temporally at the point at which the human organism and Jonathan do not have an overlapping temporal part and by then, if I am the human organism, I will know nothing at all, since I will be a corpse.[34]

So it does indeed seem that the very four-dimensional metaphysic introduced to demonstrate the possibility of my standing again at the Last Day renders me necessarily incapable on this day of knowing whether it will be me who will do so. This is because there are at least two thinkers in my chair where there seems to be but one human body. 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, albeit for its own reasons.

---

33 Even if our concept of human person does not include the human animal (as Hudson's does not), the problem rests only on the claim that there are two thinkers present, and it is clear that the human organism is at least a thinking non-person and this is sufficient for the problem to arise.

34 To object that someone can hold in *faith* that he or she will survive despite not knowing whether survival is possible in his or her case is to misunderstand faith as a non-cognitive attitude. To have faith in something is to place one's trust in it, and one must have the requisite knowledge in order to do so. A number of Bible passages illustrate the importance of occurrent knowledge that it is I who would be involved in some future event in order to have faith that I will be (e.g. Job 19:25-27, esp. v. 27), and the New Testament metaphor of being clothed with a new body (1 Cor 15:51-53, 2 Cor 5:2-4) do not express the exchanging of temporal parts but profound change to a single continuant. (I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for raising and dealing with this point.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baker, Lynne R. 2018. "Constitutionalism: Alternative to Substance Dualism". In *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, edited by Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J.L. Menuge and J.P. Moreland, 351–67. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

Bering, Jesse M. 2006. "The Folk Psychology of souls". *The Behavioral and brain sciences* 29, no. 5: 453–98. doi:10.1017/S0140525X06009101.

Bloom, Paul. 2009. "Religious Belief as an Evolutionary Accident". In *The Believing Primate: Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Reflections on the Origin of Religion*, edited by Michael J. Murray. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Cooper, John W. 2000. *Body, Soul and the Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Everts, J. M. 1993. "Hope". In *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, edited by Ralph P. Martin, G. F. Hawthorne and Daniel G. Reid, 415–17. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.

Gavrilyuk, Paul L. 2018. "The Incorporeality of the Soul in Patristic Thought". In *Christian Physicalism: Philosophical Theological Criticisms*, edited by R. K. Loftin and Joshua R. Farris, 1–26. London: Lexington.

Gibbard, Allan. 1975. "Contingent Identity". *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 4, no. 2: 187–221. doi:10.1007/BF00693273.

Habermas, Gary R. 2018. "Evidential Near-Death Experiences". In *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, edited by Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J.L. Menuge and J.P. Moreland, 227–46. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

Hasker, William. 2011. "Materialism and the Resurrection: Are the Prospects Improving?". *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 3, no. 1: 83–103.

Hudson, Hud. 2001. *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press.

—. 2010. "Multiple Location and Single Location Resurrection". In *Personal Identity and Resurrection: How Do We Survive Our Death?*, edited by Georg Gasser, 87–101. Farnham: Ashgate.

—. 2017. "The Resurrection and Hypertime". In *Paradise Understood: New Philosophical Essays About Heaven*, edited by T. R. Byerly and Eric J. Silverman, 263–73. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Lewis, David. 1983. "Survival and Identity and Postscripts". In *Philosophical Papers Vol. 1*, 55–77. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

—. 1986. *The Plurality of Worlds*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Loftin, R. K., and Joshua R. Farris, eds. 2018. *Christian Physicalism: Philosophical Theological Criticisms*. London: Lexington.

Loftin, R. K., and R.T. Mullins. 2018. "Physicalism, Divine Eternality, and Life Everlasting". In *Christian Physicalism: Philosophical Theological Criticisms*, edited by R. K. Loftin and Joshua R. Farris, 99–116. London: Lexington.

Loose, Jonathan J. 2018. "Hope for Christian Materialism? Problems of Too Many Thinkers". In *Christian Physicalism: Philosophical Theological Criticisms*, edited by R. K. Loftin and Joshua R. Farris, 257–69. London: Lexington.

—. 2018. "Materialism Most Miserable: The Prospects for Dualist and Physicalist Accounts of Resurrection". In *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, edited by Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J.L. Menuge and J.P. Moreland, 470–87. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

Loose, Jonathan J., Angus J.L. Menuge, and J.P. Moreland, eds. 2018. *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

Marsh, Michael N. 2018. "The Phenomenology of Near-Death Experiences". In *The Blackwell Companion to Substance Dualism*, edited by Jonathan J. Loose, Angus J.L. Menuge and J.P. Moreland, 247–66. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

Merricks, Trenton. 1998. "There Are No Criteria of Identity Over Time". *Noûs* 32, no. 1: 106–24.

Noonan, Harold W. 2003. *Personal Identity*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Olson, Eric T. 2007. *What Are We? A Study in Personal Ontology*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Parfit, Derek. 1975. "Personal Identity". In *Personal Identity*, edited by John Perry, 199–223. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press.

van Inwagen, Peter. 1995. "Dualism and Materialism: Athens and Jerusalem?". *Faith and Philosophy* 12, no. 4: 475–88.

—. 2009. "The Possibility of Resurrection". In *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology, Volume 2*, edited by Michael C. Rea, 321–27. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Wiggins, David. 1968. "On Being in the Same Place at the Same Time". *The Philosophical Review* 77, no. 1: 90–95. doi:10.2307/2183184.

Wright, N. T. 2003. *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. London: SPCK.

—. 1998. "Criteria of Identity and the 'Identity Mystics'". *Erkenntnis* 48, no. 2/3: 281–301. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20012846.

Zimmerman, Dean. 1999. "The Compatibility of Materialism and Survival: The 'Falling Elevator' Model". *Faith and Philosophy* 16, no. 2: 194–212. doi:10.5840/faithphil199916220.

HOPE AND NECESSITY

Sarah Pawlett Jackson
Univeristy of London & The Open University

Abstract. In this paper I offer a comparative evaluation of two types of "fundamental hope", drawn from the writings of Rebecca Solnit and Rowan Williams respectively. Arguments can be found in both, I argue, for the foundations of a dispositional existential hope. Examining and comparing the differences between these accounts, I focus on the consequences implied for hope's freedom and stability. I focus specifically on how these two accounts differ in their claims about the relationship between hope and (two types of) necessity. I argue that both Solnit and Williams base their claims for warranted fundamental hope on a sense of how reality is structured, taking this structure to provide grounds for a basic existential orientation that absolute despair is never the final word. For Solnit this structure is one of unpredictability; for Williams it is one of excess. While this investigation finds both accounts of fundamental hope to be plausible and insightful, I argue that Williams's account is ultimately more satisfying on the grounds that it offers a realistic way of thinking about a hope necessitated by what it is responsive to, and more substantial in responding to what is necessary.

I. INTRODUCTION

My exploration of hope takes a somewhat sideways-on approach, with a comparative analysis of ideas put forward by Rebecca Solnit and Rowan Williams. I focus on these thinkers insofar as Solnit offers a manifesto for political *activism*, while Williams gives us a thesis on *art.* I focus on Solnit's account of activism as found in her *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*,[1] and on Williams' reflections on art in his *Grace and Necessity: Reflections on Art and Love*.[2] In focusing on activism and art respectively, both Solnit and Williams offer thoughts on human agency in response to value of some kind,

1 Rebecca Solnit, *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities* (Haymarket, 2016).
2 Row Williams, *Grace and Necessity: Reflections on Art and Love* (Continuum, 2005).

PP. 49–73
DOI: 10.24204/EJPR.V11I3.2881
AUTHOR: SARAH.PAWLETT-JACKSON@OPEN.AC.UK

EUROPEAN JOURNAL FOR
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION
Vol 11, No 3 (2019)

value that is in some way uncertain. Where we speak of agential response to something that is perceived to be of value but is in some way unrealised or as yet out of reach, we are in the arena of hope, for this is hope's structure. Solnit's account here is explicitly about the foundations and structure of hope as she understands it, which I will outline and evaluate. Hope is not discussed explicitly in Williams' *Grace and Necessity*, so the reading of hope I draw out here is one I take to be embedded in his thought and find illuminated by the work of Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Marion, as I will make clear.

These two accounts of hope share certain features, in that they are both accounts of — to use Joseph. J. Godfrey's language — "fundamental hope" rather than "specific hope".[3] Both Solnit and Williams are ultimately concerned with a framework that *grounds a disposition to hope.* It is hope at this fundamental level that I am hence exploring in this paper, as I will outline in more detail. Solnit and Williams nevertheless offer two different accounts of the grounds for hope. I draw out the differences between these two accounts as a way of thinking evaluatively about fundamental hope.

The topic of hope is, of course, of great existential importance as well as of intellectual interest. Fundamental hope is a way of orienting oneself: it will transform how we move through the world and the meaning we attach to this movement. To talk about fundamental hope is to give both descriptive and prescriptive analyses — analyses with consequences for how and why we live. The significance of fundamental hope should then always be before us when discussing the reasons for hope, particularly as hope is not inevitable. As some argue and many assume, it is not obvious that that we have sufficient grounds to adopt a hopeful disposition, because global and personal events which invite hopelessness abound. Insofar as Solnit and Williams both argue *for* a fundamental existential hope, both attempt to speak to our intellectual curiosity in offering what we might call a metaphysics of hope, but both also speak to our existential condition — namely our longing for hope, and our fear that its foundation is not secure — and the consequences of our hope for the meaning and activity of our lives.

I begin with some general terminological clarifications before moving on to explain and analyse Solnit and Williams respectively. I have chosen to focus the paper as a comparative analysis of Solnit and Williams insofar as it is inter-

3 Joseph J. Godfrey, *A Philosophy of Human Hope* (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987).

esting to observe how these two contemporary thinkers — both with a popular readership and influence, as well as scholarly expertise — have articulated and argued for versions of fundamental hope. I specifically focus on how these two accounts differ in their claims about the relationship between hope and (two types of) necessity. The way that necessity (or the lack thereof) is woven into their respective accounts is important, I argue, for both our understanding of the internal coherence of our hope, but also for its surety and significance in our lives, and what it means to live in the light of this hope. While this investigation finds both accounts of fundamental hope to be plausible and insightful, I argue that Williams's account is ultimately more satisfying on the grounds that it offers a realistic way of thinking about a hope necessitated by what it is responsive to, and more substantial in responding to what is necessary.

II. HOPE, SPECIFIC AND FUNDAMENTAL

There are many different types of hope and possible ways of analysing them, but here I follow Godfrey's terminology of "fundamental hope", which is a dispositional hope, distinguished from "specific hopes", or "hopes-that". I do not intend to engage the content of Godfrey's analyses of fundamental hope so much as to use these categories as a lens through which to read Solnit and Williams, and to bring them into conversation with one another. [4]

First, a brief overview of "specific hope" and "fundamental hope" as I am using these terms. Specific hopes have a *definite object*, which is perceived by the hoper as of *value,* where it is *uncertain* that this object will come to pass. I

4 "Fundamental hope" for Godfrey is in fact a subcategory of what he calls "deep-grounded hope", which he sub-divides into "ultimate hope" and "fundamental hope". While "fundamental hope" is understood to be a "tone or disposition", as I will consider further, "ultimate hope" is defined as "hope that has an aim and is one's deepest hope." (Godfrey, *A Philosophy of Human Hope*, 3) "Ultimate hope", then, is directed at our object of ultimate concern, towards that which is of greatest existential importance. These two strands of deep-grounded hope are connected but can be analysed as distinct. To turn to examine "ultimate hope" would involve focusing more theologically on the nature of the "object of ultimate concern", namely whether this should be best understood as the Judeo-Christian God, or otherwise. As I outline in more detail below, I am bracketing these theological questions due to the constraints of the paper. Godfrey himself offers an analysis of "deep-grounded hope", using Kant, Ernst Bloch and Gabriel Marcel. Godfrey's angle on fundamental hope is different from mine here but nevertheless contains a number of points which are compatible with the ways of thinking about fundamental hope that I draw out from Solnit and Williams.

hope that the post will come before I have to leave for work, for example, or I hope that it will not rain tomorrow. We cannot be certain that these hopes will be fulfilled, because the specific objects or events in question are presented to us as possibilities that are neither actual nor certain. The object of hope is clear, and the nature of the uncertainty is clear: these are future events, currently possible rather than actual. Rain and post are empirically and metaphysically possible (rather than impossible or necessary), but more importantly for the phenomenon of hope, they are *epistemic* possibilities.[5] In these cases, epistemic uncertainty tracks metaphysical/empirical possibility: the object is unknown because it is not (yet) actual. This "standard account" of specific hope, namely "that hope is based on uncertainty in belief together with a representation of an object as desirable,"[6] is far from a complete account, but gives the features of specific hope which are relevant for my purposes.[7]

On what grounds are specific hopes warranted? Almost every writer on hope notes that it must be distinguished from "mere optimism" insofar as hope is something maintained while facing reality, rather than conjured by failing to properly attend to or properly calibrate reality. In the face of the illness of a loved one or the loss of something precious, hope is not simply a case of assuming that things will get better or that the difficulty will disappear, without a sense of why or how this thought is (epistemically) justified.[8]

Importantly, the objects of specific hopes present not just as possibilities but also as having a higher or lower probability or likelihood. We might think, then, that we calculate whether the desired object is worth hoping for by roughly calculating its probability, and then justifiably hoping for the things which are more probable than not. A straightforward "probabilistic hope" of this kind, while not able to hope for what is certain, hopes for what is probable or likely. Given the structure of hope, such an account would have to calculate not only the likelihood of the object's outcome, but also in some way to weigh and analyse this in the light of the perceived *value* of the object and any *risk*

5 See Andy Egan and Brian Weatherson, eds., *Epistemic Modality* (OUP, 2011).

6 Claudia Bloeser and Titus Stahl, "Hope", last modified March 8, 2017, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hope/, §2.3. See also §3.

7 There is ongoing debate in the literature as to what a complete account of hope would need. See Bloeser and Stahl, "Hope" for an overview of objections to and developments of the "standard account".

8 See e.g. Terry Eagleton, *Hope without Optimism* (Yale Univ. Press, 2015).

involved in pursuing it.[9] Godfrey calls this basic model the "desiderative-calculative approach".[10] Exactly how such a model would work does not need to be discussed here, but the basic idea is that, among the other variables, there is a roughly linear relation between the likelihood of an object coming to pass and the strength or likelihood of our hoping for it. Aristotle identifies such a version of hope in those who hope "because of their experience,"[11] which is to say, on the grounds of inferential likeliness that what they hope for will come to pass, given previous experience. One strength of this position is that it parses hope from blind optimism. Such a hope would always have grounds for its hope, namely that the object of hope is (roughly, and proportional to the good of the object) more likely to come to pass than not.

There is some question, however, as to whether a probabilistic approach to hope is descriptively or prescriptively sound. It seems that we do not simply hope for that which is probable, nor should our hopes necessarily function in this way. Aristotle criticises this way of ordering our hopes, for example, noting that those who hope this way "do not hold their ground against what is really fearful."[12] A hope that can be reduced to a calculation, even a complex calculation, we might think, gets something wrong about hope, and this is evidenced in those terrible moments where hope is precisely what is needed, but where the calculation fails. Is there an alternative? If there is, it will also need to be able to distinguish hope from mere optimism. There are many possible strands of analysis here, but I am interested in how a second-order disposition to hope might play a role in understanding the legitimacy of specific hopes, and so help us think about alternatives to a probabilistic model. This form of hope will be the focus of my paper, and it is to this "fundamental hope" that I now turn.

---

9 Note that no-one is advocating a position that we *can* only hope for what is probable — it is quite obvious that we *can* hope for improbable things; the question here is whether hopes are *warranted*. Andrew Chignell helpfully sketches an overview of the modal conditions under which hope is and is not rational. He concludes the only case in which hope is forbidden by reason is when we are certain that the object is metaphysically impossible. See Andrew Chignell, "Rational Hope, Moral Order and the Revolution of the Will", in *The Divine Order, the Human Order, and the Order of Nature*, ed. Eric Watkins (OUP, 2013).

10 Godfrey, *A Philosophy of Human Hope*, 40.

11 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (OUP, 2009), 50 (§3.6 115b). I am indebted to Bloeser and Stahl, "Hope" for this reference.

12 *Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics,* 51 (§3.7, 30).

What is fundamental hope? Godfrey defines this as "a tone or basic disposition with which one faces the future…[it] has as its core the refusal to judge 'All is lost, I am lost.'"[13] He elaborates:

> The best preliminary characterization of fundamental hope is as an openness of spirit with respect to the future. This means that, in relation to an ultimate hope or its contrary, one does not deny evidence or mis-calculate it. One faces up to the evidence. But openness also means a sense of the limits of evidence. Opposed to it are probably such closures that move from a judgement that all the evidence is in and accounted for, to the stance that therefore "I've got it made," or "Everything's going to be alright"; or on the contrary, "There's no way out"; "I'm a goner." It knows the difference between "This cause is lost," and "All is lost." The tonality here — to be called hope — is thus distinguishable from optimism and presumption on the one hand and pessimism and despair on the other.[14]

Fundamental hope, as I understand it then, is a second-order disposition or "tonality" within which one's specific hopes are held: "Shall I wait, or shall I abandon hope? The appropriate answer to such a question depends, not only on the hope, but also on *how* it is held."[15] Fundamental hope plays a role in calibrating whether the frustration or non-resolution of specific hopes will lead to despair or not. It also therefore plays a role in establishing that certain specific hopes continue to be worth pursuing even if the likelihood of their being fulfilled initially presents as slim.

In what epistemically legitimate sense could a hopeful disposition calibrate our response to the fulfilment or lack thereof of specific hopes? Godfrey suggests that this is because fundamental hope is "objectless; or — in a loose sense of the word — cosmic,"[16] elsewhere referring to it as a "cosmic hope or umbrella hope."[17] If we were to say that this hope has an object, he says, it would be "everything."[18] Fundamental hope is not random, but a disposition grounded in a conviction about how — to knowingly misappropriate Wilfred Sellers' famous remark — "things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in

13 Godfrey, *A Philosophy of Human Hope*, 3.
14 Ibid., 64–65.
15 Ibid., 63.
16 Ibid., 14.
17 Ibid., 144.
18 Ibid.

the broadest possible sense of the term."[19] Thus far this is highly vague, but an analysis of the scholars I have in mind — Solnit and Williams — who offer an account of how things "hold together" such that fundamental hope is warranted, should illuminate the kinds of claims that might fit the bill here.

Just as specific hopes can be "false hopes", disqualified as mere optimism through failure to face reality appropriately, something similar also holds for fundamental hope: on what grounds is such a disposition warranted? What keeps it from vague cosmic optimism? In different ways, this is the question I take both Solnit and Williams to be answering. Both offer reasons for dispositional existential hope, namely a way of framing why it is sometimes worth hoping for the improbable, and why we should never succumb to fundamental despair.

The question of God looms large here. Williams, of course, makes his case as a religious practitioner committed to Trinitarian theism. Solnit on the other hand rejects the Judeo-Christian God. Typically, the approach here might be to try to first establish the truth or falsity of theism or a specific doctrinal claim or eschatological premise, and then to evaluate these two accounts on the basis of these presuppositions. In this paper I am somewhat flipping this methodology. My focus here is on a philosophical analysis of the *structure* of Solnit's hope and Williams's hope respectively, rather than an analysis of their theological content. Their positions vis-à-vis theism are relevant to their accounts of fundamental hope, as I will draw out further, and the philosophical analysis has theological implications. However, there are some distinct considerations which arise as a consequence of initially bracketing the question of theological vs atheological conceptions of hope specifically. Approaching the question from this direction offers a different kind of perspective on the issue, one that can then feed back into the related issue of the persuasiveness (or not) of theological hope.[20]

Having laid out some of the basic features of hope, distinguished "specific hope" from "fundamental hope" and having outlined some elements of the relationship between the two, I now turn to outlining the two varieties of fundamental hope that I find in Solnit and Williams respectively.

19 Wilfred Sellers, *Science, Perception and Reality* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), 1.

20 For this reason I am not focusing on some of the well-established texts and debates in the theology of hope, such as Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*, which focuses on the shape and centrality of hope in the light of Christian eschatology specifically. See Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (SCM, 1967).

III. SOLNIT'S HOPE

Solnit, a popular contemporary essayist, offers an account of hope for political activists, particularly those campaigning on environmental issues. Observing a tendency towards dispositional cynicism in activist sub-cultures, her aim is to argue that dispositional hope is warranted. Solnit may seem like a strange choice to bring into conversation with an established academic philosopher and theologian like Williams, as her text is framed as a manifesto for action more than it is intended as a contribution to academic philosophy or theology. I argue nevertheless that Solnit is a worthy conversation partner for Williams, as the explicit philosophical claims which her argument trades in are worth exploring in more detail. These philosophical claims are not accidental, as she explicitly takes herself to be offering a systematic account of *what hope is* and *why it matters*. As such, what we have in Solnit is an account focused on meaning and praxis, which makes clear metaphysical and existential assertions. A well-articulated and widely-engaged account of this kind is precisely the kind of hypothesis which should be of interest to philosophers of religion and theologians.

To be clear, the focus of Solnit's argument is not that a set of specific hopes are worth pursuing because they are likely to come to pass, but rather focuses on reasons for pursuing all and any political goals which present as valuable, with dispositional hope, regardless of whether individuals or collectives are likely to succeed in bringing these goals about. In this section I will lay out what I take to be her central claim.

Solnit's position is captured in the following passage:

> [H]ope is not about what we expect. It is an embrace of the essential unknowability of the world, of the breaks with the present, the surprises. Or perhaps studying the record more carefully leads us to expect miracles — not when and where we expect them, but to expect to be astonished, to expect that we don't know. And this is grounds to act.[21]

The nub of her claim is that, when it comes to working and campaigning for significant political or social change, the probabilities of our specific hopes coming to pass are always hidden from us. They are hidden from us because the way that things "hang together" is always significantly more complex and

21 Solnit, *Hope in the Dark*, 109–10. Solnit is of course using "miracles" here in a non-technical, non-supernatural sense.

non-linear than we are capable of calculating. No human probabilistic hope calculus could offer reliable output on whether or not the objects of our specific hopes will come to pass or not. Her claim is not just that the objects of our hope are uncertain (this, as we've noted, is a condition of all hope) but that the *probabilities* that we attach to these hopes are also fundamentally uncertain. It is for this reason that a straightforwardly probabilistic model of hope can be rejected. The basis of her argument is that history evidences breakthroughs in social change that would have seemed highly unlikely to those living through those changes at the time. This testimony of change lends support to the idea that attempts to write off specific hopes as unlikely, and therefore not worth pursuing, are misguided.

Solnit opens her text with a quote from Virginia Woolf, written during the First World War: "The future is dark, which is on the whole, the best thing the future can be, I think." It is a quote that Solnit returns to, holding it up as the grounds for a fundamental hope. She elaborates on Woolf's remark:

> Dark, she seems to say, as in inscrutable, not as in terrible. We often mistake the one for the other. Or we transform the future's unknowability into something certain, the fulfilment of all our dread. But again and again, stranger things happen than the end of the world.[22]

This idea of "stranger things" is what she takes to disrupt and therefore rule out naïve forms of probabilistic hope, forms that she identifies lurking in activist discourses: "A lot of activists seem to have a mechanistic view of change….They operate on the premise that for every action there is an equal and opposite punctual reaction and regard the lack of one as a failure."[23] Against this, she advocates the view that, from the perspective of history, past futures have constantly thrown out the unexpected, and, as part of this, *some* specific human hopes and actions have played crucial roles in these positive human changes, in ways that they could not have known would be the case at the time. "Who could have imagined [at the time] a world in which the Soviet Union had vanished and the internet had arrived?"[24] she asks. Her positive assertion is that: "Cause and effect assumes history marches forward, but history is not an army. It is a crab scuttling sideways, a drip of soft water

22 Solnit, *Hope in the Dark*, 1.
23 Ibid., 60.
24 Ibid., 1.

wearing away stone, an earthquake breaking centuries of tension."[25] Later she expresses that "[h]istory is made out of common dreams, groundswells, turning points, watersheds — it's a landscape more complicated than commensurate cause and effect."[26] In a nutshell, one can never say with confidence that hopeful action — one's own or others' — is not making a difference in the grand scheme of things, which means these efforts can never be written off: "Nobody can know the full consequences of their actions, and history is full of small acts that changed the world in surprising ways,"[27] and so, she concludes, "it's always too soon to calculate effect."[28] We are asked to "trust the basic eccentricity of the world, its sense of humour, and its resilience."[29] Her orientation towards reality as fundamentally *ad hoc* grounds her fundamental hope. Without this, she says, we start to view reality as "static", which leads either to presumption or cynical fatalism.

To return more explicitly to the relationship between fundamental hope and specific hopes, Solnit is claiming that fundamental hope is justified because while some — maybe many — of the things that we specifically hope for will not come to pass, *some will*, including hopes we (individually or collectively) thought improbable. We do not know which hopes will come to pass and which will not, so all are worth pursuing. The hopes that come to be realised may not be the ones we thought were the most likely and may not be realised in exactly the way we envisaged, but this disconnect is precisely why it is always worth holding a fundamental disposition of hope. This is why her account of hope can be distinguished from mere optimism: it faces reality by *expecting* that many specific hopes will not be fulfilled, but offers a reason as to why this is no grounds to give up hope completely.

I will attempt some more detailed analysis of Solnit's fundamental hope in subsequent sections. For now, however, I want to observe that while Solnit rejects a probabilistic account of hope at the level of specific hopes (we might call this a "naïve probabilistic account"), there is a sense in which a probabilistic approach to hope operates at the level of her fundamental hope. Solnit's fundamental hope, it seems to me, is premised on the fact that at a mac-

25 Solnit, *Hope in the Dark*, 3.
26 Ibid., 60.
27 Ibid., 66.
28 Ibid., 3.
29 Ibid., 75.

roscopic scale reality operates in a mysterious, non-linear, and sometimes even random way. Given that this is the case, it is *likely* that some specific hopes will work out and some will not. Inference from previous experience is then at play in the foundation of this fundamental hope: our experience is that some specific hopes are frustrated, but that others find resolution. On balance, then, while we cannot say *which* hopes will fly, we can expect that this pattern from the past will continue into the future and can thus wager confidently at this second-order level that some of our specific hopes will pay off. This analysis tallies with her claim that: "Hope…can be based on the evidence, on the track record of what might be possible — and in this book I've been trying to shift what the track record might be," [30] and more explicitly that "though hope is about the future, grounds for hope lie in the records or recollections of the past."[31]

Having sketched Solnit's hope, I turn now to outline the fundamental hope I find in the work of Rowan Williams.

IV. WILLIAMS'S HOPE

Williams' *Grace and Necessity* focuses on the phenomenology of aesthetic perception and creative artistic endeavour. In this description and analysis, Williams demonstrates a fundamental orientation or disposition, based on a "cosmic or umbrella" conviction about how things "hold together", within which specific attempts at creative work are given meaning and justification. For this reason, I transpose his discussion onto my discussion about fundamental hope.

Williams draws on the work of Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain who, in Williams' words, "…identified the labour of art as something rooted in the sense of an unfinishedness in 'ordinary' perception, a recognition that the objects of perception were not exhausted by what could be said about

30 Solnit, *Hope in the Dark*, 64. Interestingly, she follows this claim with a direct comparison between her version of fundamental hope with "faith" as she understands it: "But faith endures even when there is no way to imagine winning in the foreseeable future, faith is more mystical." Exactly what she means by this is unclear, and her comparison between "faith" and "hope" is not developed at all, but this remark echoes something of the comparison that I want to bring out in my evaluation of these two types of fundamental hope under discussion.

31 *Solnit, Hope in the Dark,* xix.

them in descriptive, rational and pragmatic terms."[32] While Williams explicitly discusses theological aesthetics, what we have here is the articulation of a "way" of engaging with a specific hope: with the hope of bringing about a work of art that is not yet created (comparable in some ways to the social or political change that the activist wants to bring about). The claim is that this specific hope is "rooted in the sense of the 'unfinishedness' in 'ordinary' perception", which is to say, I will argue, a sense both of how things "hold together" and an understanding of the nature of a basic epistemic uncertainty with which we can engage the objects of possible specific hopes.

"Art in one sense 'dispossess' us of our habitual perception and restores to reality a dimension that necessarily escapes our conceptuality and our control. It makes the world strange,"[33] Williams tells us. Just as Solnit evokes a "strangeness" to the way of the world that founds her fundamental hope, so does Williams, but — as we will see — in a different way. Let us get a better sense of what Williams has in mind by the "'unfinishedness' in our ordinary perception". Artistic labour, he states, is:

> a sense of the work achieved as giving itself to the observer in an 'overflow' of presence…This object is there *for me*, for my delight; but it is so because it is not there *solely* for me, not designed so as to fit my specifications for being pleased.[34]

This puts us in "some kind of relation with an aspect of reality otherwise unknown."[35] This idea of an "overflow" of presence gestures towards what we might call the phenomenology of "excess". This is an idea that we find in Emmanuel Levinas's work on the phenomenology of "infinity", where Levinas's focus is intersubjective — rather than aesthetic — perception. In direct encounter with "the Other", says Levinas, I encounter something that always "exceeds" my pre-existing framework of perception and understanding. In Levinas's language, the "infinity" of the Other breaks into the "totality" of my world: "The face [of the other] is present in its refusal to be contained. In this sense it cannot be comprehended, that is, encompassed."[36] This idea of encountering something that exceeds my existing conceptual scheme is what

32 Williams, *Grace and Necessity,* x.
33 Ibid., 37.
34 Ibid., 13.
35 Ibid., 14.
36 Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* (Duquesne Univ. Press, 1998), 194.

structures this encounter as an "epiphany".[37] Levinas is inspired by Plato's idea of the transcendent Good, as well as the "idea of infinity" in Descartes' Third Meditation, where Descartes asserts that "I do not comprehend the infinite."[38] Levinas thinks that Descartes here captures a phenomenological truth about an encounter with "infinity", namely that this is an encounter with something which overflows the very idea or concept of itself. To encounter the infinite is to encounter "the presence in a container of a content exceeding its capacity."[39]

This idea is also found in Jean-Luc Marion's work on the "saturated phenomenon."[40] Rather than a kind of uncertainty where what is given in our experience of an object *fails* to satisfy the pre-existing concept that we have the object, what is "given" in a saturated phenomenon *outstrips* what the concept can grasp. Uncertainty in this case is born not of lack, but of excess. Marion famously uses the example of an "icon", in which we see "more than" what we literally see in ordinary perception. It is an opening or access point for the infinite. (This is contrasted with an idol, with which our openness to its reality stops at what we already know.[41]) Williams's hope, I argue, should be understood as a saturated phenomenon.[42]

Williams echoes the Levinasian language of the "phenomenology of infinity" in his articulation of our responsiveness to reality in artistic labour: "[the] finishedness in the work being always incomplete at some level, 'limping', like the biblical Jacob, from the encounter with what cannot be named, achieved art always has '*that kind* of imperfection through which infinity

37 *Levinas, Totality and Infinity.* See e.g. 51, 60 and 75.

38 Rene Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy", in *Key Philosophical Writings*, ed. Enrique Chăvez-Arvizo (Wordsworth Classics, 1997), 157.

39 Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 289. See also "God and Philosophy" in Emmanuel Levinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 1996), 129–48.

40 Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena* (Fordham Univ. Press, 2002). This is a theme throughout his work.

41 Jean-Luc Marion, *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies* (Fordham Univ. Press, 2001).

42 Here I am particularly indebted to Robyn Horner's excellent discussion of hope as a saturated phenomenon, which has a different emphasis to mine here, but which also draws on Levinas and Marion. See Robyn Horner, "On Hope: Critical Re-readings", *Australian eJournal of Theology* 15, no. 1 (2010). Her discussion focuses on the question of whether the object of religious hope should be determinate. She outlines various ontological and phenomenological aspects to hope as a saturated phenomenon which I take to be counterpart to my focus on fundamental hope specifically, on types of uncertainty and on freedom and necessity.

wounds the finite.'"[43] Central to Williams's claim is not only the thought that we can identify a phenomenology of excess in aesthetic perception, but that insofar as this is a response to a reality beyond us, artistic labour hopes to realise the epistemically possible only insofar as it responds to something excessive perceived in what is already *actual*. In his words, a work of art is not plucked out of the void by the sheer will of the artist, but rather is "necessarily oriented towards being."[44] His conclusion here is that "[a]rt therefore is bound to show what is in some sense real."[45] The idea is that in holding a specific hope, the content of this hope seeks to be responsive to that which definitionally (already) 'exceeds' it. Williams illuminates this idea further:

> …art seeks to reshape the data of the world so as to make their fundamental structure and relation visible. Thus the artist *does* set out to change the world, but — if we can manage the paradox — to change it into itself.[46]

We should take seriously this idea of a "paradox" in the structure of what I am calling Williams's fundamental hope. Specific hopes aim at what is not yet the case, in some clear sense: they aim to create a piece of work that does not yet exist and so aim at what is metaphysically possible and not yet actual. At the same time, however, insofar as hope motivates agency to labour towards bringing about the fulfilment of these specific hopes, this hope is also aimed at what it perceives to "already be the case" in that which is "saturated" and therefore "unfinished" in our understanding. It is this glimpse of the actual that then founds this fundamental hope. To use Williams again:

> The artwork is…an extension of 'nature'; but it is so by the thoroughness of its transmutation of given nature into another material reality that reflects it and in so doing alters it and displays 'more than it is'.[47]

This kind of fundamental hope is therefore founded on the idea that surface appearances do not tell the whole story about how things hang together. It is founded on a kind of "bearing witness" to a depth of reality which exceeds the "totality" of our individual ordinary ways of engaging reality. It invites par-

43 Williams, *Grace and Necessity*, 21. Williams cites Maritain's Mellon Lectures: *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry,* 166-7.
44 Ibid., 17.
45 Ibid., 17.
46 Ibid., 17–18.
47 Ibid., 60.

ticipation in what some thinkers have called the "sacramental imagination", which "allows us to recognize transcendence in immanence."[48] There is a conviction in this position that there is an inherent epistemic uncertainty in our viewpoint on the world: not because it is random, but because it is "infinite" and therefore in principle exceeds our capacity to grasp it fully.

Fundamental hope as a saturated phenomenon does not subscribe to the probabilistic model at either the level of specific hopes or fundamental hope. The fundamental hope is that the cosmos is "excessive", both in its reality and its goodness, and further, that all the objects and events of ordinary perception are capable of being brought into greater conformity to this reality. The fundamental hope is that reality really is structured this way. This grounds specific hopes insofar as the probability of a specific hope coming to pass based on "ordinary perception" is disrupted from outside by "new information", that takes this hope out of the economy of probability and into the excess of the actual. This fundamental hope takes itself to "track"[49] reality in a non-probabilistic way (albeit that this is a reality that it cannot ever know fully). It takes itself to be responding to something that is epistemically uncertain but metaphysically actual, tracking something that remains true and valuable in all the nearest possible worlds (indeed, interpreted theistically, as we will see, true and valuable in all possible worlds).

An illuminating real-life example of hope as a saturated phenomenon can be found in Jonathan Lear's excellent analysis of what he calls the "radical hope" of a leader of the Native American Crow Nation, Plenty Coups, in demonstrating hope for a future for his people while they experienced the total collapse of their traditional way of life around them. Plenty Coups was convicted that the Crow would survive and thrive even though everything they knew would be destroyed as a result of the influence of white settlers. From the perspective of history, this hope has shown itself to reflect

48 Anthony J. Godzieba, "The Catholic Sacramental Imagination and the Access/Excess of Grace", *New Theology Review* 21, no. 3 (2008): 16–17.

49 In using this language I have in mind Robert Nozick's language of "truth-tracking" as a condition of knowledge — namely that knowledge must track the truth of an assertion in all nearby possible worlds. (See Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Clarendon Press, 1981), Ch 2.1) Nozick himself also uses the language of "tracking bestness" (317) to express the related idea of our actions tracking evaluative facts in all nearby possible worlds. Nozick defines tracking in terms of a set of subjunctive conditionals. I am not concerned with the details how this tracking mechanism might work, nor does this account need to adopt Nozick's way of formulating this.

something true — the Crow did survive, in a new form, with a new way of life — even though the fullness of the meaning of this truth could not have been known at the time. Lear focuses on how this kind of hope takes its shape from the unknown not only because its object is located in the future, and so beyond certainty in this sense, but also because it exceeds the subject's existing framework of full intelligibility. In this case, the Crow's traditional way of life was so fundamentally bound up with their identity that a move away from this way of life involved "the emergence of a Crow subjectivity that did not yet exist,"[50] and so something outside the horizon of their comprehension.

Lear draws out the significance of this in the following:

> What makes this hope radical is that it is directed toward a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what it is. Radical hope anticipates a good for which those who have the hope as yet lack the appropriate concepts with which to understand it.[51]

Plenty Coups himself did not know what the future would look like. The *nature* of the object of hope itself was uncertain and not only whether it would come to pass or not. It was uncertain because it "exceeded" the "totality" of Plenty Coups's current conceptual scheme, but yet he trusted that "the goodness of the world transcends our finite powers to grasp it."[52]

Lear's example illustrates that this form of hope is not a form of mere optimism. It faces reality, first by not ignoring the reasons that make the fulfilment of hope improbable in one's existing framework and perception. It therefore recognises the great cost or suffering that may lie ahead. In Plenty Coups's case, he recognised that his people were about to lose everything that they had previously known and loved. What kept him in hope was the recognition that although all the possibilities that he could imagine might be put to death, the possibility of a resurrection — definitionally in terms not yet possible to comprehend — was still given. In cases of genuine hope this is not pulled out of thin air but is given "from outside", as a kind of promise. In Plenty Coups's case this was given in the symbolism of a dream. This hope, in Lear's words, is thus also

50 Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the face of cultural devastation* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2006), 104.

51 Lear, *Radical Hope*, 103.

52 Ibid., 121.

"responsive to reality"[53] insofar as it taps into something "prophetic"[54] which tracks and reflects something true about how things "hang together".

This formulation of hope as a saturated phenomenon is not intended as a *proof* of the existence of God. There may be space for non-theistic formulations of this form of hope, as Lear suggests, though I do not have the space here to explore if and how this might be done.[55] It is clear, however, that Levinas, Marion and Williams would have us understand the phenomenology of infinity in theistic terms,[56] and that this model of hope as a saturated phenomenon is further patterned in a specifically Christian hope, marked by death and resurrection, and directed towards the person of Jesus — in whom the material of ordinary perception is opened to a divine reality that "exceeds" full comprehension.[57]

To re-cap, both Solnit and Williams base their claims for warranted fundamental hope on a sense of how reality is structured, taking this structure to provide grounds for a basic existential orientation that absolute despair is never the final word, that we can never say "All is lost". For Solnit this structure is one of eccentricity, for Williams it is one of excess. There are many ways we might compare and evaluate these two accounts, but here I will focus briefly on two: (i) the different role and definition of freedom in each account, and (ii) the stability of each of these fundamental hopes in each case. These comments, interestingly enough, involve two types of necessity. I will conclude that while both accounts are credible, hope as a saturated phenomenon has strengths that Solnit's hope does not match. I turn to the first of these points now.

53 Lear, *Radical Hope*, 113. Interestingly Lear joins Levinas in evoking Plato as the inspiration here. See 120-121.

54 Ibid., 113.

55 Lear, for example, says explicitly that his "radical hope" is open to both theistic and non-theistic readings (see 113-115). The "excessive" quality of reality here perhaps referring to that the sum total of reality "beyond me", without this needing to be "infinite". On the other hand I note that it may be possible to formulate some variety of Solnit's hope which is theistic in some sense, but again I will not explore this further here.

56 This reading is compatible with the "Thou" who grounds Godfrey's intersubjective model of deep-grounded hope. Godfrey, *A Philosophy of Human Hope*, 117–21.

57 See N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (Harper Collins Publishers, 2008), 93–107 for more on patterns of the "continuous and discontinuous" that structure hope in Christian theology and the Christian imagination.

V. FREEDOM AND NECESSITY

The first point of comparison I note is that these two types of fundamental hope make different suggestions about the nature of *freedom* in relation to hope. In philosophical ethics, we find the question of how it can be the case that we are responsive to the *obligations* of value, and yet that at the same time we must choose to respond to these values *freely*, rather than as a form of coercion.[58] In the same way, we might ask how we are to conceive the relation between hope, freedom and determinism. Note that this is not the question of whether we are free to act on what we hope for, but whether and how our freedom is involved in the formation of our hopes as our own.

We might think of hope as casting out into the void of the not-yet, creating each object of hope *ex nihilo*, as a product of the unconstrained will of the hoper. Hope, trading in the economy of pure possibility, is an exercise in a kind of libertarian freedom of the will. Solnit's hope, I think it is fair to say, implies something of this structure. It is difficult to be too exacting in this reading, as the meta-ethical mechanics of hope formation are not Solnit's focus. She clearly takes the activists she is addressing to have their hopes directed towards making the world a better place, and the extent to which they are responsible for *deciding* which world is the best world to fight for is unclear. However, the will seems to play an important role in this visioning process, with Solnit calling for "the freedom for each to participate in *inventing* the world…the power to make one's life and to make the world."[59] It seems that for Solnit, the content of our hopes are ours to birth, ours to project into and onto the dark. It is our responsibility to conceive and cast our hopes into a world that otherwise may twist and turn in any direction: "Hope locates itself in the premises that we don't know what will happen and that in the spaciousness of uncertainty is room to

58 I look at this issue for moral autonomy in Sarah Pawlett Jackson, "Darwall and Williams: Moral Reasoning, Priority and the Second-Person Standpoint", in *The Moral Philosophy of Bernard Williams*, ed. Chris Herrera and Alexandra Perry (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013). In titling *this* paper "Hope and Necessity" I had in mind not only Rowan Williams' *Grace and Necessity*, which I have been engaging throughout, but also the other Williams — Bernard Williams. The latter's *Shame and Necessity,* which I look at in *Darwall and Williams,* considers the way that shame is a phenomenon both externally "necessitating" and internally constitutive of autonomy. See Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Univ. of California Press, 1993).

59 Solnit, *Hope in the Dark*, 95. Emphasis mine.

act."[60] This "spaciousness" — an absence of direction from the world itself — is a kind of vacuum or opening into which the individual or collective will has the power to bring about something new. This pure possibility (and not actuality) is the condition of hope itself and of hope's agency.

Hope as a saturated phenomenon, on the other hand, conceives hope's freedom in a slightly different way. Because the sacramental imagination takes itself to respond to something actual, this is an action *not* characterised by a radically free will. On the contrary, this is a form of epistemic uncertainty that chooses to be "obedient" to what it glimpses in the "overflow" of ordinary things. Williams says explicitly:

> You have to find what you must obey, artistically; and finding it is finding that which exists in relation to more than your will and purpose — finding the depth of alternative embodiment in the seen landscape, the depth of gratuitous capacity in the imagined character (when what you *want* to imagine will not come) and so on... the artist looks for the "necessity" in the thing being made.[61]

Williams understands the hope of artistic labour as a kind of "obedience" or "responsiveness" to that which we recognise as the "more-than" in our ordinary perception. I do not think we should read this as the idea that there is no freedom in hope; rather, this account offers us a way of understanding the nature and structure of hope's freedom. Hope's freedom is not the radical freedom of unconstrained and arbitrary possibility, but rather, freedom-as-response. We can again use resources from Levinas to understand this more fully. Levinas articulates helpfully that freedom is not the ability to choose whatever one likes from unlimited possibility, but that we must "liberate freedom from the arbitrary."[62] Moral freedom is "constrained" by the good, but not in a way that limits it, but is constitutive of it, (just as the "constraint" of truth upon my epistemic freedom is constitutive of it rather than a hinderance to it.[63]) So too, I take it, Williams's fundamental hope takes its "obedience" to be constitutive of its freedom.

On this point I would argue that Williams's account paints a more realistic picture of hope's freedom. In understanding itself as structurally constrained by what is already given, we have a portrait of hope that is "liberated…from

60 *Solnit, Hope in the Dark,* xiv.
61 Williams, *Grace and Necessity*, 147.
62 Ibid. 84–85.
63 See Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 83–84. See also Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations*, 170–71.

the arbitrary". This is not to say that Williams' account is a form of fatalism. It is not that the divine excess bypasses our autonomy in inspiring hope in us; this would be to continue to define hope's freedom as arbitrary choice. The point is that the freedom in hope is freedom to hope for that which is worthy of hope: hope is *necessitated* by the transcendent good.

If these two accounts of hope differ in their characterisation of hope's freedom, they also differ in the nature of their uncertainty, with consequences for the quality of their hope. It is to this final point that I now turn.

VI. CONTINGENCY AND NECESSITY

Hope happens at points of uncertainty, and uncertainty can involve different modal claims. Uncertainty is an operation of epistemic possibility. As we have seen, epistemic possibility might follow what is metaphysically possible but not (yet) actual, or it may pertain to what is actual but unknown, or not fully known. For Williams, the epistemic uncertainty involved in fundamental hope is the latter, for Solnit, the former. For Solnit this is metaphysical possibility at two levels — the level of specific hope and the level of fundamental hope itself. Her fundamental hope is warranted because the metaphysical possibility that "All is not lost" is probable. Solnit's fundamental hope will therefore endure so long as history continues to conform to the pattern of triumphs as well as defeats, so long as some leaps forward are made as well as steps back. This itself is contingent, as she herself would assert: "To hope is to gamble. It's to bet on the future."[64] I agree with her that this pattern she identifies is likely to continue into the future, and that her version of fundamental hope is coherent and well-founded in this sense, but it is worth considering whether and how the second-order probabilistic model colours the phenomenology of this hope.

We cannot pronounce Aristotle's criticism that Solnit's hopers "do not hold their ground against what is really fearful", at least not in the same way as Aristotle intended it. Solnit's hoper does face what is fearful, because they believe that it may not always be so fearful, or that something good on another day will be a triumph, balancing out fear and joy. Some version of Aristotle's worry, however, can be applied here, insofar as we can make the descriptive observation that this version of fundamental hope is still in some way vulnerable

64 Solnit, *Hope in the Dark*, 4.

to the contingencies of history. This may not be a criticism. The response here might be that it is quite right that fundamental hope should be responsive to the contingencies of history. Not that hope should swing wildly with every specific hope dashed or fulfilled, but that if, as a society, we fall into times where breakthroughs are no longer observed at all, then eventually this *would* be grounds to give up fundamental hope. This willingness to give up fundamental hope might be seen as the mark of its distinction from cosmic optimism. It may not be possible to say that fundamental hope will never give way to fundamental despair, but it probably will not, and we should not hope more for our hope.

Williams's hope on the other hand, is tethered to something outside of the ebb and flow of contingent probability. As we have noted, there are uncertainties at the level of specific hopes which pertain to non-actual possibilities on his account. To stay within the example of art, it is uncertain whether I will be able to complete a piece of work for all kinds of reasons. All kinds of specific contingencies may conspire such that the novel does not get written, or — to think about specific hopes in other areas of life — why the protest does not effect change or why the relationship may not be reconciled. We can legitimately hope for such things, however, because a sacramental imagination shows us that these situations always contain within them "more than they are": this is their "possibility", that they might be conformed to the likeness of a (good, true and beautiful) pattern that is, in Williams's paradox, already the case. Further, even in the case of seeming defeat, there lurks the promise that such a defeat is a death that might be taken up into a resurrection that our present worldview and imagination is not able to contain.

If fundamental hope as a saturated phenomenon tracks what is actual rather than what is probable, its foundation is more secure than the second-order probabilistic approach. This is true regardless of whether one takes a classical theistic reading of the saturated phenomenon or not, because what is actual is a more secure base than what is probable. There is a further modal claim to make, however, if hope as a saturated phenomenon is theistic, as we find in Williams, namely that this hope tracks not just what is actual, but what is necessary. Here we identify necessity in a different sense to that discussed in the previous section: here hope tracks what is necessary not just insofar as reality necessitates action in accordance with itself, but in the sense that it is

also metaphysically necessary — a (still yet "excessively" uncertain) constant across all possible worlds and all possible futures.[65]

Lear's account of radical hope again supports this reading, as a prophetic hope that differs from all forms of probabilistic hope. Lear speaks of "a gamble with necessity"[66] that shows itself only in cases of radical hope. He notes that for the most part all of us "gamble that the entire field of possibilities will remain stable; that one will continue to be able to judge success or failure in its terms."[67] This is to say — most of us know that we live in a world where there are things that we do not know and we cannot be certain of. Very few of us labour under the illusion that we are omnipotent. But we do tend to labour under the view or the framework that all things are intelligible, that ultimately all things *are* or *can be made to be* intelligible under my framework of understanding, once I am given enough information. Radical hope, in Lear's terminology, tells us that this is not necessarily the case. This is a hope that can track what happens on the far edges of the possible worlds that you yourself do not even know are there. In a very remote possible world you will lose everything, even your ability to think as you do currently — "even the concepts with which we understand ourselves and the world may collapse."[68] Radical hope tracks even this possibility and still finds that there is reason not to lose all hope.

In a similar way, in terms of the relation between specific hopes and fundamental hope, Williams's fundamental Christian hope is that even if *every* specific hope were to fail to come to pass, there is something — the possibility of an "overflow of presence", the possibility of resurrection — that would remain. We find something of this sentiment in the penultimate verse of Emily Brontë's *No Coward Soul is Mine*:

> Though earth and moon were gone
> And suns and universes ceased to be
> And Thou wert left alone
> Every Existence would exist in thee.[69]

65 If my title plays with Rowan Williams' *Grace* and Bernard Williams' *Shame* in evoking the first kind of necessity, I enjoy also the fact that the "rigid designators" of Saul Kripke's *Naming and Necessity* speak to the second kind of necessity.

66 Lear, *Radical Hope*, 26.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid., 120.

69 Emily Brontë, "No Coward Soul is Mine". In *The Complete Poems of Emily Jane Brontë*, ed. C. W. Hatfield (Columbia Univ. Press, 1995), 243.

Hope as a saturated phenomenon is ultimately not inferential or probabilistic in the ways that Solnit's hope is. In taking itself to be responsive to what is already there, 'hidden' in ordinary perception, it is not vulnerable to a shift in the distribution of successes and failures. What this kind of hope does require, however, is the right kind of attentiveness to reality as an 'icon' rather than an 'idol'. This, then, is a vulnerability of a different kind, tied to our willingness to embrace the sacramental imagination.

VII. CONCLUSION

In this paper I have drawn out two distinct accounts of fundamental hope from Solnit and Williams. Both offer thoughtful and systematic understandings of what might ground our basic disposition to the world as hopeful or hopeless. Both offer a warranted way of thinking about how specific hopes can be oriented within the context of a more fundamental disposition of hope. The accounts are not necessarily in competition with each other in every way, in that both identify forms of epistemic uncertainty that may co-exist in some way: in different contexts we may derive hope from the unknowability of whether future events will come to pass *and* on the trusted excessive goodness of the world. As *worldviews,* however — namely as *total* accounts which purport to give an ultimate reason for fundamental hope — they are mutually exclusive. Each account offers a fundamental hope which frames "how things hang together" in a different way, and so offers different reasons for ultimately trusting the universe. Whether we respond as disciples of Solnit or of Williams, then, I have argued, will change what and how we do art, activism, and indeed all forms of action.

I have tried to show that both accounts are well thought out and internally coherent. Both speak to the existential predicament that human beings face and offer a way of attending to the world realistically, in a way that is fundamentally hopeful. In addition, both offer ways of understanding how and why we might act as a result of our fundamental hope. This attentiveness and conception of agency is different in each case, however. Solnit proposes attentiveness to the arbitrary and the unexpected, and offers a hope-driven agency that sets its own goals and casts them into the void opened up by possibility. Williams proffers attentiveness to the depths of the ordinary, and calls for a hope-filled activity which is an obedience to what the artist or the prophet in each of us sees in those depths.

In a nutshell, Solnit divorces hope and necessity, whereas Williams brings them together. I have argued that Williams's account makes better sense of the phenomenology of the necessitation of fundamental hope via the sacramental imagination, and that insofar as hope and necessity are brought together, this provides a true "anchor of the soul."[70,71]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aristotle. 2009. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Bloeser, Claudia, and Titus Stahl. 2017. "Hope". Last modified March 8, 2017. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hope/.

Brontë, Emily. 1995. "No Coward Soul is Mine". In *The Complete Poems of Emily Jane Brontë*, edited by C. W. Hatfield, 243–44. New York, NY: Columbia Univ. Press.

Chignell, Andrew. 2013. "Rational Hope, Moral Order and the Revolution of the Will". In *The Divine Order, the Human Order, and the Order of Nature*, edited by Eric Watkins, 197–218. New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press.

Descartes, Rene. 1997. "Meditations on First Philosophy". In *Key Philosophical Writings*, edited by Enrique Chăvez-Arvizo, 123–90. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics.

Eagleton, Terry. 2015. *Hope without Optimism*. New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press.

Egan, Andy, and Brian Weatherson, eds. 2011. *Epistemic Modality*. New York, NY: Oxford Univ. Press.

Godfrey, Joseph J. 1987. *A Philosophy of Human Hope*. Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Godzieba, Anthony J. 2008. "The Catholic Sacramental Imagination and the Access/Excess of Grace". *New Theology Review* 21, no. 3: 14–26.

Horner, Robyn. 2010. "On Hope: Critical Re-readings". *Australian eJournal of Theology* 15, no. 1. http://aejt.com.au/2010/issue_15.

70 Hebrews 6:19 (NRSV).

71 Many thanks to Elizabeth Burns for inviting me to contribute to this Special Issue, and for her comments on the paper. Thanks to Phil Pawlett Jackson and Miroslav Imbrisevic for their helpful comments on earlier drafts, and further to an anonymous reviewer for their constructive feedback.

Lear, Jonathan. 2006. *Radical Hope: Ethics in the face of cultural devastation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.

Levinas, Emmanuel. 1996. *Basic Philosophical Writings*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Univ. Press.

—. 1998. *Totality and Infinity*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne Univ. Press.

Marion, Jean-Luc. 2001. *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies*. New York, NY: Fordham Univ. Press.

—. 2002. *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*. New York, NY: Fordham Univ. Press.

Moltmann, Jürgen. 1967. *Theology of Hope*. London: SCM.

Nozick, Robert. 1981. *Philosophical Explanations*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Pawlett Jackson, Sarah. 2013. "Darwall and Williams: Moral Reasoning, Priority and the Second-Person Standpoint". In *The Moral Philosophy of Bernard Williams*, edited by Chris Herrera and Alexandra Perry, 130–50. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Sellers, Wilfred. 1963. *Science, Perception and Reality*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Solnit, Rebecca. 2016. *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket.

Williams, Bernard. 1993. *Shame and Necessity*. London: Univ. of California Press.

Williams, Row. 2005. *Grace and Necessity: Reflections on Art and Love*. Cornwall: Continuum.

Wright, N. T. 2008. *Surprised by Hope*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.

TRUTH AS FINAL CAUSE: ESCHATOLOGY AND HOPE IN LACAN AND PRZYWARA

Christopher M. Wojtulewicz
KU Leuven

Abstract. Truth is a locus of guilt for the Christian, according to Jacques Lacan. The religious person, he argues, punitively defers truth eschatologically. Yet Lacan's own view dissolves eschatological deferral to the world, as the "Real". The metaphysics of Erich Przywara SJ helps highlight that this mirrors Lacan's view of the religious person. Przywara's Christian metaphysics and Lacanian psychoanalysis converge on the immanence of truth to history. But Przywaran analogy corrects Lacan's position on the religious person, which by implication calls for an adjustment to Lacan's worldview. In the final analysis, Lacan's dialectical nihilism should yield to a Christian's hopeful relation to the truth.

I. INTRODUCTION

In what follows, I have sought to offer some insight on the various relations to 'truth as cause' offered by Jacques Lacan (1901–1980) in his essay "Science and Truth."[1] Not only is this an exploration of the way science understands truth (as a prelude to the question of the scientific status of psychoanalysis) but more importantly for our considerations, the way that religion relates to truth. In this latter case, Lacan specifically has Christianity in mind, especially as represented in the attitude espoused by the Church Fathers. Drawing upon Aristotelian causality to characterise various ways in which truth acts as cause, Lacan identifies the religious (Christian) attitude to truth as one of final causality. Two principal matters emerge from this identification: that Christianity confers "upon truth the status of guilt," and that truth "is deferred to an end-of-the-world judgement." Key to our analysis will be the metaphysical

1 Jacques Lacan, "Science and Truth", in *Écrits*: *The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg (W. W. Norton & Company, 2006).

PP. 75–94
DOI: 10.24204/EJPR.V11I3.2976
AUTHOR: CHRISTOPHER.WOJTULEWICZ@KULEUVEN.BE

thought of Erich Przywara (1889–1972), whose *analogia entis* (analogy of being) will offer us a means of splicing a dialectical polarity in Lacan's thought. This difficult but necessary operation opens a vista onto Lacan's metaphysical presuppositions, and allows us to consider anew the relation to the transcendent which makes the eschatologising of truth possible—beyond an immanent noetic structure, and with ontological reality. In this way, I argue that Lacan's presuppositions are misguided in a way that Przywara allows us to see, and that this relation to the truth constitutes a genuine Christian hope.

In his essay "Science and Truth," Jacques Lacan suggests that four broad forms of thought (magical, scientific, psychoanalytic, and religious) can be identified as relating to "truth as cause". Following the four Aristotelian causes, magic relates to truth as efficient cause, science as formal, psychoanalytic as material, and religion as final cause. We are particularly concerned here with the religious person's relation to truth as final cause; but also, to understand Lacan's position better, the psychoanalytic material cause. For the religious person, truth is revealed as from the exteriority of Divine agency, in revelation. In this sense, truth is "eschatologised," placed beyond our grasp. The religious person's place in the causality of truth is thus eclipsed by revelation, and so truth as final cause is an assertion which radically exteriorises humanity from truth. This is why Lacan says "revelation in religion translates as a negation [*dénégation*] of truth as cause,"[2] because the religious person plays no part in the truth. Lacan's reading of the situation thus harbours a Protestant inflection which stresses both a Divine exteriority, and a depravity in humanity which causes us to "confer upon truth the status of guilt."[3] As such, the issue of "truth as cause" in religion gives us reason to think about: the relationship between immanence and transcendence (God in relation to the world), the nature of the human person as an acting subject, and the relationship of truth to history. In each of these areas, Erich Przywara gives us reason to doubt Lacan's formulation of the religious person's relation to truth as final cause. Przywara's *analogia entis* (analogy of being) is the doctrine of the *in-über* (what Betz and Bentley Hart translate as "in-and-beyond") relationship, ultimately between God and the world, which characterises all of Przywara's thought. The *analogia entis* is a frustration of the nihilism implicit in the aforementioned Prot-

2 Lacan, "Science and Truth", 741.
3 Ibid.

estant-inflected dialectic of Lacan's thought. Przywara thus adds flesh to the Christian bones of hope in an "eschatologised" truth.

If religion is hopeful in this sense, then perhaps we might suggest psychoanalysis is hopeless? This is to question the nature of a desired object (such as the truth) with the aid of the psychoanalytic observation that objects are less the end or goal of desire in themselves than they are the actors or causes of desire. "Hopeless" here, then, means nothing more than "without a goal". Therefore, the concept of "truth as cause" concerns the effect that truth has on the person's orientation in the world, and not a goal to which the person tends. This may seem to cut across the sense in which it operates as "final cause" in religion, for the eschatological might suggest *nothing more than* a complete vision to which the person tends. It is not so much that the religious person seeks finally to attain full and complete knowledge (still less in the here and now) but that the truth is conceived as a *telos*, effective upon the world from a point beyond or outside it. The "cause of his desire" has been relinquished to God; and in this "sacrifice", the religious person's "demand is subordinated to his presumed desire for God,"[4] which is why truth becomes a matter of guilt. This gives birth to an intense epistemological scepticism.

Lacan asserts, however, that the goal of a united truth for the human subject is, at the very least, unattainable. Quintessentially, this is a distaste for final causes *per se*. Such hopelessness—if we may call it that—Lacan expresses when critiquing the view that the ego be considered as "a function both of synthesis and of integration."[5] Lacan continues:

> nothing in the concrete life of a single individual allows us to ground the idea that such a finality directs his life and could lead him [...] to harmony with himself as well as to approval from the world on which his happiness depends.[6]

The religious person's scepticism towards knowledge, stemming from truth's guilt-status, seems to be appropriated by Lacan, in his own case, towards the eschatological altogether. Rhetorically we ask: whence Lacan's wariness of transcendent externalisation?

4 Lacan, "Science and Truth", 741.

5 Jacques Lacan, "Discourse to Catholics", in *The Triumph of Religion. Preceded by Discourse to Catholics*, trans. Bruce Fink (Polity Press, 2014), 9.

6 Ibid.

Lacan's emphasis on the guilt status of truth in Christianity relies on the assertion of a *nihil* that belongs to the scepticism of the religious person towards knowledge. This maximally realised scepticism towards knowledge, Lacan thinks, is something which is demonstrated by the articulation of mystery (such as Trinitarian theology) at the intersection between dogma and heresy.[7] The early Church produced dogmatic statements in a conciliar fashion, not as an arbitrary enunciation of positive truths, but in response to heresies—in response to negativities which miss the as-yet unrealised knowledge of eschatologised truth, and which emerge from the application of this scepticism resulting from truth as final cause. Responding to the "impasse" Lacan perceives in the tension between Trinitarian theology and divine unity,[8] the eschatologised "truth as cause" procures a scepticism towards philosophical and theological formulations which in some interior manner stand on the wrong side of the law enunciated by truth's "end-of-the-world judgement,"[9] driving religious desire to articulate knowledge about God in this particular way. Lacan's understanding of the relationship of the religious person to heresy is therefore an articulation of a relationship *between* the eschatological and the historical.

This relationship between the eschatological and the historical contains within it a repudiation of the dialectical dichotomy (between God and the world) which characterises Lacan's entire conception of the religious person. For Lacan, psychoanalysis treats truth as material cause, which means uncovering the truth in what is said by the analysand, as the "matter" of truth. Metaphysically speaking, the exteriorised nature of revelation can only be received in the way dictated by the creaturely being of the one receiving it; psychoanalytically, for Lacan, this would mean revelation is always and necessarily received in language or the symbolic, but these do not get a full grip on the reality (Lacan's "Real" being that which is beyond the grasp of language).

7 Lacan, "Science and Truth", 741.

8 The objection Lacan raises relative to this issue seems to draw its force from the principle of non-contradiction (PNC). It is worthy of note that Przywara treats the problem of the PNC taken strictly dialectically in his *Analogia Entis*, though with such detail as to render it impossible to redact here; therefore we reference it only in passing. See Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics, Original Structure and Universal Rhythm* (Eerdmans, 2014), 198–237.

9 Lacan, "Science and Truth", 741.

Whatever knowledge is procured as a result of "truth as cause", it is always in the creaturely *modi significandi* (modes of signification) which properly belong to the historical creature. This introduces the question of the immanent structure of nature as a relationship between essence and existence, between being and becoming. At any rate, this intimation of the creaturely metaphysics of being and becoming already articulates a point of connection to Lacan's "Real", and to his rejection of a unitary goal for the human condition. The result is the always-ever incomplete knowledge of the acting subject—a subject who is in "becoming". From this perspective, Lacan's own view and his description of the religious person are strikingly similar. It speaks, at the very least, to the material *of* truth in psychoanalysis, insofar as Lacan considers psychoanalysis to relate to truth as material cause:[10] the "matter" in question—the historically grounded subject—belongs to the immanent philosophy of the relationship between essence and existence, between being and becoming. This is very different from Lacan's suggestion that "[h]istory unfolds only in going against the rhythm of development,"[11] as though "development" here could be construed as the metaphysics of becoming. Our point is first and foremost an observation of the relationship *between* essence and existence, and not Lacan's concern that the analyst repudiate "a providential conception of its [history's] course."[12] This latter point shows how Lacan's position excludes God in favour of the immanence of the world.

Beyond the individual question of the religious person's relationship to truth as cause is the broader matter of a nihilistic cadence in Lacan's conception of the world (and God). It is this subducted nihilism which places Lacan's thought in the field of modern philosophy and away from a conception of hope whose transcendent (eschatologised) position is analogically encountered as both within and beyond the immanence of life. If Lacan's point about religion is to mean anything, one must first articulate the psychoanalytic construal of immanence and transcendence. It is in light of the relationship between these two (should one exist at all) that truth as final cause in religion demonstrates its exigency for a dialectic after the pattern of Lacan's thought as a whole. This could be turned into the suggestion that Lacan (mis)recog-

10 Lacan, "Science and Truth", 743.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 744.

nises in religion a semblance of his own psychoanalytic thought. In religion, truth as final cause diminishes humanity. In Lacan, truth as material cause diminishes God. The former, as we will see, is an expression of theopanism, the latter is an expression of pantheism. Neither position is analogical, which is what prevents the religious person in Lacan's thought from experiencing an eschatologised "truth as cause" as hopeful; rather, it is the site of punitive extrusion and guilt.

II. TRANSCENDENCE: THEOPANISM OR PANTHEISM

The immanent and the transcendent have, in some measure, already emerged in what we have said thus far, and this we may subject to Przywara's analysis. The immanent belongs to the question of the nature of the world in itself, and thus the relationship between essence and existence. We will need to look more closely at the immanent in Lacan, as well as Przywara's view that modernity relates to the immanent either by intellectualism or by voluntarism.[13] The transcendent, on the other hand, concerns the relationship between God and the world. Neither immanence nor transcendence is monolithic in its concerns; both accrue a constellation of issues and relations. Nevertheless, a disposition towards one is always a disposition towards the other, and they are for that reason always related (we will consider this later as an analogy of proportionality). For Przywara, the transcendent as conceived in contemporary thought may be subdivided into theopanism and pantheism.[14] In essence, however, both theopanism and pantheism are really polarised expressions of an underlying nihilism.

Theopanism in this sense involves the negation of the world, either denying it substantial ontological reality, or else depriving it of any agency or moral and spiritual value.[15] The result is an all-expansive God who, in having nothing real or of any value to relate to, *is* everything absolutely speaking. As

13 Erich Przywara, *Ringen der Gegenwart: Gesammelte Aufsätze 1922–1927* (Dr. Benno Filser-Verlag, 1929), 958.

14 Ibid., 958.

15 Ibid. See also John R. Betz, "Translator's Introduction", in Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics, Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, (Eerdmans, 2014), 50–51. Betz neatly summarises Przywara's position from across his works, showing how the 'Lutheran-Reformed' tradition falls under this concept of theopanism.

Przywara puts it, "the world" means nothing other than "the 'All-Alone' of God," the "divinising of the world to God."[16] Pantheism, therefore, is the precise opposite: the exclusion of God such that the world itself is all-expansive, the only true reality, and thus itself God. Again, as Przywara puts it, "God" means nothing other than "the 'All-Alone' of the world," the "de-divinisation of God to the world."[17] It is for this reason that Przywara is even able to include Heidegger among the pantheists, for his theory of Being is essentially one of nothing.[18] In either case of the dialectic at the heart of theopanism or pantheism, it is the focus on the *nihil*, wherever it is posited, which is both the source of fault and the guarantor of the absolutism of its opposite, whether God (in theopanism) or the world (in pantheism). For this reason, Przywara considers the "All-Alone" to be the "codeword" for both theopanism and pantheism,[19] each containing within itself a violent interplay between extreme presence in the "All," and extreme negation in the "Alone."

In light of these conceptual definitions, Lacan seems to view the religious person in theopanistic terms (revelation eclipses the subject, truth has the status of guilt, and they self-identify as the "waste object left behind out of divine retribution"[20]), whereas his own view of the world seems pantheistic (extrusion of transcendent otherness as traumatic and punitive). What Przywara highlights for us is that Lacan's wrestling with religion is a struggle between these two forms of "All-Alone," between the religious person's theopanism and his own pantheism, as a manifestation of the question of transcendence. Yet in some measure, because he suggests the psychoanalyst has to reject all three of the other relations to truth as cause ("magical thinking" as efficient, science as formal, and religious as final) it is not only in religion that he overwrites a theopanistic view. In magic there is an externalising attribution "to someone else,"[21] and in science the annulling of the observing subject and ultimately the rejection of truth as cause altogether.[22]

16 Przywara, *Ringen der Gegenwart*, 958.
17 Ibid.
18 Betz, "Translator's Introduction", 51 n. 138: "Przywara strikingly refers to Heidegger's philosophy of *Sein als Nichts* precisely as a form of pantheism."
19 Przywara, *Ringen der Gegenwart*, 958.
20 Jacques Lacan, *Anxiety*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (Polity Press, 2015), 220.
21 Lacan, "Science and Truth", 744.
22 Ibid., 742.

Manifestations of the theopanistic through into modernity confirm the observation of a Protestant inflection to Lacan's conception of the religious person. For Przywara, as John Betz shows, theopanism's diminishment of the created world can be seen both "with Buddhism and *mutatis mutandis* Lutheran-Reformed theology to the extent that the latter denies any cooperation with grace."[23] The Protestant dialectic between the transcendent and the immanent is displayed in Lacan's linking of religion to obsessional neurosis[24]—presumably a nod at least to the ritualism of Catholicism, but coloured by a Protestant dialectic which seeks to maintain a distancing from God (as transcendent).[25] By the same token Lacan draws upon the image of Buddhist self-mummification as expressive of the obsessional neurotic who tries to "realize himself as an object";[26] that is, to (theopanistically) diminish oneself in the face of the will of the "Other". For Przywara, the Lutheran-Reformed tradition idealistically annunciates God as "*Alleinwirksamkeit*" ("exclusive agency"),[27] and denunciates the world in a way which led the philosophies that grew out of it to view the world as "a complete *Nein-Nichts*"[28] (No-Nothing). Both are instances of the theopanistic diminishment of the human person and the world, and thus manifestations of a polarising which eclipses hope.

Despite Lacan's argument that the truth as final cause (negatively) impacts the social order by instituting hierarchies, as in Catholicism,[29] our Przywaran analysis shows that the real implication of Lacan's position for the religious person is to abolish all hierarchies in favour of a theopanistic Divine absolutism. In essence, Przywara's critique of the eschatological nature of religion, so conceived, stands in opposition to the Church[30]—no real relation between the eschatological and the world is possible because the eschatological seems to involve, for Lacan, a punitive extrusion of truth in much the

23 Betz, "Translator's Introduction", 51–52.
24 Lacan, "Science and Truth", 740.
25 Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: 1959–1960*, Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book VII, trans. Dennis Porter, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, (Routledge, 2007), 160–61.
26 Jacques Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious", in *Écrits*: *The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg (W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 700.
27 Betz, "Translator's Introduction", 51 n. 139.
28 Przywara, *Ringen der Gegenwart*, 960.
29 Lacan, "Science and Truth", 744.
30 Przywara, *Ringen der Gegenwart*, 49.

same way as he himself considers the Real.[31] For this reason, Lacan's remark about the eschatologising of truth as cause needs to be carefully considered against Christianity's claim that there *is* a relationship between truth and history. For Przywara, that claim is analogical, and is what circumnavigates what we might call the hopelessness of nihilism.

III. IMMANENCE: RATIONALISM OR VOLUNTARISM

Having considered the transcendent dimension of Lacan's view of the religious person, we return to the immanent. The immanent is a concern for that which belongs to creaturely metaphysics properly speaking, which is to say, the relationship between essence and existence as it is in creatures. Modernity tends, Przywara thinks, in one of two directions to deal with this relationship between being and becoming: either "intellectualism" (or rationalism) or "voluntarism."[32] Intellectualism, or rationalism, as an *a priori* philosophy of essence, does not lend itself to psychoanalysis conceived as relating to truth as *material* cause. Lacan's view may flirt with the eidetic and noetic focus of intellectualism (as the basis of modern science) out of a desire to secure the scientific status of psychoanalysis; but because Lacan seeks to resist the call of science's relation to truth as *formal* cause, intellectualism cannot be said to belong to Lacan's psychoanalytic worldview.

It is in light of the pantheism of Lacan's thought that the immanent is foregrounded, and the hope-filled connection to any form of eschatologised truth is foreclosed. The theopanistic conception of the religious person is but an observation of a causal structure particular to him or her—whether revelation is real matters less than the question of what effect believing it to be true has on the person. This is the psychoanalytic rationale of truth conceived as material cause. But the philosophical territory of the immanent in the religious person will draw upon Lacan's own understanding of the world. One could suppose that the religious person is an expression of a theopanistic-rationalism (as in Malebranche)—the rationalism here accounting for the immanent. Realistically, however, the religious person's theopanism (as a dialectical inversion of

31 Note how language as dissolved into the "unnamable thing" (the Real of truth) through "prosopopeia" results in "horror". Lacan, "Science and Truth", 736.

32 Przywara, *Ringen der Gegenwart*, 958.

Lacan's own position) will only ever be taken in immanence relative to questions belonging more to an *a posteriori* philosophy of existence, namely voluntarism. Such an *a posteriori* immanentism is already suggested by Lacan's choosing to frame all relation to truth in terms of Aristotelian causality.

Voluntarism concerns us here because it pertains to the nature of the acting subject, whose existence, given the debased status of the world according to Lacan's religious person, fluctuates within a state of refusal or denial and a despotic power struggle. Voluntarism, as John Betz describes Przywara's position, is an outgrowth of "Luther's existentialist-nominalist theology," which ultimately "terminates in the historicism, relativism, and will to power of Nietzsche."[33] It is not clear why Nietzsche should be considered the terminus of this dialectical tendency to voluntarism, for a conception of the human person as an acting subject driven by an overarching, unifying force, however conceived, extends at least into psychoanalysis within the ego-psychology tradition. We can think of the energy of the libido in Freud, especially in the tension between life and death in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*; or in Jung, for whom the unending resonance of archetypal forms constellates around the unity of meaning.[34] In both cases the nominal centrality of the functioning subject is clear; but precisely what *kind* of functioning subject this is remains unclear: where exactly is the acting subject given the oppositional forces within the psyche? Lacan, on the other hand, asks us to think about the acting subject, not as a unified whole as voluntarism would normally require of us, but in the complex matrices of intersubjective interaction. Try to pinpoint the locus of a "self" in Lacan, and one is endlessly frustrated. At any rate, it certainly does not rest in consciousness. Consciousness, Lacan thinks, ought not to be considered "the culmination of life."[35] Herein lies the central objection to an ego-psychology.

A certain frustration of the voluntarist position in Lacan is clear from the clinical implications of his thought. The analysand's desire to change, to be rid of his or her symptom, is not considered a reliable motivational source. At a deeper level, it is presumed, the analysand in fact rejects the idea of "cure", and for this reason, it is the position and place of the analyst to supply the desire

33 Betz, "Translator's Introduction", 50–51.

34 David Henderson, "Aspects of Negation in Freud and Jung", *Psychodynamic Practice* 17, no. 2 (2011).

35 Lacan, "Discourse to Catholics", 9.

necessary to effect any change.[36] Rather like the religious person, even in the clinical setting the dialectic of an externalised cause seems necessary. This position of the analyst relative to the analysand's desire is not a conscious process—at least not for the analysand. In such a position, the analyst does not obviously or consciously lead the analysand on in desire; rather, this occurs through mechanisms such as the analyst's "neutrality" (in the case of neurosis), manifest in a refraining from offering a plethora of interpretations.[37] It deliberately leaves the analysand wanting; yet he or she must be convinced that "the analyst's desire was in no way involved in the matter."[38] Whereas for Feuerbach God is an extrusion of the human person's self-reflection, and is only efficacious insofar as he or she is unaware of this fact, the analytic setup recasts this structure in a reverse Feuerbachean hue, for clinical efficacy requires the analysand to be oblivious to the causal position of the analyst. Yet it is a reversal because, unlike Feuerbach's God, the analyst is a really existing external cause.

IV. TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE: AN ANALOGY OF PROPORTIONALITY?

In touching upon both the transcendent and the immanent, the question of the relationship between these two modes goes unanswered. There is what we could describe as an analogy of proportionality (an analogous relation between two relations) between the secular attitude of modernity towards the dialectical relationship between God and the world (God ◊ world), and the secular attitude to the "philosophies of essence and philosophies of existence"[39] (essence ◊ existence). The former is the transcendent, and the latter the immanent. The analogy of proportionality suggests that there is a relationship between the way secular modernity relates to the transcendent question (either pantheism or the-

36 Bruce Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1997), 3–4.

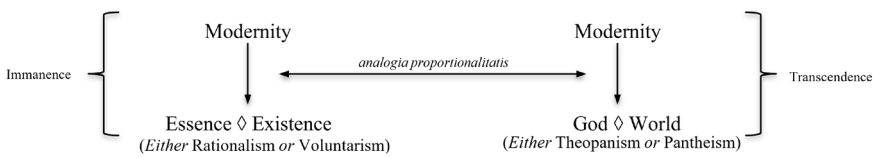
37 Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious", 698. See also Jacques Lacan, "Position of the Unconscious", in *Écrits*: *The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg (W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 708 — here Lacan gives a brief summary, in passing, of the analyst's "role": "fostering the patient's discourse, restoring its meaning effect, putting himself on the line [*s'y mettre en cause*] by responding, as well as by remaining silent."

38 Ibid., 698.

39 Betz, "Translator's Introduction", 50.

opanism) and the way it relates to the immanent question (either rationalism or voluntarism).[40] The analogy of proportionality thus asks whether there is an analogical relationship between the choice of either a secularised pantheism or theopanism, on the one hand, and the choice of rationalism or voluntarism, on the other (see the diagram below). We suggest such an analogy of proportionality in order to add greater specificity to the symbiosis between the transcendent and immanent positions (*e.g.* differences between pantheistic or theopanistic rationalism, and pantheistic or theopanistic voluntarism; and between rationalistic or voluntaristic pantheism and rationalistic or voluntaristic theopanism).

The unique conception of the acting subject in Lacan frustrates this analogy, for the voluntarism implied by the secular pantheism of his broader thought is not, as we have already seen, reducible to a singly identifiable locus within the human person. This could be a point, therefore, where Lacan's observations call for a deeper conception of the acting person in Przywara's *analogia entis*. The Lacanian conceptual frustration of this analogy of proportionality (as diagrammed below) might give us cause to say, therefore, that the peculiarities of Lacan's pantheism modifies the voluntarism, or vice versa. By the same token, we might say that the modified voluntarism of the acting subject, in Lacan, in turn colours the theopanistic conception of the religious person. Examples of this might be to consider, given a theopanistic view of the world, the role of the unconscious in someone who positions truth as final cause, or what the relationship is between their "ideal ego" (the projected self-image which shows one to be "tougher than others") and "ego-ideal" (the "introject[ed] paternal image" which acts as an organising principle for the actions of the ideal ego).[41]



40 Betz, "Translator's Introduction", 50.

41 Jacques Lacan, *Transference*, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book VIII, trans. Bruce Fink, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (Polity Press, 2015), 340–41. See also Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious", 685.

Whilst what accounts for voluntarism is an emphasis on the will, for Lacan the will is not reducible to any act of "pure consciousness,"[42] for this implies a unified and identifiable self. The person, for Lacan, is spread across "the four corners of the schema" (what he calls "Schema L"), which means across: the "Subject" (S), "his objects" (*a*), "his ego" (*a'*), and "the Other" (A).[43] It is not necessary to define these "corners" here; they serve only to demonstrate the complexity of the person in Lacan against the models of the self in the spectra of rationalism and voluntarism. Although it is difficult to classify Lacan's position as one of "pure consciousness," we might note that the schema indicates the foregrounding of noetic structures. This is perhaps inevitable for any psychoanalytic theory; but more specifically it means a conception of the immanent as noetic *over against* the ontological. It is for this reason that Lacan says "there is no such thing as a metalanguage [...] no language being able to say the truth about truth."[44] This allows us to more sharply envision truth as material cause, because truth here is expressed as a transcendence *within* the immanent — "truth speaks," in fact, "going by the name of the unconscious."[45] This is to say, truth has an "external" form (the unknowability of the unconscious as the locus of truth), but is firmly *within* the continuum of the world conceived pantheistically (the "All-Alone" of the world as pure immanence). Every instance of speech is therefore an attempt to write over the unknowability of the world in itself, an attempt to put into words something which is unsayable. To put it metaphysically: the transcendence of the ontological in itself is covered over noetically. For this reason we can say there is in Lacan the prioritising of the noetic over the ontological. This, following the aforementioned nihilism, weakens the epistemological grasp on hoped-for ontological realities.

Although in some measure this clearly sits within the Kantian tradition of the *noumenon*, the absence of a unified subject whose noetic acts are premised on sense perception, and a concomitant stress on the historical shape of thought, make it difficult to ascribe any clear definition of rationalism or vol-

42 Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 122.

43 Jacques Lacan, "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis", in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg (W. W. Norton, 2006), 459.

44 Lacan, "Science and Truth", 737.

45 Ibid., 737.

untarism to Lacan's position. As such, Lacan even frustrates many of the presuppositions of dominant secular philosophies. Perhaps, therefore, we might posit Lacan's position to be something like a "*post factum* linguisticism," where all that can be said of the world is always a retroactive imposition of linguistic structure which overwrites the reality it tries to describe, whilst always falling short of it. How can one describe, for example, the child in its pre-linguistic dyadic relationship to its mother? Either this is a retroactive myth,[46] imposed by a post-linguistic conception of the world, or else it is an unknowable instance of the Real, inaccessible in itself to language. Not only is there failure at the heart of the linguistic struggle with the always-out-of-reach of the world, the world itself is ultimately and ineluctably traumatic and horrific.[47] This negativised cadence of language reaffirms our earlier observation that what Lacan says about the religious person is a semblable of his own position.

What makes Lacan's point of view religiously potent is that it is precisely at the point of the world's immanent ontology that the transcendent is discovered (the always-out-of-reach reality of the world). Its difference to the religious, however, subsists in it being a transcendence purely *within* immanence. For Przywara, transcendence can only ever be "in-and-beyond" immanence, as this is the essence of the Catholic metaphysics of analogy. In a practical manner, Lacan may well be inclined to treat the ontologically transcendent (*i.e.* God) as having no substantial difference in effect upon the human subject than what is contained within the immanently transcendent (*i.e.* the always-out-of-reach of the world). For example, we might say that the mysterious allure of the infinite in cosmology, or the exuberance of endless discovery in biological diversity, as secular causes for scientific pursuits, seems structurally akin to ebullience for a Christian philosophical and theological exploration of the mystery of the Trinity. Similarly, following Lacan's position, we might say that the atheist (the ideal ego) acts as though some Other is watching when no-one is around (the ego-ideal) in much the same way as the theist who believes that Other to be God: they may act differently to one another, and focus on different subjects and their outcomes, but the structure is the same. It would seem wholly unsubstantiated, however,

46 Lacan, "Position of the Unconscious", 711. See also Jacques Lacan, "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis", in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg (W. W. Norton, 2006), 228–29.

47 See n. 31 above.

even assuming the truth of Lacan's position (the world as immanently transcendent), to assert that the religious position (real transcendent otherness) is therefore an untruth. One might even consider it, in its agnosticism for real transcendent otherness, a manifestation of *hopelessness*.

V. TRUTH'S RELATION TO HISTORY: SCIENCE AND MODERN PHILOSOPHY

Part of the problem of voluntarism in relation to Lacan is the degree to which its conceptualising requires a relation to self-consciousness. For Lacan, full self-consciousness is not possible, as this is caught up in the false and imaginary narrative about the self which constitutes the ideal ego. "One does not see oneself as one is," Lacan says, "and even less so when one approaches oneself wearing philosophical masks."[48] Here Lacan traces a critique of science's modification of the "subject position," in that its view of the subject flows from the "historically defined moment" brought about by Descartes' *cogito*.[49] Its results are ultimately to be seen in the approaches of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl and Jean Piaget, who both express what Lacan terms "the psychologization of the subject,"[50] or (borrowing the phrase from Claude Lévi-Strauss) an "archaic illusion."[51] Lévy-Bruhl fails in the sense that he posits a "prelogical mentality"[52] among primitive peoples, which presumes too much about the nature of their thought whilst standing outside of it; and Piaget's "egocentric discourse" fails because it tautologically writes into the answers, given by the children in his experiments, "the very same logic that governs the enunciation of the statements that make up the test."[53] In this way, "children are taken to be undeveloped men, masking the truth about what originally happens during childhood."[54] This critique is formulated on the basis of the work of, among others, Alexandre Koyré.

48 Lacan, "Science and Truth", 736.
49 Ibid., 726–27.
50 Ibid., 730.
51 Ibid., 729.
52 Ibid., 730.
53 Ibid., 730.
54 Ibid., 729.

We should note that Przywara too draws upon Koyré as an observer of the way in which "modern philosophy presupposes the problems of Scholasticism."[55] This historical connection — the need to be taken by the "current"[56] of historical thought — unites Lacan and Przywara in criticising the tendency of contemporary science, and the modern philosophy on which it rests, of foreclosing the force of historical thought which is internal to considering the human subject. In other words, for Lacan the apriorism of science leads, through Descartes and ultimately ego-psychology, to the mistaken positions of the likes of Lévy-Bruhl and Piaget. For Przywara, the apriorism of modern philosophy rejects the culmination of Scholastic thought on which its problems ultimately rest. For Lacan with respect to science, and Przywara with respect to modern philosophy, the Enlightenment bears within it the risk of having pressed a reset button on history. From Hegel, Przywara adds, we even learn that modern philosophy "bears in itself the form, specifically, of Protestant theology," and must therefore "trace its Protestant theological form back still further, to its origin [...in] the undiminished spectrum of Catholic theology."[57] Perhaps, given what we have considered already, this critique ought to extend in some way to Lacan's conception of the religious person.

Unlike in the natural sciences, both religion and psychoanalysis place emphasis on the historical nature of truths. Whereas the discovery of mathematical or geometric truths may have been made in various places and times according to prevailing "intellectual attitudes,"[58] their *a priori* and thus eidetic-noetic nature removes them from their historical unfolding. The body of knowledge in the natural sciences therefore, according to Ratzinger, functions as a "self-contained intellectual treasury."[59] This is no criticism; rather an admonition against crossing over into the sorts of thinking required in philosophy, theology, and biblical exegesis. The various philosophies of history, Ratzinger notes, "are a series of raids on the deep places of being, carried out according to the possibilities of their own time."[60] This does not dichotomise between natural science and philosophy as though one is Platonic-eidetic, and the other

55 Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 150.
56 Ibid., 150.
57 Ibid., 150.
58 Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life* (Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1988), 23.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., 24.

Aristotelian-morphologic; rather, it illustrates that the empirical apriorism of the natural sciences gives an incomplete picture of human life and the world.

Positing that religion places truth as final cause — notwithstanding the Aristotelian meta-structure of causality Lacan is appropriating — gives truth the status of what Przywara calls a "superhistorical telos."[61] Przywara emphasises the historical way in which this plays out: the historical movement of the *a posteriori* which acts as a "critical reflection" on the emergence of truths is possible only because there is an appreciation of the *a priori*, "an inner knowledge of the objective problems that lie at its foundation" and "an orientation towards their evolving solution."[62] These two standpoints — the *a posteriori* and the *a priori* — are not wholly separate, because the *a priori* objectivity of truth is "already intrinsically determined by the thinker's historical position within the entirety of the tradition in which he lives, even if he does not know it."[63] Thus, Przywara concludes, the historical nature of truth is a twofold movement: "what is 'beyond history,' makes itself known always only 'in history,'" and thus "reveals itself 'in history' as 'beyond history'."[64] This establishes the "in-and-beyond" relationship of truth to history which characterises the *analogia entis*, and acts as a corrective to Lacan's conception of the religious person. In other words, hoped-for truths may well be eschatological, as Lacan suggests, or "beyond" as Przywara suggests; but this hope is abolished by the polarising pantheism and nihilism of Lacan's position. It is only adequately restored, on Przywara's analysis, when these "All-Alone" polarities (truth as eschatologised, and the exclusion of real transcendent otherness) are dealt with analogically. Under such conditions, to paraphrase Przywara, hope in something "beyond" is manifest only as "in" earthly life; and thus "in" earthly life is revealed the "beyond" of hope.

VI. CONCLUSION

Lacan's conception of the religious person as relating to truth as final cause displays signs of a Protestant inflection: truth is eschatologised, placed solely in the hands of God, resulting in an extreme dialectic which nullifies the

61 Przywara, *Analogia Entis*, 149.
62 Ibid., 152.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.

world, rendering the religious person sceptical and truth guilty. This can be described, according to a Przywaran analysis, as theopanism. But Lacan's observation seems to model itself upon his own view of the world, though inversed. The psychoanalytic position is to view truth as material cause, eschewing the dialectical transcendence-immanence of the religious final cause. Nevertheless, Lacan seems to dissolve the transcendent into the immanent under the guise of the Real, or the always-out-of-reach of the world. More than this, the Real itself is punitively extruded (noetically, not ontologically) due to its traumatic nature. As a result, Lacan's position is in accord with Przywara's understanding of pantheism — the inverse of theopanism. But all of this only considers the "transcendent question": what is the relationship, if any, between God and the world?

The immanent, on the other hand, at least according to Przywara, is really a question of the relationship between essence and existence, between being and becoming in the world. Only one of two avenues are open to the secular philosophies of modernity to account for this: either rationalism, as a philosophy of essence, or voluntarism, as a philosophy of existence. Only the position of analogy can raise philosophy out of this either-or; but at least an analogy of proportionality seems to exist between the philosophies of immanence and the philosophies of transcendence. Though leaning more in the direction of a philosophy of existence, Lacan seems to frustrate this rationalism-voluntarism bifurcation by providing an account of the human subject in terms which, at the very least, run contrary to the dominant theories of ego-psychology. It is then through this, in the final analysis, that we come to recognise a certain degree of convergence in Lacan's and Przywara's positions, relative to science and modern philosophy, respectively. That convergence is in the form of the relationship between truth and history. But it is just here that this undercuts Lacan's conception of the religious person's truth as final cause, for the very thing Lacan repudiates about science is, for Przywara, a philosophical outgrowth of the Lutheran-Reformed theology which, ironically, characterises both Lacan's theopanistic conception of the religious person's truth as cause, and the secular pantheistic "*post factum* linguisticism" of Lacan's position. The solution for both Lacan and this particular conception of the religious person, offering real hope, is in the *analogia entis*, which rejects the nihilistic dialecticism on which both are premised.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Betz, John R. 2014. "Translator's Introduction". In Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics, Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*. Translated by John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart, 1–115. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Fink, Bruce. 1997. *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.

Henderson, David. 2011. "Aspects of Negation in Freud and Jung". *Psychodynamic Practice* 17, no. 2: 199–205. doi:10.1080/14753634.2011.562697.

Lacan, Jacques. 2006. "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis". In *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English.* Translated by Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg, 445–88. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

—. 2006. "Position of the Unconscious". In *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English.* Translated by Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg, 703–21. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

—. 2006. "Science and Truth". *In Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English.* Translated by Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg, 726–45. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

—. 2006. "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis". *In Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English.* Translated by Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg, 197–268. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

—. 2006. "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious". *In Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English.* Translated by Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg, 671–702. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

—. 2007. *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: 1959–1960*. Translated by Dennis Porter. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII. Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller. New York, NY: Routledge.

—. 2014. "Discourse to Catholics". In *The Triumph of Religion. Preceded by Discourse to Catholics*. Translated by Bruce Fink, 3–52. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

—. 2015. *Anxiety*. Translated by A. R. Price. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book X. Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

—. 2015. *Transference*. Translated by Bruce Fink. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VIII. Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Przywara, Erich. 1929. *Ringen der Gegenwart: Gesammelte Aufsätze 1922–1927*. Augsburg: Dr. Benno Filser-Verlag.

—. 2014. *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics, Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*. Translated by John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Ratzinger, Joseph. 1988. *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*. Translated by Michael Waldstein. Edited by Aidan Nichols. Washington, D.C.: Catholic Univ. of America Press.

BETWEEN THE INFINITE AND THE FINITE: GOD, HEGEL AND DISAGREEMENT

Anthony Carroll
College of the Resurrection Mirfield

Abstract. In this article, I consider the importance of philosophy in the dialogue between religious believers and non-believers. I begin by arguing that a new epistemology of epistemic peer disagreement is required if the dialogue is to progress. Rather than viewing the differences between the positions as due to a deficit of understanding, I argue that differences result from the existential anchoring of such enquiries in life projects and the underdetermination of interpretations by experience. I then explore a central issue which is often implicit in these dialogues, namely the ontological status of God-world relations. Drawing on the reflections of Hegel on the infinite and the finite, I argue that his version of panentheism provides an insightful way to conceptualise God-world relations that avoids both dualistic and monistic approaches and helps to explicate a holistic ontology of transcendence from within the world of experience.

I. INTRODUCTION

The dialogue about basic convictions and core beliefs between religious believers and non-believers has had a chequered career. In fact, it would be more accurate to characterise these exchanges as a series of monologues rather than proper dialogues. However, there are signs that a more truly dialogical approach to these encounters is emerging. In a recent book which I co-edited with Richard Norman entitled *Religion and Atheism: Beyond the Divide*,[1] we have attempted to foster a more creative approach to this dialogue and to the many complex issues it raises. In this article, I would like to consider two central issues which have emerged out of such dialogues following the publication of the book.

1 Anthony Carroll and Richard Norman, eds., *Religion and Atheism: Beyond the Divide* (Routledge, 2017).

PP. 95–113
DOI: 10.24204/EJPR.V11I3.2959
AUTHOR: TCARROLL@MIRFIELD.ORG.UK

The first concerns "epistemic peer disagreement" in the specific area of religious belief and non-belief. I suggest that religious believers and non-believers should not view each other's different claims to believe or not as *necessarily* lacking in some aspect of knowledge or understanding. I argue further that neither side should assume that their position is the default position. Avoiding these assumptions creates a more symmetrical exchange between those in dialogue and reduces the risk of one side or another adopting a *sceptical* position with respect to an *evangelical* opponent.

The second issue is an ontological one which arises in the opening dialogue in *Religion and Atheism* between Rowan Williams and Raymond Tallis. This is the view that God is not simply to be thought of as "another thing in a list, another agent among agents."[2] Viewing God in this manner overlooks the constitutive relation between God and the world and tends to promote an oppositional way of thinking about these relations. I sketch an alternative to this approach through a consideration of Hegel's account of panentheism. This is the view that all things have their being in God. Whilst Hegel does not use the term "panentheism", it is the best concept to describe his overall position. I argue that Hegel's dialectical method of tackling this ontological question provides a helpful way to think about how we experience God through awareness of our own finitude and its opening up to infinity.

II. BEYOND EPISTEMIC DEFICIENCY

The framework within which the exchange between the religious and the non-religious has been typically set is problematic. Assuming that one side has got it right and the other has got it wrong misunderstands the nature of this particular disagreement. I have been inspired to take this view by the work of Charles Taylor, especially his *A Secular Age* in which he proposes a different understanding of secularity based on the new conditions of belief in the "minority world."[3] These new conditions provide alternative ways of living our moral and spiritual lives which speak to the human quest for fulfilment. Taylor speaks of these conditions in terms of an "epistemic pluralism" which faces believers and non-believers as they realise that there are different

2 Carroll and Norman, *Religion and Atheism*, 4.

3 "Minority world" here signifies what is sometimes referred to as the "western world".

legitimate ways to provide lived answers to these existential questions.[4] The central idea here is that the background conditions of belief have shifted to a non-naïve optional choice which is aware that it is not the *only* way that people strive to live a fulfilled life.

Prior to the dawn of the modern era, the optional understanding of belief did not arise because it had been foreclosed by the taken-for-granted assumption of religious belief and the absence of toleration of diversity in these matters. Taylor's central point is that this contemporary "epistemic pluralism" should be understood within a context of the new conditions of fulfilment. Briefly put, if the former conditions for fulfilment were transcendent involving, that is to say, the good was *beyond* human flourishing which entailed a belief in a transcendent God and an afterlife, the new conditions make *immanent* human fulfilment in this world sufficient. Taylor also suggests that in the "minority world" this understanding of fulfilment has become a cultural default position.[5]

I want to draw out an implication of Taylor's work that is an important consequence of this transformation in the background assumptions of belief and unbelief. Namely, that believers and unbelievers should not view each other as giving wrong answers to the same question. Rather, I want to suggest that we should view these parties as providing different answers to the shared question of what makes for fulfilment and as attempting to live in the light of these answers in differing though overlapping ways. The implications of this shift in framework for situating the exchange between believers and non-believers are important. Rather than looking at someone on the "other side of the divide," so to speak, as simply getting the wrong answer to the question that we have got right, we should look at each other as exploring different options for understanding and living a fulfilled life that have arisen in modernity. Whilst in the past these issues were more often than not resolved by the cultural milieu within which one grew up and was embedded, now this context is made up of a range of plural options. According to Taylor's contemporary conditions of belief there is no single way to answer this question of fulfilment which defeats all other options.

Previously, these differences of belief were considered to be due to error. People lacked something or they misunderstood something and that is why they

4 Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2007), 3.
5 Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 12.

made the *wrong* choice. And this is not a foolish idea, of course. In many areas of life, we can and do make wrong choices. But in the area of religious-existential commitments, I think that this way misunderstands the nature of the differences. These differences are of a different kind to those concerned with recognising ordinary states of affairs where the existence or proof of the fact of the matter decides the case. In the case of a religious commitment a better analogy to use to understand these differences is that provided by the notion of a gestalt switch.[6]

It is possible to view a gestalt image in two different ways and for each to be an accurate account of the representation. In other words, the interpretation of the religious fact of the matter is underdetermined by the data. The data, so to speak, allow for plural interpretations. In the case of religious commitments and disagreements the way that one views the issue will depend upon one's life experiences, background, and personal assessment of the arguments and no position is ever without counterarguments. One can put this in explicitly religious terms by acknowledging that whilst religious faith is correlated with knowledge it is not simply reducible to it. It is not only possible to view religious commitment from contrasting positions, but inevitable given the nature of the disagreement. Rowan Williams alludes to this state of affairs in his dialogue with Raymond Tallis when he comments:

> If good arguments against or for the existence of God were as good arguments as they think they are, then the world would be either full of people like Richard Dawkins or it would be full of people like — whoever else you want to name. And because the world is not full of complete idiots, presumably there is something else going on here than just argument.[7]

In other words, whilst arguments for or against the existence of God are important and provide reasonable grounds for belief or unbelief, "there is something else going on" that needs to be understood in order to better make sense of these differences. Taylor's historical-philosophical account of the replacement of the former default "transcendent frame" by a modern "immanent frame" is a more convincing picture of how these differences have arisen with the emergence of our "secular age." The modern world now explains reality according to natural causal relations. This system of explanation has

6 For discussion of this Wittgensteinian idea as applied to religious beliefs, see Leander P. Marquez, "Belief as Seeing-As", *Kritike* 10, no. 1 (2016). John Wisdom has made a similar point in his article "Gods". See John Wisdom, "Gods", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 45, no. 1 (1945).

7 Carroll and Norman, *Religion and Atheism*, 18.

replaced a former model which saw spiritual forces and transcendent agents as operating on the world from the outside and from within human beings to bring about changes. Taylor builds upon his earlier work in *Sources of the Self* to elucidate how the development of a so-called *buffered self*, an enclosed identity protected from outside forces, has replaced a former understanding of the self which was permeable or porous to spiritual forces. In the transition to the modern world this new understanding of the self has gone hand in hand with an elimination of spiritual forces from the world in a general process of disenchantment.[8]

But to be clear, I do not want to suggest that arguments for or against the existence of God are unimportant in the dialogue between the religious and the non-religious. They clearly are. My point is rather that I do not think that we should consider the taking of one position or another as *necessarily* due to some kind of rational deficit, of not quite seeing the argument or the counterarguments. It is reasonable to assume that people as intelligent as Rowan Williams and Raymond Tallis understand the arguments and counterarguments and have come to different reasonable conclusions.[9] So, "something else is going on." Pursuing what this "something else" is requires attention to the existential anchoring of our arguments in *optional* life projects through which we try and live fulfilled lives. Perhaps in doing this, we can gain greater insight into the differences that positions of either belief or unbelief make in actual lives.

But there is another more fundamental reason why reflection on the existence of God should avoid presuming that this question can be categorised according to the taxonomy of just one more fact of the matter and so solved according to a simple "yes" or a "no" answer. As Rowan Williams puts it, God should not be thought of as "another thing in a list" or "another agent among agents."[10] The constitutive relation between God and the world, which I shall discuss below, means that God should not be understood to be simply a separate reality from existence to be either believed in or not. For classical theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, God is both an entity (*id quod est*) and being itself (*esse*). In *reality* these necessary analytical distinctions are one and the same. The conceptual distinction between God as "being" and God as "an entity" aris-

8 Anthony Carroll, *Protestant Modernity: Weber, Secularisation and Protestantism* (Univ. of Scranton Press, 2007), 87–94.

9 Wisdom, "Gods".

10 Carroll and Norman, *Religion and Atheism*, 4.

es because we cannot think a concrete particular (*id quod est*) and an abstract universal (*esse*) as one and the same. We require two concepts to link these thoughts. But as God is not a composite but a simple being in whom essence and existence are one then this conceptual distinction is overcome in reality.[11] Divine simplicity means that being subsists as a particular entity in God.[12]

I want to make one further point related to this deficit model of the belief and unbelief problematic prior to moving on to a second point. The tendency to assume one or another position as the *only* rational position available has clearly played its part in justifying default positions regarding belief and non-belief. If previous ages anchored belief in a cultural default position, today we have the opportunity to move beyond this and do what Anthony Kenny suggests that we do namely, to not assume the default position as our own so as to put the burden of proof on the other side.[13] This is important because otherwise we get caught up in a sceptic vs evangelical contest. This again means that a certain suspension of judgment needs to be operative in these exchanges as well as a recognition of its possible epistemic validity but not necessarily of its truth. Accepting a reasonable justification does not *necessarily* entail assenting to its truth claim. Richard Norman and I express this idea in our conclusion to *Religion and Atheism* in the following way:

> Religious and non-religious can properly regard one another's beliefs as false but not irrational. They *may* be irrational, of course. Undoubtedly some beliefs held by some religious believers are irrational, as are some of the beliefs held about religion by some of the non-religious. But they may not be. We shall put the point by saying that it is possible to reject one another's beliefs but still regard them as having epistemic status.[14]

Whilst some default positions are worthy of their status, and "innocent until proven guilty" is arguably one, in the area of the belief and non-belief exchange all that imposing a default position achieves is to foreclose the exchange before it has really begun. Philosophically, it falls short of good ra-

11 Eleonore Stump, *The God of the Bible and the God of the Philosophers* (Marquette Univ. Press, 2016), 77–97. For Aquinas's texts on these issues, see Joseph Bobik, ed., *Aquinas on Being and Essence: A Translation and Interpretation* (Notre Dame Univ. Press, 1965).

12 Frederick Sontag, "Being and God: Universal Categories and Particular Being", *Religious Studies* 9, no. 4 (1973).

13 Anthony Kenny, "Knowledge, Belief, and Faith", in *Philosophers of Our Time*, ed. Ted Honderich (Oxford Univ. Press, 2015), 265.

14 Carroll and Norman, *Religion and Atheism*, 246.

tional argumentation by committing the fallacy of the *petitio principii*, of begging the question or of assuming that which you are trying to prove.

The consequence of this is that if there is no single rational default position which the other side simply needs to adopt then dialogue between believers, non-believers and indeed other believers will be significantly influenced by the different life-experiences of the individuals in these exchanges. Consequently, the first stage in this dialogue should be to understand why a position is held by a dialogue partner and how they correlate their beliefs and way of life implied by these beliefs. A "default critique" prior to this process of deeper understanding may only prevent progression in the dialogue. This requires a mutual recognition of the parties in the dialogue which fosters a capacity to be open to another's way of seeing things, something which can develop and is a fruit that is to be found in some areas of the related dialogue between different religious traditions in interreligious dialogue. And, if in the twentieth century a great breakthrough has been the opening up of a vast new program of interreligious dialogue it may be that in the twenty-first century this dialogue will be further developed by the inclusion of those who do not hold religious beliefs.

III. HEGEL'S PANENTHEISM: TOWARDS AN ONTOLOGY OF THE GOD-WORLD RELATION

In order for dialogue between the religious and the non-religious to proceed well it is important to be clear exactly what the dialogue is about. This is not as obvious as it may at first appear because if the dialogue is to be rooted in a mutual recognition of the personal experience of the participants, and not simply a jousting about abstract arguments, one should not assume that all the parties in the dialogue share the same experiences or share the same interpretative categories for these experiences. Raymond Tallis puts this point in the following way in dialogue with Rowan Williams:

> For many people, in a sense arguments about God are pointless. It primarily is an experience, or fire in the head, or whatever you want to call it; and arguments, in a sense, are rather 'after the fact', a matter of defending your experience against somebody who hasn't shared that experience. The reason I'm saying this is because, in many ways, I worry as an atheist that I just sim-

> ply haven't had the experience, rather than that I have a very good argument against the existence of God.[15]

The openness and perhaps even vulnerability displayed by Raymond Tallis here is impressive and reveals his concern that it might be that he has not "had the experience" of God that accounts for his atheism. But how should we understand the notion of "experience of God" in such dialogues?

Since the Enlightenment, and especially since the writings of Hume and Kant, the notion that you can experience God or indeed know God has become problematic. The "heavenly realm," if it is said to exist at all, is beyond cognition and experience. Experience and cognition are held to be limited to the mundane world of sensory objects and the relations between ideas. In this framework, *religious* experience is non-cognitive. However, as soon as one tries to talk about religious experiences one is inevitably pushed up against this dilemma: "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind," as Kant puts this conundrum in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.[16]

The separation of the "heavenly" and the "earthly" creates irresolvable antinomies or contradictions in modern efforts to speak about religious experiences. Attempts to think about experience of God only create a "cognitive paralysis" as we now operate within what Charles Taylor calls the "immanent frame" within which the "heavenly realm" has become an empty idea shorn of empirical and rational contents. In this situation it is not surprising that Raymond Tallis worries that he has not "had the experience." Identifying the characteristics of such experiences is hampered by an inability to articulate the ontological status of God-world relations in human experience. And, as we lack clarity about the ontological nature of experience of God then it is not surprising that God-talk becomes limited to hypothetical speculation, and abstract exchanges about conceivable possibilities or merely postulated propositions.

The Catholic theologian Walter Kasper notes that this creates a major challenge for contemporary theology, which in order to be effective needs to draw on symbols, images, concepts and categories which have social purchase in the imagination of contemporary women and men.[17] When these no longer have

15 Carroll and Norman, *Religion and Atheism*, 18.

16 "Gedanken ohne Inhalt sind leer, Anschauungen ohne Begriffe sind blind", in Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft* (Felix Meiner, 1998), B75, 130.

17 Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ* (SCM Press, 1984), 41.

the capacity to convey the reality of the experience of God they merely reproduce an imagined fiction. Consequently, a central challenge for religious and non-religious dialogue at the philosophical level is to explore the ontological issues embedded in claims of experience of God and to employ philosophical language to better understand the nature of these experiences.

The modern way of thinking about God and the world has processed former ways of conceiving these relations and converted them into fixed dualistic and separate ontological categories. God is postulated as occupying one ontological space and the world another. These postulations are then reified and taken to be isolated from one another. Consequently to experience God you have to shift ontologically from one reality to another. But, if you hold to a monistic ontology you have nowhere to shift to and no way to think of this *other place* than as a fictional invention. Thinking ontologically about God in separate spatial and indeed temporal terms leads to a "two-world" theory that has significant *transport* and *communication* difficulties between the two worlds. Thinking ontologically within a "one-world" theory of a scientific naturalist variety leaves no space for God or indeed values and even carving out a meaningful space for humans in nature becomes challenging.[18]

It was Hegel who was the first to really attempt to think through these seemingly intractable ontological problems in the post-Kantian era. His philosophy develops a panentheistic ontology (all things have their being in God) of the God-world relations in which God and the world are seen as related through a dialectical conception of mediation. This view of Hegel's God-world mediation has been viewed by critics such as Kierkegaard and Feuerbach as falling into pantheism, but in common with a reading of Hegel shared by Peter C. Hodgson and Robert R. Williams, I consider Hegel to be a panentheist in which "unity-in-difference" is preserved between God and the world.[19] By developing this conception of reality, which is neither monistic nor dualistic, Hegel seeks to overcome the antinomies of reason identified by Kant and point in a direction in which the world and God can be conceived within a holistic theory of differential relations

18 Fiona Ellis, *God, Value, & Nature* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2014), 117–45.

19 Peter C. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2012), 68, and Robert R. Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2012), 15–16.

of mutual recognition.[20] Hegel's approach to thinking about God-world relations is instructive because it provides a helpful philosophical language for exploring the complex ontological issues which arise when one attempts to speak meaningfully about the experience of God in a post-Kantian era.

This is how Rowan Williams expresses the problematic:

> I guess where I'm coming from is certainly a commitment to the view that the universe exists because of some prior or independent agency, which can in certain circumstances be called intelligent, which is God, and that that's the context within which I make sense of what goes on in my life and the life of the universe. And I guess that the challenge for me is how you articulate that without slipping in by the back door what a great deal of traditional philosophy and theology tries to keep out, which is the idea that God is another thing in a list, another agent among agents, and can be drawn on as a sort of rabbit out of the hat to solve problems.[21]

Rowan Williams speaks of the world here in "God-involving" terms. It is not that we experience one item on the list of possible human experiences called "God" as if God were a spatio-temporal being to be experienced alongside this person, or that object. That would be to make God into "another thing in a list," "another agent among agents"; a composite entity in Aquinas's terms. This "added member on the list" would then be used to *explain* the universe by making God the first cause in a causal chain. But the problem with this view, as Rowan Williams comments, is that for traditional theology and philosophy, as in the thought of Thomas Aquinas for example, there is a causal chain in the universe *because* there is an active God. In other words, this "God-involving" manner of speaking about the existence of the world implies that God's relation to it is *constitutive* and not simply causal. The relation is thus not one of being *an extra thing in a list* of things. That would be to conflate God with the world. Neither is it to isolate God from the world as God's *difference* from the world is not one of *separation*. But if the relation is neither one of conflation nor of separation then how should we think about it?

20 For a discussion of the importance of mutual recognition in Hegel's social ethics which considers the place of the Lutheran ritual sacramental practices of confession and forgiveness and their overcoming of the domination and alienation of conflictual relations, see Molly Farneth, *Hegel's Social Ethic: Religion, Conflict, and Rituals of Reconciliation* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2017), 54–80. For a general consideration of the place of recognition in Hegel's philosophy, see Robert R. Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition* (Univ. of California Press, 1997).

21 Carroll and Norman, *Religion and Atheism*, 3–4.

Hegel's thought provides an interesting way to conceive God-world relations that avoids falling back into either a conflation or separation of God and the world. He speaks of God-world relations in terms of the concepts of the "infinite" and the "finite." Hegel is aware that some ways of speaking of God do so in such a way that God is spoken of as a "bad infinite" (die schlechte Unendlichkeit). This way of speaking sets the infinite (God) over against the finite (world) and merely reproduces the dualisms and abstractions that are posited when one thinks about the infinite as an opposing reality to the finite. This results in a squashing or a levelling (schlichten) of the infinite by circumscribing it within the limit that it transcends and makes it into an "abstract universal" which cannot but be exclusive of all that is not infinite. Such an account of the infinite is spoken of by Hegel as the "negative infinity."[22] It merely results from the negation of the finite by the infinite without acknowledging that the finite is *also* affirmed by the infinite. This affirmation takes place through a relation of inclusion between the infinite and the finite, but this inclusion does not result in a reduction of the finite to the infinite. For Hegel, the preservation of the autonomy of the finite is not compromised by its inclusion within the infinite. To do so, would be to fall back into pantheism, which destroys the essential relationality between the finite and the infinite. Rather, his concept of the "true infinite," which for Hegel is "the basic concept of philosophy,"[23] thinks the infinite *in relation* to the finite; the finite is an *essential* moment of the infinite and not merely an optional extra. The nothingness of the finite (for Hegel, non-being *nichtsein* is the nature of the finite) is reconciled with the "true infinite" in the dialectical process of "self-sublation" (negation and preservation on a higher level and so coming to be what it is- that is to say, reality is a process of becoming and not a fixed substance).[24]

The "true infinite" brings together these relations into a harmonious whole through affirming the nothingness of finite reality as an ideal moment within the becoming of the "true infinite." The finite is thus not necessarily an *absolute* moment of nothingness, but is rather in flux from its own negation in death to an affirmation in the life of the "true infinite." As Hegel puts it, the "true infinite is at home with itself in its other."[25] It is the resistance to die to

22 Georg W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic* (Hacker, 1991), §94.
23 Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, §95
24 Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God*, 183–85.
25 Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, §94.

itself as nothingness that reduces the finite to an *absolute* nothingness rather than a moment of transition to its true identity in relation with the infinite.[26] This resistance to relinquish itself is actually a false affirmation of the finite because it merely fossilises its nothingness into a false absolute, rather than affirming its nothingness as a moment in the process of the becoming of the "true infinite." Hegel thought that this ontological "short-circuiting" of the dynamic of the finite was socio-culturally manifested in the nihilism of his times as the cultural-spiritual horizon of a self-sufficient individualism. He puts this idea in the following way:

> what seems to be as close as can be, is the furthest away. This ideality, this fire in what all determinations are consumed, is at this standpoint still unconsummated negativity: I as this one, without mediation, am the unique reality; all other determinations are posited ideally and turn to ashes, and only I, this one, maintain myself. There is just this certitude of myself, this certainty that all determinations are posited only through me, that they are valid or invalid only on my say-so. To this extent, ideality is not carried through to its conclusion, and this last acme of finitude still contains what must be negated: that I as this one, in my immediate being or particularity, do not have truth or reality.[27]

Hegel expresses here the anguish which is experienced when one is confronted by one's own nothingness. We take fright at our "ontological poverty" and so in reaction to this shock posit ourselves as *absolute* nothingness, rather than as a transitional moment via negation to union with the "true infinite." In this way, the ceasing to be of the finite becomes objectified rather than relinquished. We literally hold on to death, to our own nothingness, rather than allow both to die and to recognise the infinite as our ground in the affirmation of our self-surrender by the "true infinite."

The kenotic or self-emptying recognition of the infinite as our true ground provides Hegel with another way to conceive of the nothingness of the finite. It overcomes an oppositional notion of the relation between the finite and the infinite that is suggested by the notion of the "bad infinite," and instead re-inscribes their relations in a harmonious unity of reciprocal recognition. Hegel illustrates this other possibility which presents itself when one

26 Georg W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. Volume 1: Introduction and the Concept of Religion* (Univ. of California Press, 1984); Translation by R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart, 295–96.

27 Ibid., 298.

becomes aware of one's "ontological poverty" through describing the dialectical process of "sublation": [28]

> In the first place there is indeed the finite. But in the second place, because the finite is not, is not true in itself but rather the contradiction that sublates itself, for *that* reason the truth of the finite is this affirmative element that is called the infinite. Here there is no relationship or mediation between two elements each of which *is* [abides]; for rather the point of departure sublates itself; there is a mediation that sublates itself, a mediation through the sublation of mediation. The infinite does not merely constitute one aspect. For the understanding (Verstand) there are, in the mediation, two actual beings: on this side there is a world and over yonder there is God, and the knowledge of the world is the foundation for the being of God. But through our treatment the world is relinquished as genuine being; it is not regarded as something permanent on this side. The sole import of this procedure is that *the infinite alone is*, the finite has no genuine being, whereas only God has genuine being.[29]

Through this dialectical process of "sublation" the finite is preserved without reinstating separate limits between itself and the infinite. As the finite does not endure in the process of "sublation" as a separate reality, there can be no limits between it and the infinite.[30] Hegel conceives the God-world relations here as neither conflating the finite with the infinite nor of separating the infinite from the finite: the finite is an ideal moment of the infinite and the infinite is the being of the finite. But the ideality of the finite does not mean that the finite is unreal, rather that it is no longer a collection of separate entities. The finite represents a real moment in a process of becoming. The being of the finite should be thought of as distinct but not independent or separate, it is not a self-subsistent being separate from its ground, which is the infinite. It becomes what it is or gains its unique character through the role that it plays in the whole and in this way it helps to constitute the whole.

Therefore, ideality in Hegel is an ontological position which identifies the nature of the finite within the "true infinite." And, this ideality of the finite is manifested in various kenotic forms of mutual recognition, which make the "being with oneself in another" an intrinsic part of the process of coming

28 "Sublation" is an English translation of the German "Aufheben/Aufhebung" — to raise, to negate and to preserve.

29 Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. Volume 1*, 424.

30 Ibid., 425.

to full self-realisation in "ethical life" (Sittlichkeit).[31] But he is also clear that whilst the finite as a moment in a process of becoming contributes its part in constituting the infinite, the difference or particularity of the finite is preserved in the process of "sublation."

Hegel's way of thinking of this ontological difference between the finite and the infinite has been interpreted by some Christian philosophers as falling back into a philosophy which ultimately cannot count up to two.[32] That is, in the end, Hegel's panentheism is really a version of pantheism. This interpretation fails, however, to appreciate the real relations of reciprocal recognition which exist between the finite and the infinite in the process of "sublation."

Clearly the difficulty for Hegel's position is the challenge of talking about difference without doing so in categorical terms of "this" and "that." Using such categories would either repeat an oppositional dualism that reinstates limits or generates a fusional monism that destroys the mutually recognised difference. Some scholars of Hegel, such as Peter Hodgson, have proposed using the language of the *Advaita Vedanta* which speaks of a wholeness of neither one nor two, neither monistic nor dualistic, to articulate Hegel's conception of a holistic ontology of harmonious difference.[33] In a way reminiscent of Aquinas's and later Spinoza's conceptions of God, Hodgson notes that for Hegel, "God is the substance or essence on which everything depends for its existence."[34] But this essence is no abstract universal. Rather it is the subject and spirit which is "an abundant, overflowing universal."[35]

31 "Ethical life", for Hegel (following Rousseau's conception of the *general will*), is embodied in a spiritual community made up of three basic institutions–the family, civil society, and the state. It is antithetical to the politics of a self-sufficient individualism, as often portrayed in social contract theories, which is detached from the community and hence also of the true interests of individuals. See Georg W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood (CUP, 2012); Translation by H. B. Nisbet, 275–281 (§258). Hegel's opposition to self-sufficient individualism is a result of his understanding of *modern* "social freedom," which he develops in Part III of the *Philosophy of Right*. For discussion of his views on "social freedom," see Axel Honneth, *Freedom's Right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life* (Polity Press, 2014), 42–62, and Frederick Neuhouser, *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2000).

32 William Desmond, *Hegel's Counterfeit Double?* (Ashgate, 2003).

33 Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, 252.

34 Ibid., 269.

35 Ibid.

There is no doubt that for religious believers, such as Rowan Williams, articulating this difference is challenging because the usual way to define "difference" is in categorical terms which separate one reality from another; "this" from "that."[36] But the unique difference which is God cannot be distinguished in these categorical terms because to do so would be to impose a distinction of ontological separation on God-world relations. St. Paul puts this idea in existential terms when he says, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."[37]

Hegel's conception of the ontological difference between the infinite and the finite shares much in common with St. Paul's existential account of the relation between Christ and the kenotic conception of the self. Like St. Paul, Hegel is aware of the instability and fragility of the self. St. Paul's notion of the "crucified self" in Christ is echoed in Hegel's idea of the finite finding its being in the infinite. Moreover, Hegel shares with St. Paul the conception of the human search for identity as a process in which the true self is discovered through self-emptying. Through self-emptying, relations of mutual recognition are fostered and ultimately for both St. Paul and Hegel true identity is to be found *in* God in whom "we live and move and have our being."[38]

Through experience of one's ontological fragility, one's nothingness, one comes in a certain sense to a "first death," a realisation that there is nothing that one can hold on to. This is disturbing as the whole egocentric grasping of oneself is reduced to nullity in this experience, but it can also be viewed as growing pains. One's identity is transformed as one comes to realise one's "ontological poverty" at the same time as realising God's constitutive relation with us. This manner of con-

36 The German theologian Karl Rahner speaks of this difference that is established by God who is this difference as an 'infinite horizon' of transcendence. For Rahner, this horizon can never be subsumed 'within our system of coordinates' because it can never be named or defined by separating it from something else. See Karl Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens: Einführung in den Begriff des Christentums* (Herder Verlag, 1976), 70–73.

37 Galatians 2: 20.

38 Acts 17: 28. The concept of kenosis or self-emptying (Entäuβerung) is introduced by Hegel in Chapter VI of his *Phenomenology of Spirit* in the context of the initiation of his discussion of God. Through the sacramental practices of confession and forgiveness, which for Hegel are practices of reciprocal recognition, he sees the movement of the absolute as being actualized in history in ways which correspond to the self-emptying of the Trinity. This closely parallels the kenotic Trinitarian relations of the incarnation described in Paul's Letter to the Philippians 2: 6–11. See Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Felix Meiner, 1988), 439–42.

ceiving of the human condition finds echoes in many traditions which speak in overlapping ways of experiencing one's nothingness as well as one's openness to an infinite horizon which is constitutive of one's true self. Though there are significant differences between these traditions the similarities in reflecting on the human condition are striking and point towards interesting areas of investigation for a philosophical and theological anthropology of religious experience.[39]

This is perhaps a reason why for Hegel, as indeed for Kant, the starting point for discussion of God in the context of his concept of the "true infinite" is not reflection on God, but rather human self-determination.[40] It is through an investigation of the nature of human freedom that Hegel comes to reflect on God. But, unlike Kant, Hegel views this starting point as not simply an inescapable postulate of practical action and morality. Central to Hegel's enquiry of freedom is his concern to avoid separating the finite and the infinite so that the relation with God is not conceived on the basis of anthropology alone, but on the affirmative relation of mutual recognition between the infinite and the finite. Human experience of freedom understood in this way is thus neither one of heteronomy nor of autonomy, but rather an experience of transcendence from within. One experiences oneself as free through the opening out of the non-being of one's finitude to the being of the infinite. Through this opening out one comes to know oneself *in* God as free.

Our experience of love can also display this "immanent-transcendence" as we experience the "sublation" of "being with oneself in another" through an indwelling of the beloved in the lover; the "Christ lives in me" of St. Paul. Through the affirmative self-emptying of love, the finite self is released from the bounds of its enclosed finitude and opened to an infinite horizon of freedom. This account of religious experience develops a philosophy of "immanent-transcendence" which mirrors the Christian account of death (negation), Resurrection (affirmation) and Pentecost ("sublation" in "ethical community"). In its articulation of an ontology of becoming, the categories of "being" and "nothing" are "sublated" in Hegel's account through the dialectical relations of mutual recognition between the finite and the infinite.

Such Hegelian reflections illustrate *one* possible way of understanding how philosophy can be at the service of religious and non-religious dialogue

39 Peter Hodgson notes that for Hegel, 'God is not *simply* everything but the "All that remains utterly one" and as such is the negativity, not the apotheosis, of the finite. Here Hegel is able to affirm the Buddhist conception of being as emptiness,' Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, 269.
40 Williams, *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God*, 193.

through providing a language to discuss central issues which arise when one attempts to think seriously about God-world relations. It provides a means through which we can begin to explore some of the most difficult ontological questions that lie at the core of the dialogue between the religious and the non-religious and perhaps enables us to disagree in more interesting ways than has sometimes been the case in the past.

IV. CONCLUSION

In this article, I have sketched two issues which have bearing on the potential fruitfulness of religious and non-religious dialogue. The first was the need to develop an epistemology of religious disagreement which allows us to view different approaches to the question of the good life as not *necessarily* based on a knowledge or understanding deficit, but rather on different legitimate approaches to living a fulfilled life. Seeing different positions as existentially anchored helps to avoid a reduction of these matters to being due simply to an epistemological deficit.

Together with this approach, I have also suggested, following Anthony Kenny, that no party should assume that its position is the default one, but rather that each side should provide arguments for their position. Assuming a default position introduces insurmountable asymmetries into the exchange which tends to foreclose the dialogue before it has properly started. This results in one side assuming the role of the intransigent sceptic with respect to an evangelical opponent. Little insight is gained in such encounters because the parties in the *dialogue* (more often than not parallel monologues) are unwilling to adopt a more open approach that allows for the heuristic exploration of options. Understanding religious and non-religious dialogue as anchored in ongoing life projects identifies these dialogues as a part of an existential quest to live a fulfilled life. Whilst these dialogues are served by theoretical argumentation, if they are confined to this level, they assume an inadequately thin account of the nature of the dialogue and indeed of the existential anchoring of rationality in concrete life projects and practices.

The second issue which I have considered has been the ontological one of how God-world relations should be conceived of in human experience. Taking my point of departure for these considerations from a recent dialogue between Raymond Tallis and Rowan Williams, I have discussed Hegel's panentheistic

conception of God-world relations of mutual recognition as a means of exploring a philosophical understanding of experience of God. Rejecting both dualistic and monistic accounts of such experiences, I have argued that Hegel's portrayal of the relations between the finite (world) and the infinite (God) provides a helpful ontological account of how the "difference-in-unity" between God and the world is experienced as transcendence from within. Such a panentheistic account of God-world relations provides a richer philosophical account of what is meant by religious experience in holistic ontological terms and facilitates a dialogue between the religious and the non-religious that is rooted in the life-story of individuals and communities.

In my recent experience, formerly abstract exchanges between the religious and the non-religious are giving way to more interesting and engaged learning processes between these groups. Through the capacity to explore fundamental issues in a philosophical language, philosophy can offer its resources to an area of human enquiry which has vital significance for the future of the planet and the well-being of our species. If, as some consider, we are now entering into a new geological epoch, the so-called "Anthropocene," in which the actions of humans are *the* determining factor for the evolution of the planet, the exploration and understanding of the different ways in which human beings find *ultimate* meaning and regulate their actions will be particularly vital. Religious and philosophical explorations of these fundamental questions have informed one another since humans began to theorise and at this challenging moment of history one can only hope that these great traditions will continue to do their part to serve this dialogue in the future.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bobik, Joseph, ed. 1965. *Aquinas on Being and Essence: A Translation and Interpretation*. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Univ. Press.

Carroll, Anthony. 2007. *Protestant Modernity: Weber, Secularisation and Protestantism*. Scranton, PA: Univ. of Scranton Press.

Carroll, Anthony, and Richard Norman, eds. 2017. *Religion and Atheism: Beyond the Divide*. London: Routledge.

Desmond, William. 2003. *Hegel's Counterfeit Double?* Aldershot, VT: Ashgate.

Ellis, Fiona. 2014. *God, Value, & Nature*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Farneth, Molly. 2017. *Hegel's Social Ethic: Religion, Conflict, and Rituals of Reconciliation*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press.

Hegel, Georg W. F. 1984. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. Volume 1: Introduction and the Concept of Religion*. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press; Translation by R. F. Brown, P. C. Hodgson, and J. M. Stewart.

—. 1988. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner.

—. 1991. *Encyclopedia Logic*. Indianapolis, IN: Hacker.

—. 2012. *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Edited by Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press; Translation by H. B. Nisbet.

Hodgson, Peter C. 2012. *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Honneth, Axel. 2014. *Freedom's Right: The Social Foundations of Democratic Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kant, Immanuel. 1998. *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*. Hamburg: Felix Meiner.

Kasper, Walter. 1984. *The God of Jesus Christ*. London: SCM Press.

Kenny, Anthony. 2015. "Knowledge, Belief, and Faith". In *Philosophers of Our Time,* edited by Ted Honderich, 257–70. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Marquez, Leander P. 2016. "Belief as Seeing-As". *Kritike* 10, no. 1: 213–35.

Neuhouser, Frederick. 2000. *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.

Rahner, Karl. 1976. *Grundkurs des Glaubens: Einführung in den Begriff des Christentums*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder Verlag.

Sontag, Frederick. 1973. "Being and God: Universal Categories and Particular Being". *Religious Studies* 9, no. 4: 437–48.

Stump, Eleonore. 2016. *The God of the Bible and the God of the Philosophers*. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette Univ. Press.

Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.

Williams, Robert R. 1997. *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press.

—. 2012. *Tragedy, Recognition, and the Death of God*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Wisdom, John. 1945. "Gods". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 45, no. 1: 185–206. doi:10.1093/aristotelian/45.1.185.

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION, HOPE AND RAPTURE

Christopher Hamilton
King's College London

> "We *start* with dirty hands, we inherit the law of the strongest and its values, it's where we start from."[1]
> Michael McGhee

> "Almost the whole of human life has always taken place far from hot baths."[2]
> Simone Weil

In *and our faces, my heart, brief as photos* John Berger writes this:

> What reconciles me to my own death more than anything else is the image of a place: a place where your bones and mine are buried, thrown, uncovered, together. They are strewn there pell-mell. One of your ribs leans against my skull. A metacarpal of my left hand lies inside your pelvis. (Against my broken ribs your breast like a flower.) The hundred bones of our feet are scattered like gravel. It is strange that this image of our proximity, concerning as it does mere phosphate of calcium, should bestow a sense of peace. Yet it does. With you I can imagine a place where to be phosphate of calcium is enough.[3]

Philosophy does not know rapture. It analyses, deflates, suspects, dissects, organizes, controls, places, distinguishes. It always wants to say more, and say what it says for others. It is not a discourse of intoxication. It is not filled with ecstasy. It does not allow itself to be carried away, to long, to yearn. Its hope is the hope of clarity, of measure, of perspicuity. It does not weep and it does not know the melancholy tone, the nostalgia, the sense of the appalling depredations of time of Berger's comment. Or if it does, this is its exception, its guilty conscience speaking. Weeping, yearning are never at its centre.

1 Michael McGhee, *Transformations of Mind: Philosophy as Spiritual Practice* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), 78.

2 Simone Weil, "L'Iliade ou le poème de la force", in *Œuvres*, ed. Florence de Lussy (Gallimard, 1999 [1940]), 530.

3 John Berger, *and our faces, my heart, brief as photos* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005 [1984]), 101.

PP. 115–134
DOI: 10.24204/EJPR.V11I3.2964
AUTHOR: CHRISTOPHER.HAMILTON@KCL.AC.UK

Berger's hope is a religious hope, not a philosophical hope. Religion knows the yearnings and longings of which Berger speaks.

Berger's religious hope says: this world is enough. Yet religious yearning often finds the world inadequate. It wants more than phosphate of calcium. Not in Berger's case.

Nietzsche says that Christianity is in love with extremes. Berger's religious sensibility finds hope in sensations of the most delicate and subtle kind, sensations that lie next to silence.

His image of his bones strewn with hers picks up on a moment when they were woken by children playing a piano. "The two children were playing lightly and dutifully and the notes filled the house. You were lying with your back to me, your breasts in my hands. Neither of us stirred."[4]

How can it be that philosophy has overlooked the importance of such moments in a life, moments that can be filled with so much hope? Her breasts in his hands, not stirring, listening: how could a human being ask for anything more in this shabby world of ours? How could one hope for more? Philosophical ethics has been unable to understand this and see it as enough. It is embarrassed by Berger's comment. It does not have its measure. It flees it. But if you have not known the kinds of moments Berger describes — there are many different versions of such moments of silence and delicacy — you have missed one of the most important dimensions of human experience. An ethics that cannot say this condemns itself.

Nietzsche never knew the comfort of a woman's warm body next to his in bed.[5] Who could possibly measure the loss to his life of this fact, of the endless deprivation it signifies? How much of his refusal to find hope in religion can be traced to that misery?

But Nietzsche longed for such moments. Bad luck and personal incompetence combined to deprive him of them. Philosophy, however, indulges a certain pride in passing by such moments. This is its image of *strength*, of *power*: philosophy takes pleasure in leaving aside experiences such as that of Berger because it sees them as — well, what, exactly? *Soft*, perhaps; too emotional; too minor and incidental. Philosophical ethics is in love with duty, obliga-

4 Berger, *and our faces, my heart, brief as photos*, 99.

5 Stefan Zweig, *Der Kampf mit dem Dämon: Hölderlin, Kleist, Nietzsche* (Frankfurter Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998 [1925]), 245.

tion, welfare, virtue; it sees these mountains and peaks of ethical experience, and it is right to do so, but it misses the plains and flatlands, the plateaux, the meadows, the groves and arbours, the valleys rich with fruit and ripe wheat in the sunshine; it shuns sensuality and the body, longing and yearning, the grief of loss of things never had, or had only fleetingly. But religion is about these things: the Buddha's vision of ageing, disease and death; asceticism; Jesus broken on the cross; Sufism; Yom Kippur, Sukkot…these are all about longing and yearning, the body delivered up to others or oneself in ecstasy or pain or pained ecstasy.

Writing of that moment of waking, as the children play the piano, Berger says:

> If ours were the eighteenth century, when questions opened idly like doors onto gardens, I might ask you: Do you remember? But in our century, when only evil and indifference are limitless, we cannot afford unnecessary questions; rather, we need to defend ourselves with whatever there is to hand of certainty. I know that you remember.[6]

Lying in bed, with his hands on her breasts, is no answer to limitless evil and indifference. It solves nothing. But it is a miracle that it is still possible. In a world in which our lives are spun out from and woven back into the evil and indifference of which Berger speaks, the kind of moment he describes is a hope of better human possibilities. We are not sufficiently astonished that such possibilities are still available to us. We do not *stop* over them. We rush on, as if philosophy has to get on with some task more important. But how can there be a more important task for philosophy than reminding us how it is possible to be consoled for the wreckage that history is?[7]

Some contemporary philosophers find philosophy of religion arid, detached from the vicissitudes of lived faith. They find this because they see that the questions posed by those who write on such matters do not matter to them in such a way that the answer could turn their lives inside out. Callicles: "Tell me, Socrates, are we to take you as serious just now, or joking? For if you are serious and what you say is really true, must not the life of us human beings have been turned upside down, and must we not be doing quite the opposite,

6 Berger, *and our faces, my heart, brief as photos*, 99.

7 Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (Pimlico, 1999 [1955]), 249.

it seems, of what we ought to do?"[8] If philosophy or religion cannot turn your life inside out, it loses its sacred dimension. The hope that either can do this is the hope that human life might not be emptied of all that makes it worthwhile.

If you tell someone what to believe, he or she will most likely resist and become even more embedded in his or her life as it is. So you need to avoid that if you want your words to mean anything. Berger avoids that, most philosophy and most religion does not. His is a philosophy in the subjunctive (Kierkegaard). This is why someone who said that the evil and indifference of our time is not *limitless*, would miss the point. The comment is written in the subjunctive, even if the verbal marker is lacking. The tone is the tone of the subjunctive. The assertions of literary culture are written, spoken in the subjunctive (which does not mean they all are…Here, as elsewhere, it is important to resist the temptation to literal-mindedness, a temptation philosophy often mistakes for rigour). Philosophy does not know what to do with that, so its permanent desire is to claim that literature is, or should be, there for our moral education. If you love literature and want to say why it is important to you, it is flattering to the ego and consoling to the intellect to suppose that its purpose is that of moral edification. You stop being puzzled as to why you love this thing and you feel good about yourself in devoting your time to it. But we should not strip literature of whatever it is in it — many things — that baffles us. It addresses the ways in which one's life is knotted, seemingly hopelessly tangled, that is true. But to think of that address in mainly moral terms is to fail to see the ways in which literature *goads* us, and that need not be a moral matter at all. Indeed, it may address the tangle of the inner life by pulling the knots even tighter, making you more baffled, less sure of your moral aims.

How could being phosphate of calcium be enough? Berger *loves* this woman. And he knows his love to be inadequate, mediocre. W.H. Auden:

> Lay your sleeping head, my love,
> Human on my faithless arm;
> Time and fevers burn away
> Individual beauty from
> Thoughtful children, and the grave
> Proves the child ephemeral:
> But in my arms till break of day

8 Plato, "Gorgias", http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0178%3Atext%3DGorg, 481c.

> Let the living creature lie,
> Mortal, guilty, but to me
> The entirely beautiful.

This is the sentiment of Berger's comment. His lover is entirely beautiful *because* she (or he, in Auden's case) is mortal and guilty. Phosphate of calcium is enough because it is (can be) a mark of our mortal and guilty condition. Simone Weil:

> The vulnerability of precious things is beautiful because vulnerability is a mark of existence.
>
> Destruction of Troy. Fall of the petals from fruit trees in blossom. To know that what is most precious is not rooted in existence — that is beautiful. Why? Projects the soul beyond time.[9]

Love of the phosphate of calcium of another, of one's own mixed with that of another, the capacity to love in this way, projects the soul beyond time, not into timelessness, not into another realm, but *back into* this realm, into the materiality of things, of their irreplaceability, the beyond time of their permanent presence, permanent present, which is utterly transient. That is the whole point of Weil's comment. This moment is timeless because transient; this person is perfect because guilty; there is hope because otherwise "hope would be hope for the wrong thing".

Alphonso Lingis, speaking of beauty and sexual lust:

> The sacred is not separated from the here-below of generation and corruption, beckoning from beyond as the figure of holiness, wholeness and ideal integrity. From the beginning the sacred is in decomposition, is separated from the world of work, reason, and discontinuous beings fixed in their identity, by decomposition. The zone of the sacred is the zone of spilt blood, semen, discharges, excretions, which excite the transgressive and ruinous passions.[10]

We need not think that Lingis names the only kind of activity that is the sacred; it is enough if he has isolated one aspect of this concept. But Weil would have resisted Lingis's thought. Yet her own thinking drives her towards it, since it is implied by her idea that vulnerability is at the core of beauty and projects the soul beyond time. The sexual ecstasy of which Lingis speaks expresses the same idea. Religion knows this: Saint Catherine of Siena, drinking

9 Simone Weil, *La Pesanteur et la grâce* (Plon, 2004 [1947]), 181.

10 Alphonso Lingis, *Dangerous Emotions* (Univ. of California Press, 2000), 149.

a cup of the pus issuing from her patient's sores to subdue her own flesh in an *imitatio christi*, knows it. Her ecstasy in this moment is of a piece with the ecstasy of the lover who delights in his or her lover's bodily secretions.

Auden's poem is entitled 'Lullaby'. Lullabies are for children and they help them go to sleep. Auden sees the tenderness of which he is capable as dependent upon the fact that his lover was once an infant. Would two adults ever be as tender to each other as Auden is to his lover and as Berger is to his if we had never been infants?

When we sleep, we are enclosed in our humanity. We are innocent. Our humanity, that is, shows up as innocent when we sleep. Sleep is therefore hope for us, the absence of sleep, a curse. Emil Cioran says that he became a philosopher as a result of insomnia. Man, he says, is the only animal that cannot sleep when it wants to. There is no hope in Cioran's philosophy, which is but an extended round of reflection on human folly and fanaticism.

*

Michael McGhee:

> Philosophy is also conversation, and what matters beyond all else here is demeanour, how we listen, how we speak or write, not seeking dominance, not indifferent to the well-being of the other, but encouraging inwardness, a friendly, even 'erotic' spirit, and we have to learn when thinking can be shared, when its communication can only be indirect, and when we have to stay silent.[11]

This is what I am trying to remember here.

(And I am trying to remember it even though I have hoped to learn, sought to learn, so much from voices shrill, nagging, violent: those of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and others. I am not sure what to do with that thought, that fact, here.)

*

"Sight is free and sight is irresponsible", wrote Gabriel Josipovici.[12] But to touch entangles, compromises us, makes things irrevocable. This is one rea-

11 McGhee, *Transformations of Mind*, 1.

12 Gabriel Josipovici, *Touch* (Yale Univ. Press, 1996), 9.

son why Berger finds hope in his vision of a place where he is phosphate of calcium. He is able there to *touch* the woman he loves, and this offers consolation, hope. But it is also because it is in a particular place: "What reconciles me to my own death more than anything else is the image of a place", he says. This place is sacred because it is where he touches his beloved. It is where he can touch his beloved because it is sacred. We move in such sacred places and think they are just spaces. All our movements are influenced, inflected, moulded, set in train, hampered by the material environment in which we exist, through which we pass and which offer the experience of the sacred to us. — As I sit here writing, I look out of the window. It is bitterly cold outside and snowing. Some boys are walking home from school. They break into a run, hide behind parked cars, collect snow, mould it into balls and throw them at each other, push each other into piles of snow on the pavement, drag their hands through the snow across car windows: released from the confines of self-control in the school, they are free, energy coursing through them, alive with the sense that it is Friday afternoon and tomorrow and the day after there is no school, they can laze about in bed, eat their fill at breakfast, go back to bed, lark around at the shops, chat endlessly with their girlfriends, create mischief, be cocky…These are sacred moments in a life, all the more so since not known as such, and they are as they are because these boys' bodies are out there in the world, exposed, they flex their muscles in finding out who they are, feel life in their bones and hair…The snow, today, tomorrow, makes their world and who they are. This is their version, at this moment in life, of Berger's holding his beloved's breasts and listening to the piano. This is their hope. In their love of the world, at this time and place, they may one day find the roots of a religious hope for life, unnamed.

E.J. Carr's novel *A Month in the Country* names this sacred moment. It does so with sunshine, rather than with the snow. Tom Birkin, badly damaged by the Great War, spends the summer in Oxgodby, removing the whitewashed surface of a mediaeval wall painting to reveal a scene of the Last Judgement. It is a summer of bliss, fleeting, glorious, filled with longing for a woman who will never be his and for a life among these people of the village which can never be his life.

> If I'd stayed there, would I always have been happy? No, I suppose not. People move away, grow older, die, and the bright belief that there will be

> another marvellous thing around each corner fades. It is now or never; we must snatch at happiness as it flies.[13]

This is what he learns. And this:

> We can ask and ask but we can't have again what once seemed ours for ever — the way things looked, that church alone in the fields, a bed on a belfry floor [where he slept], a remembered voice, the touch of a hand, a loved face. They've gone and you can only wait for the pain to pass.[14]

You can know this and still not have learnt it. When you have learnt it, you know that life will never be the same again. You can resent life because of this knowledge, hope that somehow it is all mistaken or that it can be made good in some continuation of this existence after death, or you can see the hope for yourself and others in the reverence, perhaps religious, that Birkin finds here. — Birkin hates institutional religion. There was no God in the trenches and there is no God beyond them. He has seen things no human being should see. Why call his attitude religious? Just this: 'religion' comes perhaps from the Latin *relegere* 'to go through again' from *legere* read, so 'to read again'; or perhaps from *religare*, 'to bind fast'. Birkin finds a way to re-read the world and be bound to it, he consecrates himself to the world and finds that it is worth living in. If anyone knows the limitlessness of evil and indifference it is Birkin. He has the right to find the possibility of the sacred in a world abandoned by God. He has a right to this hope.

*

Pierre Bonnard painted many canvases of his wife, Marthe. Marthe suffered from mental afflictions that led her to an obsession with washing. Bonnard painted her washing on countless occasions: soaking herself in water, getting out of or into the bath, drying herself etc. He also painted numerous domestic interiors and views of his garden in the south of France. His main painterly interest was colour; the main interest of his life was Marthe.

Not that he would have recognised the distinction.

13 E. J. Carr, *A Month in the Country* (Penguin, 2000 [1980]), 65.
14 Carr, *A Month in the Country*, 85.

Bonnard is my favourite painter. He is not the greatest painter, not by a long way, not least because his vision of life is in some ways narrow. But his sense of colour and of the absolute importance of colour in life is of the first order.

I trace, perhaps erroneously, but certainly ineluctably, the intense ecstasy I feel in front of his canvases to their being everything that the interiors of my childhood were not. In Bonnard, rooms are filled with light and open onto gardens and landscapes of plants, trees, flowers, lawns, and everywhere there is colour, green, red, purple, blue, white, yellow, ochre, azure, colours which vibrate in these paintings with the possibility of release, of freedom, of fulfilment. His wife, Marthe, is often there in these rooms, frequently nude, usually washing herself, lying in the bath, utterly absorbed in herself and yet at one with the space, overflowing into it, absorbed by it.

When I look at Bonnard's canvases I feel hope. You will have something like this in your life, something that will convince you that the world is not simply a random collection of disjointed objects, most of the them ugly, dirty or squalid. You may not have noticed your need of such things because the world does not strike you as being as shabby as it does me. But that just means that there are more things in the face of which you find hope. For no one could deny the utterly second-rate features of large parts of the world.

If you do not have something like that which I have in Bonnard your life will be correspondingly deprived of hope. Look for it if you do not have it. "The natural flights of the human mind are not from pleasure to pleasure, but from hope to hope", said Samuel Johnson in one of his *Rambler* essays. To live without hope is to die.

I am following Camus. Yet Camus says one must live without hope. What he means by hope is hope in a life after this. I am saying that the religious attitude does not need the hope of life after death. Indeed, it is better off without it (Simone Weil). Camus' attitude, in his early essays written in the mid-1930s, is that of one of the most lyrical absorption in the material world, a sense of the body, his body, as being at one with the sky, sun, wind, water, and there are gods everywhere. It is of a sacral world, enchanted (as Max Weber thought the world *entzaubert*, de-magicked, disenchanted), to be grasped and loved. How could *loving* the world not be religious when virtually everything in it invites one, goads one, to the opposite? Hence, says Camus: "There

is no love of life without despair about life."[15] There are very few who *love* the world, and institutional religion cuts entirely crosswise over those who do.

> In the spring, Tipasa is inhabited by the gods and the gods speak in the sun and the scent of absinthe leaves, in the sea with its silver armour, in the raw blue sky, the ruins covered with flowers, and the great bubbles of light among the piles of stone.[16]

This is from Camus' essay *Noces à Tipasa*: Camus consecrates himself to the world, here, as one might to the man or woman one loves. Philosophy has not understood well enough that the manner in which one expresses one's love is central to the constituting it. The lyricism of Camus' expression is not extraneous to what he feels.

It has been said that Camus' thoughts here are 'subjective'. John Weightman:

> Sometimes Camus expresses this solar paganism in impressionistic or rhetorical prose. At other times, he handles it more intellectually and ironically. In either case, his treatment is very subjective. It may be enjoyed, but can hardly be fully accepted, by readers who have had to live their lives many hundreds of miles away from the Mediterranean.[17]

This is unhelpful. It does not matter if his view about the sun cannot be fully accepted. The point is to see what he means and find something in your life that can play the role there that the sun played in his life. Camus invites us to find the gods in our own life. One must never forget that some lead lives of misery in which the gods will never find a place, let alone a home. It would be thoughtless and complacent to forget that. But it hardly follows that one should not speak as Camus does.

Nietzsche, perhaps an influence on Camus here, as elsewhere, says this:

> Hope.—Pandora brought the box containing evils and opened it. It was the gift of the gods to human beings, on the outside a beautiful, seductive gift, and called the 'box of happiness.' From it flew out all the evils, living, lively beings: from that time they roam around and do ill to human beings by day and night. One single evil did not slip out of the box…[in accord with] the will of Zeus….Human beings now have this box always in the house and are delighted at the treasure they have inside it…For they do not know that the box that Pandora brought is the box of evils and suppose the remaining evil to be greatest source of happiness: hope. Zeus did not want human beings,

15 Albert Camus, *Lyrical and Critical Essays*, ed. Philip Thody (Vintage, 1970 [1958]), 13.
16 Albert Camus, *Noces, (suivi de) L'été* (Gallimard, 2007 [1959]), 11.
17 John Weightman, "Lyrical and Critical Essays", *New York Times*, December 15, 1968.

> however tormented by other evils, to throw their life away but to carry on in order to face fresh torments. For this purpose he gives human beings hope, in truth the greatest of the evils for it prolongs human beings' wretchedness.[18]

Hope here is an evil. It is what binds us to the world. Life does not bind us to life. Without hope, life gives us nothing — or not enough — to carry on. Hope just guarantees the continuation of our misery. Nietzsche suffered from terrible ill health and certainly could not experience the joy of physical life as Camus did. Much of his philosophy, perhaps most of it, was an attempt to reconcile himself to the poverty of his experience in this way. He certainly sought something that could play for him the role that the sun played for Camus. He never found it, although he spent a lot of time trying to persuade himself he had.

Everything in Nietzsche speaks of a search for rapture. The Übermensch, the so-called higher types, the masters, Napoleon, Goethe…these speak of a longing for excess, for abandon, for the Dionysiac. The rest is secondary. Those who write on Nietzsche, especially those who write on him as if he were an analytic philosopher *manqué* — which is largely a way of domesticating Nietzsche -, often fail to see this, or fail to write about it if they see it, and, in missing this, they fail to see that it contains a critique of philosophy, a style of thinking from which Nietzsche sought to escape: it was, for him, too deeply imbued with the spirit of moderation and timidity. Philosophy held out little hope for him, for, despite his protestations, he sought hope everywhere, in default of which his whole idea of life affirmation would have come to nothing.

In this sense, there is no hope in philosophy. It finds rapture and excess dangerous in the face of its deep desire to subdue the world morally. This is what Nietzsche meant by saying that philosophers *came to a halt before morality*. It operates as a turnpike or sorting house for moral seriousness. Yet no philosopher has been more morally serious than Nietzsche. Morality for him meant: I stake everything I am on finding out who I am, refusing to supress the recalcitrant self — the fascination with violence, the horror of mediocrity, the contempt and disgust, the endless waves of disturbing emotion, passion, affect — without giving these their due, owning them, letting them speak or find their voice. The moral seriousness he condemned is that form of it that

18 Friedrich Nietzsche, "Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I". In *Kritische Studienausgabe Band 2*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzini Montinari, 2nd ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988 [1878]), §71.

wishes, not to *place* these excesses of life, since they *must* be placed, but to *rush past* such things and to get elsewhere, before they are understood, before they can teach us who we are.

Religion, as Nietzsche knew, sees things differently. How could Christianity not, with its image of Jesus on the cross? The saints and mystics with their rapture, their dark night of the soul, their self-flagellation and self-discipline, their subduing of the flesh, their limitless love of life so close to, feeding from, a limitless scorn for life, all the blood, all the tears: none of this can be contained in philosophy. Nietzsche found it all contrary to his taste, as did Hume in a different way, it was all too hysterical and frenetic. Moreover, it will not love things in their particularity. Weil's sense that the eternal is so because transient shows up the hysteria of the saints, their incapacity to accept that this life is all we have. Berger's ecstasy is a lesson, so much more delicate, subtle.

I am saying this: the *energy* for life, the energy that binds us to life, is the energy of rapture; and the rapture can be that of Dionysus or of art or of the sunshine or holding one's beloved. And much else. In all cases, it is fleeting, transient. It is folded into, enclosed in, loss and vulnerability. Were it not, it could not be the rapture it is. This rapture is always religious because it expresses the sacred. It consecrates itself to particularity. This consecration is hope.

*

Those philosophers who do not scorn this idea — probably most of them, these days — think that philosophy can provide a kind of therapy; that is, hope. This is Pierre Hadot's view and he seeks to connect some modern philosophy — Nietzsche in particular — with the ancient schools that offered an education of the soul to help us make better sense of our anger or fear of death and the like, and reduce these.

Can philosophy offer such hope? I have said that it refuses rapture. But might its capacity to dissect and analyse be its strength? Is it not able to bring our emotional life into better order and *teach* us? Can it not help us with our pathologies of emotion?

"Philosophy triumphs easily over evils past and evils to come. But present evils triumph over philosophy."[19] Who, thinking about these things, could fail to be haunted by La Rochefoucauld's *aperçu*?

If you spend years reading philosophy and seek to think honestly about your life and try to bring philosophy into connection with it — it is hard to think there is no help, no hope, to be had from philosophy. But La Rochefoucauld does not say there is no hope. He says there is no hope in the moment when you really need it, that is, when you are suffering, suffering from the world, or from yourself, or from both. The only help concerns the aftermath and with what will come.

Perhaps this is what La Rochefoucauld wants to say: if you think philosophy can help you with present ills this is because you suppose it has given you something *powerful*. But to think that is to fail to understand human vulnerability and weakness. You cannot know how you will cope with suffering until you are faced with it. And, if you face it well, then you will know this to be utterly unexpected, given our fragility, a matter of *luck* — and thus not of your having been taught anything by philosophy. La Rochefoucauld says: philosophy has only human weakness to teach. If you think it teaches strength, you have betrayed philosophy. The depth philosophy has to offer is its own weakness and its own knowledge of weakness.

Philosophy is in this way *placed* by life. Those who are suspicious of philosophy, of philosophers, are right, if their suspicion is as I have tried to describe it. From this point of view, philosophy must leave itself open to repudiation. It rarely does so, indeed, is often hostile to those who would repudiate it in this way. Its gesture of aggression is not worthy of it, but has accompanied it from its beginnings, despite its better possibilities.

*

Berger said that in the eighteenth century questions opened idly like doors into gardens. Now they do not. What does this mean?

It means Auschwitz. It is always said that nothing is the same after Auschwitz as before. It is always said that moral thinking and experience has been irrevocably changed by Auschwitz. But no one believes it. As always in

19 La Rochefoucauld, *Maximes* (Garnier-Flammarion, 1977 [1659]), no.22

human life, when we say that everything has changed we find that it goes on as normal. Man is the complacent animal.

Berger says: after Auschwitz, we do not have the right to think in terms of gardens with doors that open *idly* onto them: gardens are enclosed spaces and doors that open idly onto them gives a sense of *ease*. Our questions are no longer enclosed and they cannot evoke ease.

We have to be careful about the questions we ask. The hope of philosophy is that it will help us ask better questions or know when to desist from questioning. Usually it betrays this hope. It does this because it forgets its own connection with poetry. ("True philosophy is written in the language of poetry."[20] McGhee, discussing Wittgenstein. I have always felt this. But I know that there are plenty of philosophers, and many I admire and respect, who do not so much disagree with this as express a total bafflement at what it could mean. This is one place where one sees that philosophers are less in disagreement about what philosophy is than they are *confused*, do not understand what they do.) Poetry, as Berger says, finds its origin in prayer. Philosophy can be prayer and then it must speak of suffering (though not only of suffering) in the hope that its words will be heard. Philosophy as prayer and philosophy in the subjunctive: these are two sides of the same coin, as Kierkegaard understood so well, because they put into question the speaker and deliver his or her subjectivity over to the hope of a hearing, the hope that this suffering can be heard.

A question philosophy does not ask often enough: How is it possible to be at home in a world where Auschwitz has taken place? One can have this sense: I do not want to exist in a world where such things happen, do not want to be part of such a world. It is not that such things *ought* not to happen. It is that they *cannot* happen. They are impossible. But they happen nonetheless.

In one of his essays, Alphonso Lingis speaks of awakenings: suddenly I see something, hear something, and am stopped in my tracks. I am shaken out of my complacent absorption.

> While reading on the porch, to wake up to a hummingbird sizzling in the sheets of sunlight. To wake up to the grain of the old wood of the porch railing, enigmatic as a fossil of some long-extinct reptile…Awakening is proud and hopeful. The interruption of continuity makes possible the leap,

20 McGhee, *Transformations of Mind*, 83.

> with all the forces of the present, into what is ahead. It makes possible hope, the awaiting what cannot reasonably be expected.[21]

The world is filled with such possibilities. We usually pay insufficient attention to them. They give hope: the hope that one can be at home in the world. But if that hope is not to be mere indifference, it has to remember how surprising it is. No one can reasonably expect to be at home in the world after Auschwitz. Only our bluntness tells us otherwise.

Richard Swinburne, considering the unspeakable quantity of evil in the world, wonders whether God could possibly "have allowed Hiroshima, the Holocaust, the Lisbon earthquake, or the Black Death…With the objection that, if there is a God, he has overdone it, I feel *considerable initial* sympathy".[22] But Swinburne goes on to argue that there are good reasons why God would have allowed these things anyway. His reasons are of little interest compared to his unease with what he is doing. Does he wish to reassure the reader that he is, after all, not so blunt on account of his considerable initial sympathy? If so, one might wonder whether offering a reply that makes bluntness into an argument really does reassure. It might be thought to make things worse. More importantly, Swinburne's refusal to stay with his initial sympathy, to linger over it, is likely to give one a sense of desperation, to strip one of hope. He wants us to *forget* how surprising it is that we can feel at home in the world, by turning hope into conviction, conviction supplied by philosophical argument. The argument betrays hope, it betrays the victims and it betrays those who thought that philosophy could offer something to us in the confusions of life. Swinburne mistakes where to find strength in philosophy: it will come only if philosophy is able to find its own limits and learn when it has nothing to say. Swinburne's is, contrary to what he thinks, a counsel of despair, not hope.

"Be not too hasty…to trust or to admire the teachers of morality: they discourse like angels, but live like men,"[23] wrote Samuel Johnson.

How do you know when you are speaking like an angel? In truth, neither Swinburne's considerable initial sympathy nor his argument is spoken with the voice of a man. Initial sympathy, however considerable, is fatuous in the face of the Holocaust and the rest, and that it is so is shown by Swinburne's ease

21 Alphonso Lingis, *Dangerous Emotions*, 105–6.

22 Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God* (Clarendon Press, 2004), 263.

23 Samuel Johnson, *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* (Penguin, 1985 [1759]), 179.

in wanting to set it aside, even if the argument to do so means he has to go through some twists and turns. There is no such thing as initial sympathy with the victims of the Holocaust. If that is what you think you have, you have no understanding of the issue at all. You might be haunted or horrified, but not possessed of some initial sympathy, however considerable.

Am I being unfair? Swinburne said he had sympathy with a certain objection. How can he be accused of misunderstanding the nature of sympathy with the victims? But my point is that sympathy with the objection cannot be sealed off from sympathy with the victims. Swinburne could not, would not, italicise his initial sympathy unless this were so. The objection that God has 'overdone it' is a call to seriousness about sympathy with the victims, not simply a point about a some kind of mistake in reasoning. Otherwise, Swinburne would simply not be uncomfortable in the way he clearly is.

It is easy to forget, when writing and thinking about such things, McGhee's comment. How could one encourage inwardness in Swinburne or in those many other philosophers who speak about such things in a similar tone? I do not know. I feel it to be an intense failure on my part that I do not know. That is a failure of my inwardness, which unfits me, on my own understanding, for philosophy. The only hope is that the inadequacy is not total.

Or is my anger part of the inwardness I seek? I do not know.

How do you know, I asked, when you are speaking as an angel? Do angels get angry? Or is that a mark of a man, a woman, a human being? Perhaps speaking as a man, rather than an angel, means one runs a special risk of anger. But, so far as I can see, judging by his book, McGhee is able to avoid it, except such anger as directed to himself.

My feeling that philosophy contains so little hope is expressed by my sense that this question is not taken seriously, is not raised, by nearly enough philosophers. Sometimes philosophy appears as a massive conspiracy for the denial of the human. The appeal of that stance has not been adequately measured in the subject because the question is not considered a real or live one from the first.

*

> Christianity is a system, a *whole* view of things thought out together. By breaking one main concept out of it, the faith in God, one breaks the whole: nothing necessary remains in one's hands.[24]

This is Nietzsche's verdict. It would be foolish to claim that one cannot see why he says this. It would also be foolish to deny that there are still those who find hope in this whole system. But I have been suggesting that there are those for whom religion — that is, Christianity — is more what Philip Larkin suggested it was: a 'vast moth-eaten musical brocade'. Larkin's line captures the sense of there being something still of value in Christianity, as Nietzsche's thought does not. But Christianity has always been a divided religion, torn between the affirmation of the world as something good and a rejection of materiality as a distraction from God.

In the same poem, Larkin speaks of 'all the uncaring/Intricate rented world'. The hope of religion, for religion, is that be capable, as Berger was, of loving such a world. That is not something that any system can provide; it is something it is easy to think one is doing when one is not. And the only place one can see it will be, in the end, in a life that is testimony to that possibility.

What is crucial here is the *spirit* that animates a life. Seeing that spirit in another provides hope, because it shows it to be a genuine human possibility. I have met many who call themselves Christians in whom there is no such spirit; and others who would reject any claim that they are Christians, or in any sense religious, and in whom such a spirit is alive.

The key here, I have been trying to say, is, as Auden has it, to '[f]ind the mortal world enough'. There is a spirit in some people which manifests their capacity to acknowledge that this is a rented world and that that is enough. 'Rented' means not simply that we are here temporarily and that all by which we are surrounded is not ours. 'Rented' evokes 'to rend' and this world is rent. To find it enough is to know what it can give and not to ask more.

Robert Nozick said[25] once that Auschwitz was the second fall of man and that we human beings had now lost the right to exist — it would not be a

24 Friedrich Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung". In *Kritische Studienausgabe Band 6*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzini Montinari, (De Gruyter, 1988 [1889]), §5.

25 Robert Nozick, *The Examined Life* (Simon & Schuster, 1990), 239.

tragedy if there were no longer human beings. Whether or not Auschwitz was unprecedented in its barbarity, it *seals* our knowledge of what we are.

Nozick's thought makes us wonder whether we have the *right* to find the world enough. When Pascal said that '*Jésus sera en agonie jusqu'à la fin du monde. Il ne faut pas dormir pendant ce temps-là*',[26] ['Jesus will be in the throes of death until the end of the world. We must not sleep during this whole time.'] we see him stripping Jesus of his redemptive work and making of him nothing more than an image of human misery. For Pascal, in that moment at least, we have no right to find the world enough. Here, and elsewhere, Pascal expresses that side of Christianity that can only repudiate the world in its totality. His vision here is one of perfect hopelessness.

But if Christianity is, however moth-eaten, still something that, in its *interstices*, offers hope, as I have been suggesting it can, then it can only be by turning towards the world. Anyone who genuinely felt he or she had no right to find the world enough would be in such a state of wretchedness that his or her mind would blank at the glare, to borrow again from Larkin. This, indeed, was what happened to Pascal. There would be a price to pay for such an attitude, a price that Pascal was willing to pay, but, if one does not pay, the attitude becomes an affectation. Virtually all of us close ourselves to the issue to which Pascal was so alive, and it is no doubt better that we do. We cannot open ourselves to it with our whole being — assuming one can know what one's whole being is — but to ignore it totally would be simply to reflect the complacency of our world.

McGhee said that "we have to learn when thinking can be shared, when its communication can only be indirect, and when we have to stay silent". But how can you know whether thinking can be shared unless you hazard the sharing? I have shared some thoughts here that are — or shared them in a way, in a tone, that is — uncharacteristic of much philosophical conversation in the English-speaking world. I have tried not to give in to the anxiety that would act as a form of self-censure and forbid the hazard. If I have a hope for philosophy it is that it could find space for such a working out of anxiety.

26 Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Gérard Ferreyrolles (Librairie Générale Française, 2011 [1670]), 575.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Benjamin, Walter. 1999 [1955]. "Theses on the Philosophy of History". In *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, 245–55. London: Pimlico.

Berger, John. 2005 [1984]. *and our faces, my heart, brief as photos*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Camus, Albert. 1970 [1958]. *Lyrical and Critical Essays*. Edited by Philip Thody. New York, NY: Vintage.

—. 2007 [1959]. *Noces, (suivi de) L'été*. Paris: Gallimard.

Carr, E. J. 2000 [1980]. *A Month in the Country*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Johnson, Samuel. 1985 [1759]. *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Josipovici, Gabriel. 1996. *Touch*. New Haven, CN: Yale Univ. Press.

La Rochefoucauld. 1977 [1659]. *Maximes*. Paris: Garnier-Flammarion.

Levinas, Emmanuel. 1998. *Totality and Infinity*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne Univ. Press.

Lingis, Alphonso. 2000. *Dangerous Emotions*. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press.

McGhee, Michael. 2000. *Transformations of Mind: Philosophy as Spiritual Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1988 [1889]. "Götzen-Dämmerung". In *Kritische Studienausgabe Band 6*, edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzini Montinari. 2nd ed., 55–161. Berlin: de Gruyter.

—. 1988 [1878]. "Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I". In *Kritische Studienausgabe Band 2*, edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzini Montinari. 2nd ed. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Nozick, Robert. 1990. *The Examined Life*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Pascal, Blaise. 2011 [1670]. *Pensées*. Edited by Gérard Ferreyrolles. Paris: Librairie Générale Française.

Plato. "Gorgias". http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0178%3Atext%3DGorg.

Swinburne, Richard. 2004. *The Existence of God*. Oxford, New York: Clarendon Press.

Weightman, John. 1968. "Lyrical and Critical Essays". *New York Times*, December 15, 1968. http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/12/14/home/camus-essays.html.

Weil, Simone. 1999 [1940]. "L'Iliade ou le poème de la force". In *Œuvres*, edited by Florence de Lussy, 527–52. Paris: Gallimard.

—. 2004 [1947]. *La Pesanteur et la grâce*. Paris: Plon.

Zweig, Stefan. 1998 [1925]. *Der Kampf mit dem Dämon: Hölderlin, Kleist, Nietzsche*. Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Taschenbuch Verlag.

HOPE AND TRAGEDY: INSIGHTS FROM RELIGION IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF PAUL RICŒUR

Amy Daughton
University of Birmingham

Abstract. The trajectory of Paul Ricœur's thought from the fallible to the capable human person offers a hopeful vision of human nature constitutive of our shared political life. Yet, by necessity, hope arises in response to the tragic, which also features in Ricœur's work at the existential and ethical levels. At the same time hope and tragedy represent concepts at the limit of philosophical reasoning, introducing meeting points with religious discourse. Exploring those meeting points reveals the contribution of religious thinking to the understanding of hope and tragedy and establishes Ricœur's political thinking as ultimately shaped by their interplay.

I. INTRODUCTION

The whole trajectory of Paul Ricœur's philosophy might be thought of as a hopeful journey. Certainly it is frequently characterised that way, with his exploration of human self-understanding described as a move from *l'homme faillible*, to *l'homme capable*[1], allowing hope in human capability to be the climactic concept of his oeuvre. That journey takes a course though diverse areas of philosophical enquiry, including the early phenomenology of the will; hermeneutics, language and narrative; and the great turn toward ethics in the mid-80s and onwards, which would see application in questions of memory, historiography, and justice.

1 An early example is Domenico Jervolino who stressed the capable human as the ultimately unifying idea of Ricœur's work, relying on Ricœur's own reference to *Soi-même comme un autre* as his '*summa*'. See Domenico Jervolino, "The Unity of Paul Ricœur's Work: l'homme capable", in *Between Suspicion and Sympathy*: *Paul Ricœur's Unstable Equilibrium*, ed. Andrzej Wierciński (Hermeneutic Press, 2003). See also Gaëlle Fiasse ed., *Paul Ricœur: De l'homme faillible à l'homme capable* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2008). More systematically, see Jean Greisch, *Fehlbarkeit und Fähigkeit: Die philosophische Anthropologie Paul Ricœurs* (LIT Verlag, 2009).

PP. 135–156
DOI: 10.24204/EJPR.V11I3.2953
AUTHOR: A.DAUGHTON@BHAM.AC.UK

EUROPEAN JOURNAL FOR
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION
Vol 11, No 3 (2019)

In her excellent work *Ricœur on Hope*, Rebecca Huskey has suggested that hope might be taken as "the centre of and the guiding theme for Ricœur's hermeneutics."[2] What I find especially valuable about Huskey's approach is that her understanding of that hermeneutical hope goes beyond consideration of texts to frame the wider work on the self. Indeed, Huskey's analysis is of hope as a particular human capacity. Thus, she is able to introduce her own reading through Ricœur of "hope as an expectation of some future good, an expectation that must be acted upon for oneself and for others."[3] This maps the turn to *l'homme capable*, and indeed, when we consider the self in Ricœur's later work, including in its political entanglement with others and institutions, there is a consistent hopefulness.

Ricœur is not simply erasing the differences of political life with an irenic resolution in hope. What this article intends is to reintroduce the complexity of hope in its constant interplay with the tragic that continued to inflect Ricœur's work from the early to the late. Indeed one can read the tragic forwards through Ricœur's work to its later stages, even in *Reflections on the Just*, and read hope backwards, finding its origins in very early work such as *History and Truth*. The return of hope and the tragic at multiple stages of Ricœur's *oeuvre* allows us to consider their significance at both the existential and the ethical level. Hope and the tragic are not an opposing pair of concepts, not two sides of the same coin. Instead they frame what is in prospect for our political life together.

Understanding this interplay might valuably be begun with a methodological consideration of how Ricœur, as a philosopher, grappled with religious discourse as a wholly distinct form of understanding. This is a live question as hope and tragedy are emblems of how Ricœur conceived of the conceptual limits where philosophy and religion meet.

II. HOPE IN PHILOSOPHY AND HOPE IN RELIGION

Speaking of his early career, Paul Ricœur remarked "I had to permanently justify my existence saying that I was not a 'crypto-theologian.'"[4] In response

2 Rebecca K. Huskey, *Ricœur on Hope: Expecting the Good* (Peter Lang, 2009), 5.

3 Huskey, *Ricœur on Hope*, 18.

4 Paul Ricœur and questioners, "Roundtable Discussion", in *Memory, Narrativity, Self and the Challenge to Think God*: *The Reception within Theology of the Recent Work of Paul Ricœur*, ed. Maureen Junker-Kenny and Peter Kenny (LIT Verlag, 2004), 203.

to the imprecations of the French philosophical academy[5], Ricœur would continue to draw an abiding distinction between theology, versus the inclusion of religious sources as the discursive context for philosophical enquiry. He consistently presented himself as philosopher, and intended his systematic works to explore strictly within philosophical limits. Perhaps the most significant example of this in practice was Ricœur's notorious division of his published Gifford Lectures. Ten of the lectures formed the chapters of the systematic *Oneself as Another* while the final two lectures which treated religious sources, including the figure of the summoned prophet, and themes of justice and love, were published as isolated essays[6].

As the separate publication of those scripturally shaped final lectures indicates though, Ricœur continued to give religious discourse an important if distinct role in his work. He saw part of his task as a philosopher to be to listen to the mythic "utterance of man about himself,"[7] which necessarily included the scriptural myths and their reception within communities of faith. In this way Ricœur was engaged with what religious discourses could offer to the philosopher in terms of their understanding of the human person.

Still Ricœur's wariness about religious discourse remained and cannot be attributed to a merely political consciousness of academic suspicion; what was crucial for him was to distinguish his approach from that of the theologian. Even in the 1970s when Ricœur had already held the Nuveen Chair of Divinity for some years, he saw in theology the potential to be an uprooted discipline that was dangerously abstracted from what he called the "originary expressions of [the] community of faith."[8] What gave Ricœur pause was that theology itself ran the risk of confusing the distinction between religious

5 It may be that the early collection *History and Truth* prompted these difficulties for Ricœur, which frequently draws and reflects on religious sources and concepts, without dwelling clearly on the methodological distinctions in play. Subsequent work was far more austere in this respect.

6 Among other publications, these essays found form in English in an essay collection edited by Mark Wallace, ed., *Figuring the Sacred Religion, Narrative and Imagination* (Fortress Press, 1995).

7 Paul Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil* (Beacon Press, 1967), 4. Originally published as Paul Ricœur, *Philosophie de la volonté: Finitude et Culpabilité II. La symbolique du mal.* (Aubier, 1960). The details of the original French publication more clearly show the place of the *Symbolism* within Ricœur's unfinished series on the philosophy of the will.

8 Paul Ricœur, "Philosophy and Religious Language", *The Journal of Religion* 54, no. 1 (1974): 73.

responses to originary texts and philosophical theorising[9]. By contrast, he would go on to describe his philosophy as "strictly agnostic":

> the experience of transcendence, such as the experience of the moral conscience, can be interpreted in multiple ways... philosophy leaves open these opportunities. And that's the intersection, where the properly philosophical dimension stops and the strictly religious dimension begins.[10]

This careful limit is what Christoph Mandry has characterised "as a distinction between the general and the particular,"[11] where religion responds in a particular way, to that which philosophy keeps open.

Still the way in which religious discourse responds is not merely a particular version of philosophy, but rather singular to its own discourse, which is revealed in how Ricœur discussed his use of religious resources. In a relatively late set of interviews, he articulated the relationship as a conversation between two distinct kinds of thinking: "I place great importance on the mediation of writings, which are different from one sphere to another, even if the activity of reading draws them closer."[12] Indeed, this includes the "mediation of language and scripture; this is even where my two affiliations confront one another."[13] Ricœur's approach of mediating between forms of thinking absolutely requires their continuing distinction from each other, and thus his work may engage with certain kinds of religious shaped discourse, on their own terms, while distinguishing the philosophical task and its proper limits. This can be illustrated by Ricœur's treatment of hope itself as a meeting point between philosophy and theology.

Hope as the Structure of Philosophical Systems

In the essay 'Hope as the Structure of Philosophical Systems', Ricœur considers the role of hope as a concept shaping both philosophy and theology. He

9 See especially Ricœur's treatment of Thomas Aquinas's *De Potentia* in *The Rule of Metaphor* for a further consideration of the distinction between speculative and poetic discourse.

10 Charles E. Reagan, "Interview avec Paul Ricœur", *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 3, no. 3 (1991): 157. Translation my own.

11 Christoph Mandry, "The Relationship between Philosophy and Theology in the Recent Work of Paul Ricœur", in *Memory, Narrativity, Self and the Challenge to Think God*: *The Reception within Theology of the Recent Work of Paul Ricœur*, ed. Maureen Junker-Kenny and Peter Kenny (LIT Verlag, 2004), 72.

12 Paul Ricœur, *Critique and Conviction, Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay* (Polity Press, 1998), 140.

13 Ibid.

turns to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant as the needed alternative to Hegelian frameworks. As Alison Scott-Baumann has observed, by contrast with the determinist character of Absolute Knowledge, Kant's philosophy represented "a practical philosophy that stresses human capacities for action"[14]. Philosophy in the Kantian sense, Ricœur suggests, encounters hope not as a distinct object of thought, but as what he calls an "approximation,"[15] an idea that can only be attempted to be thought but not grasped and thus lies at the very horizon of its reasoning. Hope appears repeatedly through Kant's critiques, as a limit that reshapes the structure of philosophical enquiry. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant comes to the conclusion that we cannot achieve an understanding of the unconditioned from conditions. This is a "repudiation by reason of its absolute claim."[16] Although this is a limit on the powers of reason — "reason must first despair"[17] — yet nevertheless Ricœur argues that this is profoundly hopeful because it represents the rejection of the illusion that we might somehow achieve absolute knowledge. Thus, as Maureen Junker-Kenny has articulated, "it leaves open the possibility to "think" beyond them, in the shape of postulates such as freedom."[18]

The *Critique of Practical Reason* is concerned with the good and "extends to the will the same structure, the same act of ending the philosophical discourse in a way that both breaks a closure and opens a horizon."[19] The limit on the will is that we cannot "acquire by ourselves" congruence between virtue and happiness, "between the work of humankind and the fulfilment of the desire that constitutes human existence... a connection between the purity of heart and satisfaction of our most intimate desire."[20] We can only hope for that congruence, rather than achieving it. Thus freedom and God appear again as postulates, not subject to speculative reasoning. God is a rational

14 Alison Scott-Baumann, *Ricœur and the Negation of Happiness* (Bloomsbury, 2013), 72.

15 Paul Ricœur, "Hope and the Structure of Philosophical Systems", in *Figuring the Sacred Religion, Narrative and Imagination*, ed. Mark Wallace (Augsburg Fortress Press, 1995), 216. Originally published in 1970 in *Proceedings of the American Catholic Society*.

16 Ibid., 213.

17 Ibid., 212.

18 Maureen Junker-Kenny, *Religion and Public Reason: A Comparison of the Positions of John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas and Paul Ricœur* (de Gruyter, 2014), 260.

19 Ricœur, "Hope and the Structure of Philosophical Systems", 213.

20 Ibid., 213–4.

postulate, since God remains a response to the practical level and thus "the necessity of hope is not epistemological but practical and existential."[21]

These limits introduced by the earlier Critiques offer a foundation for what *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* then establishes: our knowledge has limits, our power has limits and one of those limits is the reality of evil, of our will captured in some way by evil. Junker-Kenny's articulation of the problem at hand here is especially helpful. It is "how the agent's capability can be regained after becoming culpable, as an inescapable question of individual hope."[22] As Ricœur puts it, even in the face of evil, "a real liberty can only be hoped."[23] That liberty is found in what Kant called the 'regeneration' of the will, toward the good and he leaves it as "the task of 'religion within the limits of reason alone' to elaborate the condition of possibility of this regeneration without alienating freedom either to a magical conception of grace and salvation, or to an authoritarian organisation of the religious community."[24]

Religion, specifically Christian thinking, offers a particular assertion of that condition of possibility in its own hopeful narration of the human condition. Ricœur proposes (while noting his lack of authority on the question) that the theological significance of hope is in the character of Christian thinking as eschatological. A distinctively Christian theology declares a God who is yet to come, rather than an ontologically eternal being made manifest as the Hellenistic legacy instead emphasises.[25] Thus, hope is not presented as something proven, but as a kind of assertion for the future: a new way of understanding oneself in the face of death, of despair: "seen from the standpoint of hope, life is not only the contrary of but the denial of death."[26] In this sense then Christian hope inaugurates a new way of living, a new rationality. This is a logic of love that goes beyond mere *do ut des* exchanges (I give so that you may give), and which we take up as our new law, asserting it as a chosen rationality: "Freedom is the capacity to live according to the paradoxical law of superabundance, of

21 Ibid.

22 Junker-Kenny, *Religion and Public Reason*, 263.

23 Ricœur, "Hope and the Structure of Philosophical Systems", 215.

24 Ibid. The translation here is perhaps a little unclear — freedom should not be reduced or made strange to its real meaning by linking it with a hermetic system of grace, or a rigid hierarchy.

25 See also Paul Ricœur, "Freedom in the Light of Hope: Translated by Robert Sweeney", in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Don Idhe (Northwestern Univ. Press, 1974), 407.

26 Ricœur, "Hope and the Structure of Philosophical Systems", 206.

denying death and asserting an excess of sense over non-sense, in all desperate situations."[27] Thus the logic of Christian superabundance represents precisely that renewal of freedom, which is "the very content of hope."[28]

Here we see that the content of hope is named when religious thinking meets philosophy at the point of philosophy's rational approximation of hope in the face of its own limits. Ultimately then Ricœur can characterise philosophy in the Kantian mode as "saying something of the Easter-preaching. But why it knows and what it says remains within the limits of reason alone. In this self-restraint abide both the responsibility and the modesty of philosophy."[29] Philosophy itself may even need to continue with 'regeneration', rather than the religious name of hope.

Already we begin to see that the great theme of hope in Ricœur's work is intertwined with the notion of limits, introduced here at both the existential and the ethical levels. I suggest that we can see these levels playing out in two major works, separated by thirty years and representative of different stages of Ricœur's consideration of the human person: his 1960 *La symbolique du mal*, and *Soi-même comme un autre* in 1990. Both explore hope arising in response to negative limits: dread, and the tragic, respectively, and do so through the symbolic resources of myth, including religious myth. Yet although the human condition is framed by this interplay, I will argue that hope is what ultimately helps point toward the prospects for political life.

III. HOPE, IN THE FACE OF...

As we noted above, Ricœur's early work focused on the fallible human person, which was primarily driven by his interest in a phenomenology of the will. Specifically that was begun in his work in1950 on the interplay of voluntary and involuntary action, translated into English as *Freedom and Nature*. The works of 1960, *L'homme faillible* and *La symbolique du mal*, translated later as *Fallible Man* (1965) and *The Symbolism of Evil* (1967), build on this beginning, and it is the latter of these with which our exploration will begin, already introducing hope by way of the tragic.

27 Ricœur, "Hope and the Structure of Philosophical Systems", 207.
28 Ricœur, "Freedom in the Light of Hope", 422.
29 Ricœur, "Hope and the Structure of Philosophical Systems", 216.

The Symbolism of Evil

The *Symbolism* represents Ricœur's concern with the transition from "the possibility of evil in man (*sic*) to its reality, fallibility to fault".[30] It also constitutes a significant engagement with religious resources, since, as Ricœur argues:

> In fact there is no direct, nonsymbolic language of evil undergone, suffered, or committed; whether man admits his responsibility or claims to be the prey of an evil which takes hold of him, he does so first and foremost in a symbolism whose articulations can be traced out thanks to various rituals of "confession" that the history of religion has interpreted for us.[31]

Ricœur therefore proceeds from what he calls "primary symbols" of evil — stain, sin, guilt — not as a theologian, but with the aim of building "a hermeneutics of rational symbols whose task is to reconstitute the layers of meaning which have become sedimented in the concept."[32] This is not an attempt at finding an explanation in the symbol, but rather its "dark analogical riches."[33]

It is in his consideration of the first of these, stain or defilement, that Ricœur makes what I find to be an especially fascinating remark. The symbol of defilement (harm, intrusion, suffering, etc.) is something that "is experienced subjectively in a specific feeling which is of the order of Dread. Man enters into the ethical world through fear and not through love."[34] A later explication puts it: "Man asks himself: since I experience this failure, this sickness, this evil, what sin have I committed?"[35] At this level of the primary symbol, what we are dreading is the experience of defilement as a consequence: "suffering evil clings to doing evil as punishment proceeds ineluctably from defilement."[36]

When Ricœur turns to consider dread, then — standing for an originary experience of fear of harm — he sees the self-reflexive move introducing fault as an ethical implication. He explains:

---

30 Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 3.

31 Paul Ricœur, "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection", *International Philosophical Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (1962): 193.

32 Ricœur, "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection", 210.

33 Paul Ricœur, "'Original Sin': A Study in Meaning", in *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Don Idhe (Northwestern Univ. Press, 1974), 282.

34 Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 30.

35 Ibid., 41.

36 Ibid., 31.

> that dread contains in germ all the later moments, because it conceals within itself the secret of its own passing; for it is already ethical dread and not merely physical fear, dread of a danger which is itself ethical and which, at a higher level of the consciousness of evil, will be the danger of not being able to love any more, the danger of being a dead man in the realm of ends.[37]

Ricœur's analysis is that this is a fundamentally ethical concern with our own failure, perhaps more existentially our inability, to seek the good that strikes at the heart of who we are as individual human persons. "A spiritual death" he describes it, "a diminution of existence, a loss of the personal core of one's being."[38] In this way, fallibility is the "constitutional weakness that makes evil possible,"[39] but dread introduces fault: "because fate belongs to freedom as the non-chosen portion of all our choices, it must be experienced as fault."[40]

This may seem a strange place to begin the consideration of hope in the work of Ricœur, but as Bernard Dauenhauer has observed, the outworking of that dynamic of fault and freedom is that "if fallibility makes human evil possible, it also makes genuinely human goodness, knowledge and achievement possible."[41] Even the limiting choices that one makes that close off other paths, Ricœur is able to articulate hopefully: "in an existential sense: to become oneself is to fail to realize wholeness, which nevertheless remains the end, the dream, the horizon, and that which the Idea of happiness points to."[42]

So fascinatingly, even in the moment of Dread there is a moment of hope. As Peter Kemp has proposed, "by thinking an existential negation to its end, one is brought to an affirmation of existence which [Nabert] calls 'original affirmation.'"[43] Thus this consideration of Dread, introduces the possibility of fault, but therefore also the possibility of right choices. We can see the roots of this insight already in *Fallible Man* where, considering Jean Nabert's

37 Ibid., 30.

38 Ibid., 41.

39 Ricœur, *Fallible Man* (Fordham Univ. Press, 1986), xiii.

40 Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 313.

41 Bernard Dauenhauer, *Paul Ricœur: The Promise and Risk of Politics* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), 62.

42 Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 312.

43 Peter Kemp, "Ricœur between Heidegger and Lévinas: original affirmation between ontological attestation and ethical injunction", *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 21, no. 5-6 (1995): 43.

Eléments pour une éthique[44], Ricœur uncovers that "the avowal of fault is, at the same time, the discovery of freedom."[45] Thus, the assessment of the symbols of evil produces:

> an interpretation in which evil as far as possible is reset within the context of freedom; in which, therefore, evil is an invention of freedom. Reciprocally, an ethical vision of evil is a vision in which freedom is revealed in its depths as power to act and power to be; the freedom that evil supposes is a freedom capable of digression, deviation, subversion, wandering. This mutual "explanation" of evil by freedom and of freedom by evil is the essence of the moral vision of the world and of evil.[46]

Thus the symbols of evil bring to the surface the "fateful aspects," with which Ricœur's work on fallibility is always ultimately concerned: the freedom of the self is not posited as in Cartesian philosophy but rather "in a dialogue with the conditions in which it itself is rooted."[47]

There are two key elements to establish from this brief exploration. Firstly, we begin to see the working out of the relationship with religious discourse in Ricœur's philosophy. He does not reason from religious discourse, but reflects philosophically upon its resources. The cultural resources of religious myth articulate "everything which the believer experiences in a fugitive fashion and confesses in an allusive way... inexpressible in direct and clear language."[48] In this sense it is the myths "*revealing* power concerning the human condition as a whole which constitutes its *revealed* meaning."[49]

Secondly, what is revealed is something radical. Although Ricœur's work here indicates that fear is a kind of originary moment for ethics, hope arises as an originary assertion in the face of that fear. This interplay makes sense of later references by Ricœur to "the fundamental relation of history to violence,"[50] and his acceptance of Hobbes' political anthropology of fear. One cannot approach

---

44 Jean Nabert, *Eléments pour une éthique* (Presses Universitaires de France, 1943). Ricœur would go on to write the Preface to the second edition of the *Eléments* in the same year as he published *L'homme faillible*.

45 Paul Ricœur, *Fallible Man*, xlvii.

46 Ricœur, "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection", 205.

47 Paul Ricœur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary* (Chicago Univ. Press, 1966), 18.

48 Ricœur, "'Original Sin'", 283.

49 Ibid., 284.

50 Paul Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting: Translated by Kathleen Blamey* (Chicago Univ. Press, 2006), 79.

Ricœur's work on the capable human without continuing to place it in relation to this early work on the conditions of its freedom. Still there remains an original affirmation of hope even in these early studies, which we will see transforms Ricœur's thinking in contrast with the Hobbesian solution.

Oneself as Another

In *Oneself as Another*, Ricœur considers the human person in terms of her capacity to speak, to act, to narrate and to impute action to herself, introducing conditions of possibility that already show a more positive framing. At the same time, Ricœur constructs these capacities in terms of self-reflection and inter-subjectivity, mediated by institutions. He thereby introduces an explicitly ethical approach to his continuing concern with human nature. Thus the later studies of this work begin to build up the levels of ethical reasoning that are bound up in the human person in relation with others. Those levels are the ethical aim, the test of the moral norm, and finally practical wisdom.

The ethical aim is the aim of the good life, living well, with and for others, in just institutions, and is marked by the intuitions of self-esteem, solicitude, and the sense of justice.[51] The plurality of teleological visions meets at the test or the "sieve of the norm,"[52] where diverse persons, mediated by institutions, agree on certain limits on moral norms and obligations. The structural conflict appears when Ricœur argues that "a morality of obligation... produces conflictual situations where practical wisdom has no recourse, in our opinion, other than to return to the initial intuition of ethics."[53] Thus practical wisdom is introduced as the moment where these visions and principles meet the judgement of particular situations — the tension between particular and universal.

Practical wisdom is thus a way of deliberatively engaging with potential contradictions and conflicts of morals and ethics in particular situations, by "reawakening the resources of singularity inherent in the aim of the true life."[54] This means returning to the intuition of ethics as for the good life, with and for others, in just institutions and thus shaped by solicitude for the other,

51 For a more thorough reconstruction of these elements of Ricœur's ethics see Amy Daughton, *With and For Others: Developing Ricœur's Ethics of Self using Aquinas's Language of Analogy* (Herder Verlag, 2016).

52 Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago Univ. Press, 1992), 170.

53 Ibid., 240.

54 Ibid.

and a sense of justice. In this way the conflict between ethical and moral in real situations is already being heralded as a genuinely productive one, returning consideration back to the teleological level to find a route through the difficulty. It is for this reason that John Wall can address Ricœur's ethics by emphasising its roots in the Greek *phronêsis* of "acting well in society."[55]

For our exploration of hope and the tragic, we might find Ricœur's practical wisdom tipping toward the hopeful. Indeed, Fred Dallmayr has complained that *phronêsis* enters Ricœur's ethics as a kind of "*deus ex machina*,"[56] easily resolving conflict. However, practical wisdom is not the resolving capstone to a disagreement. Instead it arises at the point which Ricœur would later call "the enigmatic point of the conversion of plurality into hostility."[57] Ricœur turns again to mythic expressions of this intuition, by taking up Sophocles' *Antigone.* This play treats the aftermath of the conflict between Antigone's brothers over rule of Thebes. Their deaths have led to Creon taking the throne and his early act is to refuse to permit burial or mourning for Polynices, one of Antigone's brothers. Antigone insists on performing the rites regardless, and tragedy ensues in the consequent reactions. The play is frequently taken as a classic expression of conflict over incommensurable goods. Civic order versus godly piety proves impossible to resolve and this is used by Ricœur to illustrate "the hubris of practical reason itself."[58]

As noted above, this hesitation regarding too easy a resolution is already at play in the *Symbolism*, where Ricœur observes that even the choices we make freely for ourselves are of a limiting kind. For example, Ricœur asks, "who can realise himself without excluding not only possibilities, but also realities and existences, and consequently without destroying?"[59] Already that level is being indicated in the other mythic utterances that Ricœur treats in a text such as *Antigone*, where:

> [she] and Creon destroy one another, and there is no third force that might mediate their opposition and embrace the good reasons of both. That a

55 John Wall, *Moral Creativity: Paul Ricœur and the Poetics of Possibility* (OUP, 2005), 5.

56 Fred Dallmayr, "Ethics and Public Life: A Critical Tribute to Paul Ricœur", in *Paul Ricœur and Contemporary Moral Thought*, ed. John Wall, William Schweiker and David W. Hall (Routledge, 2002), 225.

57 Paul Ricœur, *Reflections on the Just* (Chicago Univ. Press, 2007), 25.

58 Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 241.

59 Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 312.

> value cannot be realized without the destruction of another value, equally positive — there again is the tragic.[60]

As Robert Piercey has observed, "Tragedy illustrates the conflicts that occur within rationality"[61] and thus tragedy reintroduces the *Symbolism*'s existential concern at the ethical level. As Ricœur emphasises, this clash is of the "one-sidedness of the moral principles which themselves are confronted with the complexity of life,"[62] from which there may simply be no good way out. This is a challenge so fundamental that Ricœur later proposed that his work on this reality "should become the crucial chapter" of his whole ethical project[63].

Yet the route through inevitable conflict is found in the continuing interplay of the tragic with the real hope for the possibility of acting well. Indeed, there is a sense in which tragedy itself offers hope by nourishing our resources for critiquing our own and others' convictions. In that sense, ethical conflict offers "instruction wholly immanent to the tragic itself."[64] The tragic story of *Antigone* introduces us to the idea of conviction — a principled stance — but also to the Chorus's repeated exhortation to "deliberate well."[65]

Throughout his work, Ricœur takes seriously the incompletion of solutions to practical, intransigent problems. No perfect translation exists; no solution for genuinely incommensurable goods is available[66]. Yet it is in the deliberation, in the attempt to translate, that we can learn from the other, rather than collapse into fear of her. This is characteristic of Ricœur's own

60 Ricœur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, 323. But see also amongst others Martha Nussbaum on non-Western examples, such as the *Mahabarata*: Martha Nussbaum, "Ricœur on Tragedy: Teleology, Deontology, Phronesis", in *Paul Ricœur and Contemporary Moral Thought*, ed. John Wall, William Schweiker and David W. Hall (Routledge, 2002).

61 Robert Piercey, "The Role of Greek Tragedy in the Philosophy of Paul Ricœur", *Philosophy Today* 49, no. 1 (2005): 3.

62 Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 249.

63 Paul Ricœur, "Ethics and Human Capability: A Response", in *Paul Ricœur and Contemporary Moral Thought*, ed. John Wall, William Schweiker and David W. Hall (Routledge, 2002), 288.

64 Piercey, "The Role of Greek Tragedy in the Philosophy of Paul Ricœur", 3. An important influence may also have been Karl Jaspers on tragic wisdom: Karl Jaspers, *Von der Wehrweit* (Piper Verlag, 1947), 915–60.

65 Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 247. c.f. Gaëlle Fiasse, "La phronesis dans l'ethique de Paul Ricœur", in *Le jugement pratique*: *Autour de la notion de phronesis*, ed. Danielle Lories and Laura Rizzerio (Vrin, 2008).

66 See Scott-Baumann, *Ricœur and the Negation of Happiness*, which treats the role of the negative throughout Ricœur's work.

philosophical method of dialectic debate, and of keeping that argument open as long as possible.

Moreover, such conflicts can arise even within our own commitments, prompting us to turn to the other to seek to make sense of a vision of the good. Ricœur recalls to the attention of the reader the nature of the ethical ground: rooted in a shared development of self-esteem, solicitude and the sense of justice, made universal principles in the shared test of the norm. This further explicates what a conviction is — a principled stance that arises in a social context and can also be upheld against it. Thus practical wisdom is consistently directed by an ethical intuition that is social and oriented to the other. Hence Scott-Baumann has noted that what characterises practical wisdom is that "it adheres to respect for persons", while it also "attempts to reconcile opposed claims and seeks to avoid arbitrariness."[67] What this requires is that we turn our concern to the individuals within the particular situation, as a singular fulfilment of the ethical concern with the good life, lived with and for others, in just institutions. The treatment of those individuals feeds and shapes the wider social context in which future decisions might be made. This is why Ricœur argues that "in the conflicts to which morality gives rise, only a recourse to the ethical ground against which morality stands out can give rise to the wisdom of judgement in situation."[68] Practical wisdom cleaves to the ethical sensibilities of solicitude and justice in "intractable, nonnegotiable"[69] situations, because, while there are no good solutions, there could be worse solutions.

Practical wisdom is rightly humbled by the detour through tragedy, and can only be considered a limited response to the encounter of conflicting principles. However, Ricœur's conception of it as returning to place the singular situation against the horizon of the envisioned ethical life with and for others, also heralds hope in that vision, and its practical outworking. It is with its outworking understood as political with which the final section is concerned and where we also see the return of religion once again as a contribution to hope, not only the utterances of dread.

67 Alison Scott-Baumann, *Ricœur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion* (Continuum, 2011), 143.
68 Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, 249.
69 Ibid., 248.

IV. HOPE FOR THE POLITICAL

I open this closing segment with Dauenhauer's powerful expression of hope in relation to politics: hope is not an ever-receding horizon, but a "way of bearing the present into the future"[70].

Much of Ricœur's own politically focused work can be seen in his critical essays on political philosophers in *Ideology and Utopia*, and then later in the wake of his ethics. However, for the purpose of this study, I turn to a very early collection, *History and Truth*, originally published in French in 1955. The essays gathered in this work treat issues in history but frequently do so in relation to the questions of power that lie behind both the writing and the reality of historical events. As the translator Charles Kelbley observes in his introduction, the focus on power at the practical level draws out the continuing "ambiguous nature of man,"[71] with which the themes of hope and tragedy have repeatedly been concerned above.

"Power is the central question of politics: Who commands? For whom? Within what limits and under what conditions?"[72] As my earlier allusion to Ricœur's use of Hobbes already indicates, power introduces for him the fear of the other and the violent response. This is a practical expression of the ambiguity Kelbley names. As Dauenhauer aptly describes it, "Power, as the capacity to shape the conduct of men among themselves and in their dealings with nature, is one of man's splendors. And yet this very splendor is prone to evil, prone to destructive exercise."[73] So here at the political level, the existential and ethical limits of human nature return. Many of the essays in *History and Truth* are concerned with confronting this reality of power in the political, understood as requiring a certain coercion, even a certain violence.

Still in the face of this somewhat pessimistic assessment, the citizen is not given over to despair, but is instead confronted with his own culpability in relation to political power, in institutions and practices: "One could not infer a political defeatism on the basis of this lucidity. Such a reflection leads

70 Dauenhauer, *Paul Ricœur*, 92.

71 Paul Ricœur, *History and Truth* (Northwestern Univ. Press, 1968), xvii. Originally published in French in 1955.

72 Ibid., 91.

73 Bernard Dauenhauer, *The Politics of Hope* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 176.

rather to a political vigilance."[74] That vigilance is called to praxis, and even here in the mid-1950s, we can see the beginnings of what Ricœur would more systematically consider in terms of practical wisdom: "discussion is a vital necessity for the State; through discussion it is given orientation and impetus; discussion curbs its tendency to abuse power."[75] It is also this vigilance which Peggy Avez argues Ricœur connects directly with "tentative hope," since hope returns to traditions of politics their own intention to make people free:

> Ricœur restores to the critical project its necessary positivity. To be fruitful, criticism must be compelled to resist the totalization of suspicion, its extension into a vision of the world. By virtue of the emancipatory ambition, inscribed in their own traditions, the critical attitude must also allow hope.[76]

Hope here arises from the critical attitude, as enriching debate may arise from disagreement at the ethical level. Rather than merely abstract, at this political level are concrete resources for reimagining the intention to make people free. Such a re-envisioning:

> [shares] in the particularity of its context of origin. It will be connected to the founding promises of a culture, reinvigorating its unrealized hopes, drawing on possibilities marginalized by historical circumstances, and holding up a mirror to the power arrangements of the current stage. By imagining a different world, utopias reveal a critical, reflective capacity.[77]

We see here the cultural resources for non-religious hope also, found in the moral recognition of broken promises to be fulfilled in the future. Still, Avez's assessment also reminds us that the frontier of political hope returns Ricœur to the resources of religion, which for him name his own particular heritage. Here Ricœur again comes to the limits of what his philosophy can build and turns instead to the narratives of religion to give content to what political hope can mean. For him, walking on two legs, this means stepping from philosophy into a biblically grounded response.

It is in the essay "The Image of God and the Epic of Man" where the originary expressions of the Christian faith community can be seen as a hopeful reinterpretation of politics:

---

74 Ricœur, *History and Truth*, 261.

75 Ibid., 270.

76 Peggy Avez, "Une espérance post-critique ? Enjeux critiques de la conception ricœurienne de l'imaginaire social", Études Ricœuriennes 5, no. 2 (2014): 29. My translation.

77 Junker-Kenny, *Religion and Public Reason*, 196.

> Mankind is not only preserved through the medium of the political sphere, but is also established, elevated, and educated by it. If this education falls outside of the order of redemption, then what does it have to do with the Gospel and why does St Paul speak of it? And if redemption does not include the actual history of men, which is, in art, political, does it not become abstract and unreal?[78]

Here Ricœur gives the history of politics seeking liberation the religious name of redemption. To be clear, he is not evoking Paul of Tarsus in an attempt to render politics itself theological, as if a theocracy was more likely to establish justice. Rather he is identifying within Christian scripture the religious recognition of political institutions, "instituted by God, not when they are clerical, but rather when they are just."[79] Justice must still be sought, and deliberated on, and Ricœur's turn to scripture frames that task as recognisable within a religious understanding of the human person. He observes that,

> we are reluctant to speak of redemption at the level of the political development of mankind, because we have lost one of the fundamental meanings of redemption, namely, the growth of humanity, its coming to maturity, its state of adulthood.[80]

Redemption thus bears a double meaning: eschatological in the Christian hope of the new creation, but also eschatological in Dauenhauer's sense of bearing the present into the future. Hope here becomes a meeting point of the symbolic utterances and visions of religion, and the similarly culturally contingent histories of justice and liberation, sought by politics, both separately and together offering resources for a reimagined life together. The Christian hope of right relationships of love summons political deliberation and action to seek a transformed vision of itself. As Ricœur argues "this utopian ideal is vital for the very destiny of the political order. It gives the political sphere its aim, its tension and, if I may use the term, its hope."[81] Elsewhere, he more sharply articulates this as "reminding [the State] why it exists: to lead men to equality and freedom."[82]

78 Ricœur, *History and Truth*, 122.
79 Ibid., 123.
80 Ibid., 122.
81 Ibid., 123.
82 Ibid., 124.

Of course, other utopian visions exist: that is precisely the dilemma that *Oneself as Another* grappled with through the consideration of practical wisdom. Ricœur is not introducing the Christian understanding of redemption as a transformation of the world in order to argue for its superiority, but to retrieve from it part of the symbolic heritages that shape the plural political space. These particular heritages contribute to the universal, shared level of politics, rather than subsuming it. As Maureen Junker-Kenny has argued, this distinction, "allows for a dialectic in which one [tradition] can correct the other and drive it to a higher level"[83] including between religious and non-religious traditions. Ricœur's continued emphasis on the ethical as the returning emphasis in practical wisdom underscores this. The solution is always hermeneutical.

Thus, the resources of cultural imagination, including religion, represent a needed register of thinking–"a direct functionality for the project of democracy"[84]–which sits at and beyond the very limits of philosophical reasoning.

> In the broad sense of the word, these images of reconciliation are *myths*, not in the positivistic sense of legend or fable, but in the phenomenological sense of religion, in the sense of a meaningful story of the destiny of the whole human race... The imagination, insofar as it has a mytho-poetic function, is also the seat of profound workings which govern the decisive changes in our visions of the world. Every *real* conversion is first a revolution at the level of our directive images. By changing his imagination, man alters his existence.[85]

V. CONCLUSION

It would be easy to follow the thread of hope through Ricœur's work into complacency, casting him as a fundamentally irenic thinker, erasing the real tragedy of moral conflict. In fact hope only makes sense as a confrontation with real difficulty, perhaps the "impossibly difficult"[86]. While on one hand we are rightly reminded by Dauenhauer that "political critique must never

83 Junker-Kenny, *Religion and Public Reason*, 298.
84 Ibid., 299.
85 Ricœur, *History and Truth*, 127.
86 Scott-Baumann, *Ricœur and the Negation of Happiness*, 23.

fail to recognize that the possibility of great political projects for human betterment is inseparable from guilt", yet we can also conclude, like him, that "the appropriate response is one of hope."[87] We have seen this interplay, of hope as the response to dread, to tragedy, to the limits and conditions of human freedom, mapped right through Ricœur's work, in both the "fallible" and the "capable" periods of his consideration of the human person. The symbolic resources of religion and engagement with the other offer meaningfulness to these limits, both the hope and the dread, articulating the existential fear but also replenishing our political imagination.

Where Ricœur concludes, in his sprawling, diverse philosophical projects, is that it is ultimately up to us to choose hope, to reject the Hobbesian fear. Although politics remains a discourse and a practice bounded by tragedy and hope, it is hope which represents the fulfilment of the conditions of our freedom, and it is hope which represents the imaginative resources that seek a way out of the tragic conflict. In this way, "Hope is not a theme that comes after other themes, an idea that closes the system, but an impulse that opens the system, that breaks the closure of the system; it is a way of opening what was unduly closed."[88]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Avez, Peggy. 2014. "Une espérance post-critique ? Enjeux critiques de la conception ricœurienne de l'imaginaire social". *Études Ricœuriennes / Ricœur Studies* 5, no. 2: 23–34. doi:10.5195/errs.2014.262.

Dallmayr, Fred. 2002. "Ethics and Public Life: A Critical Tribute to Paul Ricœur". In *Paul Ricœur and Contemporary Moral Thought*, edited by John Wall, William Schweiker and David W. Hall, 213–32. New York, NY: Routledge.

Dauenhauer, Bernard. 1986. *The Politics of Hope*. New York, NY: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

—. 1998. *Paul Ricœur: The Promise and Risk of Politics*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.

Daughton, Amy. 2016. *With and For Others: Developing Ricœur's Ethics of Self using Aquinas's Language of Analogy*. Fribourg: Herder Verlag & Academic Press Fribourg.

87 Dauenhauer, *Paul Ricœur*, 32.

88 Ricœur, "Hope and the Structure of Philosophical Systems", 211.

Fiasse, Gaëlle. 2008. "La phronesis dans l'ethique de Paul Ricœur". In *Le jugement pratique: Autour de la notion de phronesis*, edited by Danielle Lories and Laura Rizzerio, 349–60. Paris: Vrin.

—, ed. 2008. *Paul Ricœur: De l'homme faillible à l'homme capable*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Greisch, Jean. 2009. *Fehlbarkeit und Fähigkeit: Die philosophische Anthropologie Paul Ricœurs*. Münster: LIT Verlag.

Huskey, Rebecca K. 2009. *Ricœur on Hope: Expecting the Good*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Idhe, Don, ed. 1974. *The Conflict of Interpretations*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press.

Jaspers, Karl. 1947. *Von der Wehrweit*. München: Piper Verlag.

Jervolino, Domenico. 2003. "The Unity of Paul Ricœur's Work: l'homme capable". In *Between Suspicion and Sympathy: Paul Ricœur's Unstable Equilibrium*, edited by Andrzej Wierciński, 202–16. Toronto: Hermeneutic Press.

Junker-Kenny, Maureen. 2014. *Religion and Public Reason: A Comparison of the Positions of John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas and Paul Ricœur*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Junker-Kenny, Maureen, and Peter Kenny, eds. 2004. *Memory, Narrativity, Self and the Challenge to Think God: The Reception within Theology of the Recent Work of Paul Ricœur*. Münster: LIT Verlag.

Kemp, Peter. 1995. "Ricœur between Heidegger and Lévinas: original affirmation between ontological attestation and ethical injunction". *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 21, no. 5-6: 41–61. doi:10.1177/0191453795021005-605.

Mandry, Christoph. 2004. "The Relationship between Philosophy and Theology in the Recent Work of Paul Ricœur". In *Memory, Narrativity, Self and the Challenge to Think God: The Reception within Theology of the Recent Work of Paul Ricœur*, edited by Maureen Junker-Kenny and Peter Kenny, 63–77. Münster: LIT Verlag.

Nabert, Jean. 1943. *Eléments pour une éthique*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Nussbaum, Martha. 2002. "Ricœur on Tragedy: Teleology, Deontology, Phronesis". In *Paul Ricœur and Contemporary Moral Thought*, edited by John Wall, William Schweiker and David W. Hall, 264–78. New York, NY: Routledge.

Piercey, Robert. 2005. "The Role of Greek Tragedy in the Philosophy of Paul Ricœur". *Philosophy Today* 49, no. 1: 3–13. doi:10.5840/philtoday200549159.

Reagan, Charles E. 1991. "Interview avec Paul Ricœur". *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 3, no. 3: 155–72. doi:10.5195/jffp.1991.33.

Ricœur, Paul. 1960. *Philosophie de la volonté: Finitude et Culpabilité II. La symbolique du mal.* Paris: Aubier.

—. 1962. "The Hermeneutics of Symbols and Philosophical Reflection". *International Philosophical Quarterly* 2, no. 2: 191–218. doi:10.5840/ipq19622210.

—. 1966. *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Univ. Press.

—. 1967. *The Symbolism of Evil*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

—. 1968. *History and Truth*. Chicago, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press.

—. 1974. "Freedom in the Light of Hope: Translated by Robert Sweeney". In *The Conflict of Interpretations*, edited by Don Idhe, 401–24. Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press.

—. 1974. "'Original Sin': A Study in Meaning". In *The Conflict of Interpretations*, edited by Don Idhe, 269–314. Evanston, IL: Northwestern Univ. Press.

—. 1974. "Philosophy and Religious Language". *The Journal of Religion* 54, no. 1: 71–85. doi:10.1086/486374.

—. 1986. *Fallible Man*. New York, NY: Fordham Univ. Press.

—. 1992. *Oneself as Another*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Univ. Press.

—. 1995. "Hope and the Structure of Philosophical Systems". In *Figuring the Sacred Religion, Narrative and Imagination*, edited by Mark Wallace, 203–16. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press.

—. 1998. *Critique and Conviction, Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay*. Oxford: Polity Press.

—. 2002. "Ethics and Human Capability: A Response". In *Paul Ricœur and Contemporary Moral Thought*, edited by John Wall, William Schweiker and David W. Hall, 279–90. New York, NY: Routledge.

—. 2006. *Memory, History, Forgetting: Translated by Kathleen Blamey*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Univ. Press.

—. 2007. *Reflections on the Just*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Univ. Press.

Ricœur, Paul and questioners. 2004. "Roundtable Discussion". In *Memory, Narrativity, Self and the Challenge to Think God: The Reception within Theology of the Recent Work of Paul Ricœur*, edited by Maureen Junker-Kenny and Peter Kenny, 202–16. Münster: LIT Verlag.

Scott-Baumann, Alison. 2011. *Ricœur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion*. London: Continuum.

—. 2013. *Ricœur and the Negation of Happiness*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Wall, John. 2005. *Moral Creativity: Paul Ricœur and the Poetics of Possibility*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Wall, John, William Schweiker, and David W. Hall, eds. 2002. *Paul Ricœur and Contemporary Moral Thought*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Wallace, Mark, ed. Paul Ricœur. 1995. *Figuring the Sacred Religion, Narrative and Imagination*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press.

RELIGION FOR NATURALISTS AND THE MEANING OF BELIEF

Natalja Deng
Yonsei University

Abstract. This article relates the philosophical discussion on naturalistic religious practice to Tim Crane's *The Meaning of Belief: Religion from an Atheist's Point of View*, in which he claims that atheists can derive no genuine solace from religion. I argue that Crane's claim is a little too strong. There is a sense in which atheists can derive solace from religion and that fact is worth acknowledging (whether or not this counts as 'genuine' solace).

I. INTRODUCTION

There are naturalists who feel an affinity with some religion, perhaps because they have been brought up in it, or perhaps because they are close to people who belong to it, or for some other reason. This phenomenon raises some interesting philosophical questions. How should we think of the role religious doctrines play in religion, and to what extent can those who reject religious beliefs enter into aspects of the religious life? Thinking about these leads one to consider the prior question of what it is that demarcates religion from other endeavors. Talk of 'naturalistic religious practice' implies both that there is an intelligible distinction between naturalism and religion in theory, and that there is some middle ground between the two in practice.

The aim of this article is to relate the philosophical discussion on naturalistic religious practice to Tim Crane's conception of religion and to his claim that atheists can derive no genuine solace from religion. I'll argue that there is a sense in which atheists can derive solace from religion, and that that fact is worth acknowledging (whether or not this counts as 'genuine' solace).

The main aim of *The Meaning of Belief* is to correct what Crane sees as shortcomings in the New Atheists' conception of religion (where by 'New Atheists', he

PP. 157–174
DOI: 10.24204/EJPR.V11I3.3034
AUTHOR: NMDENG@GMAIL.COM

means such writers as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, and A. C. Grayling).[1] As will become clear, I find Crane's conception of religion interesting and accurate to a large extent (I say a bit more about what I mean by this in section 3). But I'd like to emphasize that the value of the book as a corrective measure to the New Atheist movement is not my topic here; i.e. I'm not discussing the extent to which Crane's critique of the New Atheists succeeds. What follows is intended to be compatible with the New Atheists' writings containing a wealth of important insights. I'm commenting merely on the relation between Crane's conception of religion and naturalistic religious practice.

Let me start with some terminological remarks. By 'naturalism' I mean the view that there are no supernatural aspects to reality. Naturalism implies atheism, which is the claim that the theistic God does not exist. By 'theism', I mean the view that there is a God who is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent, who created the world, and who is still actively involved in the world. I won't attempt to define 'supernatural', but I mean to include at least all claims about entities like gods or angels, and/or about the actions of such entities, like creation, miracles, or salvation, and/or about states of affairs involving holiness or heaven or hell.

Section 1 outlines Crane's conception of religion and his critical remarks on the possibility of 'atheistic religion'. Section 2 develops a version of religious fictionalism that can function as a basis for naturalistic religious practice, defends it from objections and recommends it over an alternative version. Section 3 returns to Crane's position. The upshot will be that there is a sense in which naturalists (including atheists) can derive solace from religion, and that this sense is all the more significant if one takes on board Crane's claim that religious belief is inherently paradoxical, which I'll provide some support for.

II. THE RELIGIOUS IMPULSE AND IDENTIFICATION

Crane acknowledges that one may well wonder at the outset what is meant by 'religion'. He points out that few things can be rigorously defined, and that there is likely to be no single essence of religion, but proposes that we think of the phenomenon as follows. Religion is "a systematic and practical attempt

1 Tim Crane, *The Meaning of Belief: Religion from an Atheist's Point of View* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2017).

by human beings to find meaning in the world and their place in it, in terms of their relationship to something transcendent".[2] One of these transcendent entities is the God of Western theism.

This is the phenomenon Crane is offering a conception of. The conception has two key ingredients: the religious impulse, and identification. By 'religious impulse', Crane means a belief (or the tendency towards forming a belief) with a certain complex content. Quoting William James, he says this is the belief 'that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto'.[3] It's the belief that "*this can't be all there is; there must be something more to the world*", something that gives life as a whole meaning.[4] He also calls this belief in the transcendent. This belief gives the believer's life meaning because it is a belief in an unseen order, alignment with which makes life as a whole meaningful. So it's a belief about what the world is like, but one with important practical implications, regarding the behaviors that are likely to produce alignment with that unseen order.

Crane thinks this notion of the religious impulse differs in several key ways from the New Atheists' understanding of religious belief. First, the content of the religious impulse is not intended as a hypothesis in the scientific sense. It's not intended to provide an explanation by fitting an explanandum into a general pattern, and/or by relating it to something simpler and more intelligible.[5] Secondly, according to Crane, the content of the religious impulse is inherently mysterious. There are inbuilt limits to how intelligible that unseen order can become to us. (I return to these claims in section 3.)

The second ingredient in Crane's conception of religion is the element of identification, which he takes to be about religious practice. He takes the key features of religious practice to be repetition, i.e. the historical dimension of religious practice, and a social dimension, i.e. the fact that one typically engages in these actions *with* other people. 'Identification' is intended to stand for both of these features.

2 Crane, *The Meaning of Belief*, 6.

3 William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (Longmans, Green and Co, 1902), 53.

4 James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 38.

5 For some worries about the view of science implicit in this, see Arif Ahmed, "The Meaning of Belief: Religion from an Atheist's Point of View, by Tim Crane", *Mind* 127, no. 508 (2018): 1265.

Note that Crane prefers talk of the transcendent to talk of the supernatural. At least he rejects the New Atheists' use of the term 'supernatural' as at once too sophisticated ("religious believers need not operate with the clear-cut idea of the supernatural attributed to them by today's philosophers and scientists") and too simplistic ("the idea of God is not simply the idea of a supernatural agent who made the world").[6] But as I'm using 'supernatural', it is not at all clear-cut (though useful nonetheless). Moreover, while theism is, amongst other things, a thesis about a supernatural agent, this is compatible with there being more to its content, as well as with the possibility that its content is quite complex (see section 3).

Consider now Crane's stance on the possibility of naturalistic religious practice. Even though it is not his main concern, Crane touches on this topic at various points in the book. For example, when commenting on Ronald Dworkin and Alain de Botton, he makes two points. The first is that whatever each of these authors is proposing, it shouldn't be called Religion (as in Dworkin's *Religion without God*, or De Botton's *Religion for Atheists)*, since neither proposal involves the religious impulse, one of the key ingredients of religion.[7] I agree: what these authors are proposing involves a rejection of the supernatural (and of the transcendent). That feature will make what they are proposing importantly different from the original phenomenon. And it does matter that we not stretch terms ('religion') beyond the limits of usefulness. So what these writers are proposing can't literally be an atheistic religion; nor could anyone else propose anything that is best described as such.

Crane's second point, though, is the following:

> I share these thinkers' opposition to the New Atheists. But I don't think an atheist can find genuine solace in religion. There are things to admire in the religious traditions in the world, but it is one thing to admire aspects of a religion and another to try to adopt its practices without believing its doctrines.[8]

While there may be much to disagree with in De Botton's and Dworkin's proposals (who are, after all, Crane's targets in this passage), it is worth situating these remarks with respect to the recent philosophical literature on the topic.

---

6 Crane, *The Meaning of Belief*, 12–13.

7 Ronald Dworkin, *Religion without God* (Harvard Univ. Press, 2013); Alain Botton, *Religion for Atheists* (Penguin, 2012).

8 Crane, *The Meaning of Belief*, 23.

When we zoom into the practical grey area between religion and naturalism, we do find room for naturalistic religious practice.

I should note right away that Crane may not disagree with anything that follows, since he allows that there can be people who participate in religious practices without any sense of the transcendent, i.e. without the religious impulse.[9] He also suggests that many Jews and Christians are deeply embedded in their respective religious traditions, while nevertheless lacking what Thomas Nagel calls 'the religious temperament', which is the need for an aspiration "to live not merely the life of the creature one is, but in some sense to participate through it in the life of the universe as a whole".[10] For Crane, these Jews and Christians are religious in a sense, even though they lack a religious temperament, and even though many of them also lack the religious impulse.

What, then, is the sense in which they are religious? And, is it really the case that none of them can find solace in religion, when "[i]t is of supreme importance in their lives that they are [for example] Jews, that what they are doing is what their parents and grandparents did, and that their lives would not make any real sense without it"?[11]

III. RELIGIOUS FICTIONALISM

To get clearer on what is available to naturalists here, let's consider the position known as fictionalism, which has been deployed in a variety of philosophical domains. One particular variety of fictionalism will be most relevant to our purposes.[12]

9 Crane, *The Meaning of Belief*, 106.

10 Thomas Nagel, *Secular Philosophy and The Religious Temperament* (OUP, 2010), 5.

11 Crane, *The Meaning of Belief*, 52.

12 For some recent applications of fictionalism to the religious domain, see e.g. Peter Lipton, "Science and Religion: The Immersion Solution", in *Realism and Religion*: *Philosophical and Theological Perspectives*, ed. Michael Scott and Andrew Moore (Taylor and Francis, 2007); Benjamin Cordry, "A Critique of Religious Fictionalism", *Religious Studies* 46, no. 1 (2010); Andrew Eshleman, "Religious Fictionalism Defended: Reply to Cordry", *Religious Studies* 46, no. 1 (2010); Victoria Harrison, "Philosophy of Religion, Fictionalism, and Religious Diversity", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 68, no. 1-3 (2010); Christopher Jay, "The Kantian Moral Hazard Argument for Religious Fictionalism", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 75, no. 3 (2014); Natalja Deng, "Religion for Naturalists", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 78, no. 2 (2015); Robin Le Poidevin, "Playing the God Game: The Perils of Religious Fictionalism", in *Alternative Concepts of God*: *Essays on the Metaphysics*

Take an approach to the language in a given domain that combines the following three claims. (1) The sentences in that domain are truth-apt (they can be true or false) and ordinarily express beliefs; (2) at least some of them are about what they seem to be about — that is, they are not entirely figurative or metaphorical; but (3) our attitudes towards these sentences need not be truth-normed. Although the sentences in question purport to describe reality, our attitude towards them need not depend on their truth or falsity. Our attitude can be one of *non-doxastic acceptance*. This is supposed to be a distinctive kind of state of commitment that doesn't involve belief. The value involved in believing sentences in this domain is independent of whether our attitudes are non-doxastic. Elsewhere, I have called this view 'Weak Evaluative Fictionalism' or WEF.[13] (Note that religious WEF can also be explored in connection with agnosticism. But the focus here will be on its uses for understanding naturalistic (including atheistic) religious practice.) I will call the conjunction of (1) and (2) a realist approach to the language in a given domain.[14]

In the background of religious WEF and of realism about religious language, is the assumption that there are such things as sentences with a religious subject matter, and that it makes sense to enquire into their meaning. Examples of religious sentences might include 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son', 'He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead', or 'God is our refuge and strength'. This basic assumption contrasts with approaches such as those of William Alston and (according to some) Ludwig Wittgenstein.[15] For example, Wittgenstein in some places implies that the meaning of religious utterances ('There will be a Last Judgement') is so radically context-dependent that their meaning cannot be approached by thinking about the meaning of religious sentences. He contends that when a religious person says 'There will be a Last Judgement' and a non-religious person says 'There will not be a Last Judgement', they do not contradict one another.

of the Divine, ed. Andrei A. Buckareff and Yujin Nagasawa (OUP, 2016); Finlay Malcolm, "Can Fictionalists Have Faith?", *Religious Studies* 54, no. 2 (2018); Michael Scott and Finlay Malcolm, "Religious Fictionalism", *Philosophy Compass* (forthcoming).

13 Deng, "Religion for Naturalists".

14 Some authors include in the definition of a 'realist' semantics for a language the claim that some of the sentences in question are true. As I'm using the term, that is not part of it.

15 See Michael Scott, "Religious Language", *Philosophy Compass* 5, no. 6 (2010).

Any plausible approach to the semantics of religious language has to take into account the considerable role that context plays in determining the meaning of religious utterances. Nonetheless, it seems plausible that religious sentences, like other sentences, have some stable semantic content. After all, we seem able to communicate about religious matters, and to voice diverging opinions about them.

Realism about religious language also opposes expressivist and reductionist approaches to the semantic project by maintaining that religious sentences are ordinarily used to express beliefs (rather than merely plans, attitudes, or emotions), and that at least some religious sentences are about what they seem to be about. At least some religious sentences are not just codified ways of talking about aspects of the natural or social world. WEF's distinctive addition to this is the claim that the value associated with the religious domain is independent of whether we believe the sentences in question, or merely non-doxastically accept them.

That can sound quite incredible. Consider such values as solace or hope. How can the naturalist derive any such thing from non-doxastically accepting religious sentences? Some of these sentences state that there is reason to think that there is an after-life, during which one will see one's loved ones again. Similarly, some others state that there is a divine being who guides all that happens in the universe, and who deeply cares for each of us. If truth and falsity make no difference to the acceptability of these sentences, then when do they matter? Surely the values in question are inaccessible to naturalists.

One reaction one might have to these questions is to weaken religious WEF somewhat. Perhaps not *all* of the value accessible to religious believers is independent of belief, but some of it is. The problem with this weaker form of religious WEF is one that also afflicts the stronger one: it's unclear how one can non-doxastically accept anything. Non-doxastic acceptance is intended to be acceptance in all 'ordinary', 'non-critical' contexts. Roughly, the idea is that as long as one is not doing philosophy, or otherwise critically probing one's beliefs, one assents to the sentences in question, but in 'critical contexts', one dissents. Unfortunately, it is doubtful that there is a principled distinction between 'critical' and 'non-critical' contexts.[16] All we can say is that in any

16 See Zoltán G. Szabó, "Critical Study of Mark Eli Kalderon (ed.) Fictionalism in Mataphysics", *Noûs* 45, no. 2 (2011).

given context, a variety of considerations are potentially relevant, and we usually choose to bracket some but not others. Since non-doxastic acceptance is defined as assent in all but 'critical' context, this is a serious problem for WEF, even in a weakened form. This means that WEF does not achieve its aim: it doesn't really offer a principled way for naturalists to use religious language, in a way that allows them to live just as if the religion were true. Assuming that we want to avoid periodic wavering, hypocrisy, and mental fragmentation, we have not yet found a viable basis for naturalistic religious practice.

But there is such a basis. If we want, we can still call this a version of religious fictionalism (though not of WEF).[17] A note of caution before we proceed: what follows is a description of a fictionalist basis on which naturalists *can* engage in religious practice. The kind of naturalist I'm addressing feels an affinity with some religions, or with a particular religion. This suggests that in some sense they think religious practice has some value. For my purposes, we can just take this to mean that they think religious practice achieves something that *they* value, such as inspiration, comfort, personal or spiritual or moral growth, a sense of purpose, or a sense of community. So I'll assume, for the purposes of this discussion, that such things are available to some people by religious means. I won't, however, assume anything about whether religion also has dis-value, or about whether that dis-value outweighs any value it may have, either in the case of believers or even in the case of the naturalist practitioner I'll describe. A fortiori, it's no part of my proposal that naturalists who don't feel such an affinity should become religious practitioners.

Unlike (perhaps more properly so-called) fictionalist positions in many other domains, the version that best fits the religious domain does not make use of the notion of non-doxastic acceptance. It does not aim to allow the naturalist to live a life that is indistinguishable from a believer's in all but 'critical contexts'. Instead, it simply emphasizes the possibility of treating a religious tradition and its texts like a story, and of engaging in a game of make-believe.[18] For example, when taking part in a religious service, one immerses

17 It was pointed out by referees that it makes sense to retain the 'fictionalist' label for the view I'm proposing. I wouldn't insist on the label though.

18 Richard Joyce, when advocating fictionalism about morality, talks of a spectrum of stances (Richard Joyce, *The Myth of Morality* (CUP, 2001), Ch. 7). At the near end of the spectrum, there is the stance we all take with respect to fiction, for example when we tell a story or otherwise engage with one. At the far end, there is non-doxastic acceptance. The position

oneself in a story, and becomes an actor within the fictional world of that religion's world view. As Le Poidevin has pointed out, the mere experience of the religious service can have the power to engage one's emotions,

> to the extent that a religious service is capable of being an intense experience. The immediate object of our emotions is the fictional God, but there is a wider object, and that is the collection of real individuals in our lives. In the game of make-believe (for example, the Christian one), we are presented with a series of dramatic images: an all- powerful creator, who is able to judge our moral worth, to forgive us or to condemn, who appears on Earth in human form and who willingly allows himself to be put to death. What remains, when the game of make-believe is over, is an awareness of our responsibilities for ourselves and others, of the need to pursue spiritual goals, and so on.[19]

In a similar way, the naturalist can take part in a variety of religious rituals and forms of worship.

One of the objections often raised for fictionalism in this and other domains is this: isn't the fictionalist practitioner constantly expressing beliefs they don't have, and thereby lying to those around them? This can seem particularly worrying in the religious case, given the intimate role that religion plays in many believers' lives. But it's important to keep in mind that on the version of fictionalism proposed, the naturalist is not acting just as if the religion were true. They are not hiding their rejection of the supernatural. Rather, they are consciously and transparently engaging with a religious tradition by treating it and its texts as a story. Religious practices are for them tools for creating certain atmospheres - namely ones that will instill a sense of something sacred.

Le Poidevin defends a different form of religious fictionalism from the one proposed here. His version, like WEF, is more susceptible to the objection discussed in the previous paragraph. On Le Poidevin's version, the truth-conditions of religious sentences are as follows: "any given [religious sentence] *p* is true if and only if it is true in the theological fiction that *p*".[20] Le Poidevin thinks that this version, involving a 'fictionalist semantics', is preferable to the one advocated here, which accepts a realist semantics and adds talk of a distinctive fictionalist attitude of make-believe:

I'm describing is located on the near end of Joyce's spectrum, near more familiar activities of make-believe (see Deng, "Religion for Naturalists").

19 Robin Le Poidevin, *Arguing for Atheism: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Routledge, 1996), 119.

20 Le Poidevin, *Arguing for Atheism*, 178.

> [I]t is not clear that the attitude is rationally sustainable independently of the corresponding semantics. On the other hand, treating theological statements as if they were true clearly fits comfortably with the supposition that they are in fact fictional. That, arguably, is the purer position.[21]

Thus, according to Le Poidevin, it makes more sense to combine the fictionalist attitude of make-believe with a 'fictionalist semantics'.

I have two related worries about this. The first is that, as Le Poidevin is no doubt aware, the fictionalist semantics proposed (according to which e.g. 'God gave his only Son' is true if and only if 'according to Christianity/the theological fiction, God gave his only Son') fares rather badly as a semantics for the religious sentences as used by believers. This is not what religious believers mean when they use religious sentences. Religious believers are making statements about the world, not about the theological fiction advocated by their religious institution. Le Poidevin's position seems to be that those who take a realist view of the semantics (including religious believers, but also atheists and agnostics) are right about the semantics of religious sentences as used by them, while fictionalists are right about the semantics of religious sentences as used by themselves.[22]

But that's a bit strange. Suppose a religious fictionalist (of the kind Le Poidevin is interested in) encounters some non-fictionalists, either in the context of a religious service, or while talking about religion. Of course, the fictionalist can use the religious sentences to mean something different from everyone else, but presumably they can't deny that they understand what the others are using them to mean. After all, there is nothing unclear about using the sentence 'God loves us' to say that God loves us (as opposed to that according to some theological fiction, God loves us). Given that the fictionalist understands this, it seems odd to decide to ignore this straightforward meaning and instead use the same sentence to mean something entirely different. Why not use a different sentence (such as, 'according to some theological fiction, God loves us') to mean that according to some theological fiction, God loves us? This worry relates back to the objection discussed above. It's hard to imagine why the fictionalist would adopt such a non-standard semantics, other than for the reason that they want to blend in and give the impression

21 Le Poidevin, *Arguing for Atheism*, 181.
22 Le Poidevin, "Playing the God Game", 182.

of more agreement than there really is. Better to accept the realist semantics, and just to adopt a fictionalist attitude (of make-believe) — which, after all, is what really matters to Le Poidevin's fictionalist too.

The second worry is more serious, because it concerns the very ability of Le Poidevin's fictionalist to adopt the fictionalist attitude in question. On the 'fictionalist semantics' proposed, there seems to be no room for a fictionalist attitude. 'God gave his only Son' is simply true, on that semantics, because it means that according to the Christian theological fiction, God gave his only Son. So there is nothing for the fictionalist to adopt a fictionalist attitude towards: it wouldn't make sense to *make-believe* that according to Christianity, God gave his only Son. That's just something we all believe and know to be the case.[23]

Let's return to the version of fictionalism proposed here. There is even the possibility of a fictionalist version of prayer. Elsewhere I have called this 'make-believe prayer'.[24] Le Poidevin too emphasizes this possibility. He concedes that there are kinds of prayer that are not available to the fictionalist, for example petitionary prayer (asking God for things) or seeking companionship with God. But he suggests that the fictionalist may still be able to use prayer to align their will with what they imagine would be God's will. Suppose the idea of God represents for them an ideal of perfect love.

> [The fictionalist] might find it helpful to voice, in her head, her own thoughts, as if they were addressed to another person, and imagine what someone motivated only by love would say in response. And, without there being any actually hallucinatory experience, answers may come to her as if they did not have their origin in her own thoughts. Phenomenologically, this could have a great deal in common with the experience of prayer that many realists have.[25]

It might seem strange to want to dedicate feelings of gratitude or humility to a being one believes is not there. But if one resonates with the idea of an all powerful, all-loving creator who is able to hear and listen to one's concern, then it can make experiential sense to momentarily dedicate feelings of gratitude, or humility, to that fictional God. In Petru Dumitriu's words: "I cast my

23 Scott and Malcolm, "Religious Fictionalism" point to further problems with Le Poidevin's version of religious fictionalism. Actually, as they also note, many of these problems are not specific to the application of this kind of fictionalism to the religious domain.

24 Deng, "Religion for Naturalists".

25 Le Poidevin, "Playing the God Game", 187.

gratitude into the void, I want to call out in the void. If there is no one there, I want to address myself to that strange absence".[26]

IV. MYSTERY AND OPTIMISM

One can acknowledge the possibility of meaningful naturalist religious practice without losing sight of the distinction between religion and naturalism.

Recall the two key ingredients of religion according to Crane, the religious impulse, and identification (repetition and the social dimension). The religious impulse is a belief in the transcendent, an unseen order, alignment with which gives our lives meaning, while "[t]he element of identification consists in the fact that religion involves institutions to which believers belong and practices in which they participate".[27]

I said at the outset that Crane's conception seems accurate to a large extent. What do I mean by 'a large extent'? Here is one general point about the scope of what follows. Consider Arif Ahmed's review of Crane. Ahmed *is* commenting on the extent which Crane's critique of the New Atheists succeeds, and he argues that it does not. Interestingly, he prefaces his criticism with the following:

> I can imagine many humane and thoughtful Jews, Christians and Muslims finding in this book an almost unimprovable articulation of their own approaches to faith. I myself have learnt, and I expect many atheists will learn, much more than I thought could intelligibly be said about what religious belief could and perhaps should be. What it is, is another question.[28]

To my mind, the first sentence implies that Crane has an accurate conception of the religion practiced by some people, namely those humane and thoughtful theists. I take myself to be focusing on just them; this is the scope of what follows. Let's call their version of theism humane theism. It might be nice to be able to offer some empirically grounded estimates of the size of this group, but I won't attempt that here. If it turns out to be a much smaller group than I imagine, so that this is a large concession towards the New Atheists, so be it. What follows is just about humane theism.

---

26 Petru Dumitriu, *To the Unknown God (Au Dieu Inconnu)* (Seabury Press, 1982), 106.

27 Crane, *The Meaning of Belief*, 23.

28 Ahmed, "The Meaning of Belief", 1261.

Let's now return to Crane's discussion of 'atheistic religion'. I said that he's right to point out that there can be no such thing. Dworkin's proposal lacks both elements of religion. De Botton's proposal aims to make room for the element of identification, but it leaves no place for the religious impulse — unsurprisingly, since that impulse is a belief the naturalist rejects. There can't literally be a naturalistic religion (nor an atheistic religion); a naturalist can't take over religion and its practices without altering its nature.

But we can see now that Crane's overall assessment isn't right: there *is* a sense in which a naturalist can find solace in religion (that is, in naturalistic religious practice). Not in the sense of the conviction, or even hope, of an afterlife or of an unseen order that provides for us and sees to it that justice is done in the end.[29] Nor in the sense of knowing, or even hoping, that a divine being is listening to and caring for one's concerns in the present. What is available has to do not with (degrees of) belief, but merely with thoughts: the very thought of such an unseen transcendent order can elicit a positive emotional reaction. This is in principle no more puzzling than thoughts of disaster (such as one's house burning down) eliciting negative emotional reactions, even if one knows that these thoughts have nothing to do with reality. And though the reactions are momentary, one can choose to elicit them repeatedly. Compare this also to aesthetic experience. Music too elicits reactions only in a given moment, but people choose to consume it repeatedly.

Naturalistic religious practice, then, can involve both identification (in both the historical and social senses), and some connection to the (content of the) religious impulse. Though a naturalist rejects the belief in an unseen order, they can choose to repeatedly entertain thoughts of it, and to let specific religious stories about the nature of that unseen order engage them emotionally. Moreover, the naturalist practitioner can spend as much time within the religious game of make-believe as they choose. They can even include ideas and practices from different religious traditions. Theirs is a sui generis form of engagement with religion (though one that I think already exists).

29 I think it is possible, without irrationality, to wish for *p* while disbelieving *p*; but I do not think the same holds for hoping that *p* while disbelieving *p* (cf Malcolm, "Can Fictionalists Have Faith?", 228; for further discussion see Einar Duenger Bohn, "The Logic of Hope: A Defense of the Hopeful", *Religious Studies* 54, no. 1 (2018)). Moreover, I do not think the naturalist practitioner necessarily needs to hope or wish that the religious story be true. One need not want a story to be true in order to find aspects of it beautiful or otherwise engaging.

One could now insist that all this doesn't amount to solace in a substantial sense. Without getting distracted by quibbles over what counts as 'genuine' solace, the important point is that one shouldn't be too quick to dismiss the value of what is available to some naturalists in this way. This becomes even clearer if one reflects on what exactly is available to the believer at various points during their lives. Crane points out that the religious impulse is rather more complex than is often assumed. Talk of the afterlife is just as often an expression of a fragile hope as it is an expression of a comforting conviction. Crane also describes what he calls the essential paradoxicality of the content of the religious impulse, quoting Alfred N. Whitehead:

> Religion is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind and within the passing flux of immediate things; something which is real, and yet waiting to be realized; something which is a remote possibility and yet the greatest of present facts; something that gives meaning to all that passes and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final good and yet is beyond all reach; something which is the ultimate ideal, and the hopeless quest.[30]

This point seems to me relevant to the question of how significant we should take naturalist religious practice to be, because it refines our picture of what is available to the believer. It's not just that the believer struggles with maintaining belief in the face of suffering, though that is a very real struggle.[31] It's that, at least in many religious traditions, the very nature of the transcendent — and with it, the very nature of what it is one does when engaging with ideas about the transcendent — has to remain mysterious. It's not just beyond human understanding how, if God exists, the world can contain the suffering it contains. Ultimately, it's beyond human understanding even *what it would be for God to exist*. And when that is part of a story, the value of engaging with that story becomes to an additional degree independent of belief or hope. Part of what matters in religious practice is simply opening oneself up to the feeling of existential uncertainty, by repeatedly engaging with the very idea of the transcendent.[32]

30 Alfred N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (Free Press, 1967), 192.

31 This struggle is probably one that is not accessible to the naturalist (though see Le Poidevin, "Playing the God Game", 187, for the suggestion of a fictionalist counterpart).

32 It might be objected here that not all religious traditions involve mysticism, and that their interpretation should not overemphasize this element of mystery and paradoxicality. Crane an-

One reason some naturalists might want to do this is that they too may include mystery somewhere in their world view, even if they don't connect that mystery to anything transcendent. That is, the world according to a naturalist may be mysterious in some secular sense (as Crane himself seems to suggest in places).[33] If in addition, they find some religious story a beautiful reaction to that mystery, then they too can appreciate that story. But even if a naturalist finds no place for anything worth calling 'mystery' in their world view, if they feel an affinity with some religious tradition, they can still engage in that tradition's practices, and experience some of the same sense of the sacred as a believer might.

One other point from *The Meaning of Belief* is relevant here. Crane makes a distinction between what he calls 'pessimistic atheists' and 'optimistic atheists'. Pessimistic atheists (of which he says he is one) find the religious impulse intelligible and acknowledge that the transcendent would give life meaning of a kind it can never actually have. They also acknowledge that religious believers are able to appreciate religious art and music in a way no secular person can. Optimistic atheists, as Crane thinks of them, are inclined to disagree on both points. They think their experience of works of religious art shows that they too can fully appreciate them. Moreover, the Cranean optimistic atheist finds the religious impulse unintelligible. They think the idea of the 'enchantment' of the world, of the world really harbouring an unseen order that gives life as a whole meaning, is a kind of confusion. So they won't concede that a naturalist world view is in any sense bleak, because what the naturalist has rejected didn't make sense in the first place.

Religious fictionalism of the kind described here, and the naturalistic religious practice it grounds, have a distinctly optimistic flavor. But neither relies on the optimist's claim that the religious impulse is unintelligible, in the sense that there was never anything there to hope for. The religious impulse makes enough sense to be an object of hope, and the naturalist does not share that

ticipates this objection: "This is not to say that orthodox versions of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity should be regarded as mystical faiths, but only that they place certain epistemic limits on believers: that is, limits about what they can know" (Crane, *The Meaning of Belief*, 57). Admittedly, there is a difference between there being limits to what can be known (or said) and there being hardly anything that can be known (or said), and talk of an 'ultimate' mystery can mask a slide between these two claims. But it seems to me that in practice, the element of mystery Crane describes does play a central role even in orthodox versions of Western theistic religions.

33 E.g. Crane, *The Meaning of Belief*, 159.

hope (see footnote 28). Since they believe there is no transcendent aspect to reality, they cannot, without periodic wavering or mental fragmentation, live just as if the religion were true, or even just as if it might be true. Naturalistic religious practice, on this version of religious fictionalism, is fundamentally different in nature from a believer's practice.

Nonetheless, as we've seen, the naturalist is able to access some experiences that are similar to those of the believer, and one reason for this does have to do with how intelligible the idea of the transcendent can become. The strange situation we are in with respect to the demarcation of religion is this. As Crane acknowledges (despite his criticism of the New Atheists' focus on cosmological elements), the religious impulse is a key feature of religion. Since naturalism is defined in terms of the belief(s) it rejects, the religious impulse lies at the heart of what separates religious believers from naturalists. And yet the content of the religious impulse is inherently paradoxical and ultimately has to remain mysterious.[34]

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The theme of this collection of articles, 'Philosophy, Religion, and Hope', is open to a variety of interpretations. The interpretation I've focused on is, what is the role that religious doctrine plays in religion, and to what extent can naturalists enter into aspects of the religious way of life? My aim was to relate the philosophical discussion on these questions to Tim Crane's *The Meaning of Belief*, especially his claim that atheists can derive no genuine solace from religion.

I've argued that while there are limits to naturalistic religious practice, there is an experientially significant remainder accessible to naturalists who feel so inclined. Whether or not this remainder involves anything properly describable as 'genuine' solace, it can be of enough value to the naturalist to be worth engaging in, and it need involve no mental fragmentation or hypocrisy. I've also suggested that there is a version of fictionalism that can underwrite this practice, on which one treats a religion as a story to be imaginatively entered into and brought to life. Moreover, the significance of this kind of activity is all

34 Is there a tension between this talk of mystery in the content of the religious impulse and taking a realist approach to the semantics of religious language? I am not sure there is: a stable semantic content is not the same as a definite or non-mysterious semantic content.

the greater if one is prepared to take on board Crane's claim that religious belief is inherently paradoxical, for which I've provided some support.

A different way to interpret the theme 'Philosophy, Religion, and Hope' would be this: when it comes to matters of inter-religious dialogue, including dialogue between the religious and the non-religious, is there reason to be hopeful? And, can philosophy help? Though not an academic philosophy book, *The Meaning of Belief* demonstrates how philosophy *can* help. The book's closing sentences highlight the connection between these two ways of interpreting the theme:

> The problems the world is facing are practical political problems, problems whose solutions need cooperation, coordination, and compromise. Any view about how atheists and theists should live together and interact must ultimately confront the fact that neither religion nor secularism is going to disappear. The least we can hope for is peaceful coexistence, while the most we can hope for is a kind of dialogue between those who hold very different views of reality. A genuine dialogue of this kind will be very difficult to achieve, but the first step must be for each side to gain an adequate understanding of the views of the other.[35,36]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ahmed, Arif. 2018. "The Meaning of Belief: Religion from an Atheist's Point of View, by Tim Crane". *Mind* 127, no. 508: 1261–70. doi:10.1093/mind/fzy018.

Botton, Alain. 2012. *Religion for Atheists*. London: Penguin.

Bohn, Einar Duenger. 2018. "The Logic of Hope: A Defense of the Hopeful". *Religious Studies* 54, no. 1: 107-116. doi:10.1017/S0034412516000469.

Cordry, Benjamin. 2010. "A Critique of Religious Fictionalism". *Religious Studies* 46, no. 1: 77–89. doi:10.1017/S0034412509990291.

Crane, Tim. 2017. *The Meaning of Belief: Religion from an Atheist's Point of View*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.

Deng, Natalja. 2015. "Religion for Naturalists". *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 78, no. 2: 195–214. doi:10.1007/s11153-015-9529-y.

35 Crane, *The Meaning of Belief*, 193.

36 This work was supported (in part) by the Yonsei Univ. Future-Leading Research Initiative of 2018 (2018-22-0100).

Dumitriu, Petru. 1982. *To the Unknown God (Au Dieu Inconnu)*. New York, NY: Seabury Press.

Dworkin, Ronald. 2013. *Religion without God*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press.

Eshleman, Andrew. 2010. "Religious Fictionalism Defended: Reply to Cordry". *Religious Studies* 46, no. 1: 91–96. doi:10.1017/S0034412509990333.

Harrison, Victoria. 2010. "Philosophy of Religion, Fictionalism, and Religious Diversity". *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 68, no. 1-3: 43–58.

James, William. 1902. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. New York, NY: Longmans, Green and Co.

Jay, Christopher. 2014. "The Kantian Moral Hazard Argument for Religious Fictionalism". *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 75, no. 3: 207–32. doi:10.1007/s11153-013-9435-0.

Joyce, Richard. 2001. *The Myth of Morality*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Le Poidevin, Robin. 1996. *Arguing for Atheism: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*. London: Routledge.

—. 2016. "Playing the God Game: The Perils of Religious Fictionalism". In *Alternative Concepts of God: Essays on the Metaphysics of the Divine*, edited by Andrei A. Buckareff and Yujin Nagasawa, 178–94. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Lipton, Peter. 2007. "Science and Religion: The Immersion Solution". In *Realism and Religion: Philosophical and Theological Perspectives*, edited by Michael Scott and Andrew Moore, 31–46. Brookfield: Taylor and Francis.

Malcolm, Finlay. 2018. "Can Fictionalists Have Faith?". *Religious Studies* 54, no. 2: 215–32. doi:10.1017/S0034412517000063.

Nagel, Thomas. 2010. *Secular Philosophy and The Religious Temperament*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Scott, Michael. 2010. "Religious Language". *Philosophy Compass* 5, no. 6: 505–15. doi:10.1111/j.1747-9991.2010.00301.x.

Scott, Michael, and Finlay Malcolm. forthcoming. "Religious Fictionalism". *Philosophy Compass*.

Szabó, Zoltán G. 2011. "Critical Study of Mark Eli Kalderon (ed.) Fictionalism in Mataphysics". *Noûs* 45, no. 2: 375–85. doi:10.1111/j.1468-0068.2011.00828.x.

Whitehead, Alfred N. 1967. *Science and the Modern World*. New York, NY: Free Press.

AQUINAS, GEACH, AND EXISTENCE

Damiano Costa
Università della Svizzera Italiana

Abstract. In a series of influential publications, Peter Geach suggested that the correct semantic analysis of some existential propositions requires a first-order, individual, property of existence alongside with the nowadays standard, second-order, one. Moreover, Geach argues that Aquinas was well aware of this need and accepted both a first-order and a second-order property of existence — the first of which goes under the name of actus essendi. In this paper, I argue that Geach's individual existence is not Aquinas' actus essendi, for at least two crucial reasons. Geach's existence is tensed and is instantiated by present entities only, whereas in a series of works which spans throughout his corpus, Aquinas attributes a tenseless property of existence to past and future entities as well.

I. INTRODUCTION

At least since Russell, it has been a dogma of analytic philosophy that existence is a second-order property.[1] Accordingly, seemingly individual existential attributions, such as "Augustus exists", are interpreted as generic existential attributions, such as "there is a unique first Roman emperor" or as "there is a unique person that actually stands at the origin of the current use of the name 'Augustus'", where existence is intended as the second-order property of *being instantiated*, here attributed to properties such as "being the first Roman emperor".

While this Russellian dogma is still mainstream today, it has come under attack on different grounds.[2] An early and influential dissenter has been Peter Geach who, in a series of publications, has advocated the need of distinguishing between two senses of existence, namely a generic, second-order, sense

1 Bertrand Russell, *Principles of Mathematics* (Routledge, 1903); W. V. Quine, *Word and Object* (MIT Press, 1960).

2 Michael Nelson, "Existence", Spring 2019, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/existence/.

PP. 175–195
DOI: 10.24204/EJPR.V11I3.2837
AUTHOR: DAMIANO.COSTA@USI.CH

of existence — his *there is sense* — and an individual, first-order, sense of existence — his *actuality*, or *present actuality sense*.[3] Apart from this theoretical claim, Geach has also advanced the historical claim that his distinction between *there is sense* and *present actuality sense* coincides with a distinction Aquinas used to make, between generic and individual existence, called by Aquinas *esse ut verum* and *esse ut actus essendi*, respectively.[4] Geach's theory of existence, as well as Geach's interpretation of Aquinas, have triggered an interesting line of research and are still under discussion.[5]

In this paper, I argue that there are good reasons to doubt that Geach's *present actuality sense* should be identified with Aquinas' individual existence. In particular, I argue that while Geach's *present actuality sense* is tensed, and is attributed to present entities only, Aquinas' individual existence is, in a consistent series of texts spread throughout Aquinas' corpus, intended as tenseless, and attributed to past and future entities too. Therefore, Geach's *present actuality sense* is both extensionally and intensionally different, or more simply is not, Aquinas' individual existence.

In the first section of this paper, I present Geach's two senses of existence and their alleged correspondence to Aquinas' *esse ut verum* and *esse ut actus essendi*. In the second section, I focus on the extensional difference between Geach's *present actuality sense* and Aquinas' individual existence and show that while Geach's *present actuality sense* is attributed to present entities only, Aquinas attributes individual existence to past and future entities as well. In the third section of this paper, I focus on the intensional difference, and show that while Geach's *present actuality sense* is tensed, Aquinas' individual exist-

3 Peter T. Geach, "Form and Existence", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 55, no. 1 (1955); Peter T. Geach, "Aquinas", in *Three Philosophers*: *Aristotle, Aquinas, Frege*, ed. Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter T. Geach (Cornell Univ. Press, 1961); Peter T. Geach and Robert H. Stoothoff, "What Actually Exists", *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 42, no. 1 (1968).

4 Geach, "Form and Existence".

5 Stephen Brock, "Thomas Aquinas and "What Actually Exists"", in *Wisdom's Apprentice*: *Thomistic Essays in Honor of Lawrence Dewan, O.P*, ed. Lawrence Dewan and Peter A. Kwasniewski (Catholic Univ. of America Press, 2007); Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Being* (OUP, 2002); Barry Miller, *From Existence to God: A Contemporary Philosophical Argument* (Routledge, 1992); Barry Miller, "Existence", Fall 2009, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2009/entries/existence/; Giovanni Ventimiglia, "Aquinas on Being: One, Two or Three Senses of Being?", *Quaestio* 18 (2018); Giovanni Ventimiglia, "Is the Thomistic Doctrine of God as "Ipsum Esse Subsistens" Consistent?", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 10, no. 4 (2018).

ence is tenseless. In the fourth section, I address two worries that might arise as regards the status of future entities in Aquinas and Geach.

II. GEACH ON TWO SENSES OF EXISTENCE

In his *Form and Existence*, dedicated to the correct understanding and the theoretical significance of Aquinas' theory of existence, Peter Geach argues, against the Russellian dogma, for the need of a first order-sense of existence alongside the nowadays standard second-order sense. Geach asks us to consider the following negative existential propositions:

(1) Dragons do not exist.

(2) Simeon is not and Joseph is not.

On the one hand, Geach takes the first sentence to involve the standard, generic, second-order, sense of existence: when saying that dragons do not exist, we are not saying something about a given set of individuals; rather we are saying something about a property (or a concept), namely that of "being a dragon", of which we are saying that it is not instantiated.

On the other hand, Geach takes the second sentence — a quote from Genesis, where Jacob is lamenting the fact that, he believes, his sons Simeon and Joseph are not there anymore — to offer reasons to acknowledge an individual, first-order, sense of existence. For, in his words:

> [it] would be quite absurd to say that Jacob in uttering these words was not talking about Joseph and Simeon but about the use of their names. Of course he was talking about his sons; he was expressing a fear that something had happened to them, that they were dead. We have here a sense of "is" or "exists" that seems to me to be certainly a genuine predicate of individuals ….[6]

Geach refers to this individual, first-order, sense of existence as *actuality*[7] or *present actuality.*[8] Geach writes:

> We may express the difference between the two senses of 'is' as follows: An individual may be said to 'be', meaning that it is at present actually existing; on the other hand, when we say that 'there is' an X …, we are saying concerning a kind or description of things, Xs, that there is at least one thing

6 Geach, "Form and Existence", 266–67.

7 Geach and Stoothoff, "What Actually Exists", 7.

8 Geach, "Aquinas", 90.

> of that kind or description …. Frege was clear as to this distinction, though he rightly had no special interest, as a mathematical logician, in assertions of present actuality. It is a great misfortune that Russell has dogmatically reiterated that the 'there is' sense of the 'substantive' verb 'to be' is the only one that logic can recognise and legitimate; for the other meaning — present actuality — is of enormous importance in philosophy, and only harm can be done by a Procrustean treatment which either squeezes assertions of present actuality into the 'there is' form or lops them off as non-sensical.[9]

Let us focus on Geach's individual existence, and more precisely on its intended extension. The name used by Geach to indicate it — *present actuality* — suggests that one can correctly attribute it only to things that are both present and actual. Clearly enough, this imposes a double restriction on what can correctly be said to individually exist. First, only *actual* things can be said to exist in this sense. Here, 'Actuality' is not taken in its modal sense, but rather in the Fregean sense of causal efficacy (*Wirklichkeit*): to be actual is either to act or to undergo change.[10] Hence, Geach's individual sense of existence can be correctly attributed to things which are causally efficacious only — a set which Geach takes to include individual substances as well as events[11] but not, for example, numbers or concepts.[12]

The second restriction on the possible extension of this individual sense of existence — a restriction which will turn out to be crucial later — is a temporal one: only present substances and events can be said to exist in this sense — present actuality is *present* actuality, after all. Geach writes that present actuality is "the sense of 'exist' in which one says that an individual came to exist, still exists, no longer exists, etc.".[13] If *present actuality* is the sense in use when we say that an individual has come to exist, continues to exist, or no longer exists, it comes as no surprise that *present actuality* is neither possessed by future entities — because they have not yet come to exist — nor by past entities — because they no longer exist — but only by temporally present entities — those that have come to existence and still exist. To briefly illustrate the point, Geach's second example — "Simeon is not and Joseph is not" — involves the negation of individual existence to Simeon and Joseph, entities that the utterer takes to have

9 Geach, "Aquinas", 90–91.
10 Geach and Stoothoff, "What Actually Exists", 7.
11 Ibid., 29.
12 Ibid., 27.
13 Geach, "Form and Existence", 266–67.

died and not to exist anymore. In other words, Simeon and Joseph do not have individual existence insofar as they are not present.

To sum up, Geach is here making a theoretical point about existence. The theoretical point is that the correct analysis of some existential propositions highlights the need to acknowledge — alongside the standard, generic, second-order sense of existence, namely his *there is sense* — an individual, first-order, sense of existence which is restricted to entities that are present and actual — his *present actuality sense*.

Geach does not take such a distinction between two senses of existence to be anything new. He is persuaded that the distinction was already clear to Frege and is even to be found in Aquinas. Indeed, Aquinas used to distinguish at least two senses of the verb *esse*, 'to be', namely a generic sense, i.e. *esse ut verum* and an individual sense, i.e. *esse ut actus essendi*.[14]

In Aquinas, the need of distinguishing such two senses comes from considerations ranging from the metaphysics of privations, such as blindness or evil[15], to analysis of the nature of Christ.[16] To illustrate, let us briefly consider a reason that concerns the essence of God.[17] Aquinas believes that we cannot know God's essence. Now, in God, essence and existence are one and the same. As a consequence, we cannot know God's existence (*esse Dei*) either. However, Aquinas also holds that we *can* know God's existence (*an sit*), through his well-known proofs of God's existence. How is it that we both can and cannot know God's existence? Aquinas' solution is based on the aforementioned distinction between two senses of existence. He explains:

> 'To be' can mean either of two things. It may mean the act of existence [*actus essendi*], or it may mean the composition of a proposition effected by the mind in joining a predicate to a subject [*esse ut verum*]. Taking 'to be' in the first sense, we cannot understand God's existence nor His essence; but only in the second sense. We know that this proposition which we form about God when we say 'God is' is true; and this we know from His effects.[18]

14 Geach, "Form and Existence", 265.

15 Geach, "Form and Existence", 266; Geach, "Aquinas", 89.

16 Geach, "Aquinas", 90.

17 Geach, "Form and Existence", 266.

18 Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, second and revised edition, ed. the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Oates and Washbourne, 1920), I, q. 3, a. 4, ad 2. (The translation has been slightly modified).

Geach takes *esse ut verum* as the same as his *there is sense* and *esse ut actus essendi* as the same as his *present actuality*. In other words, under this interpretation, what we can know is merely that there is a God, or that the concept of God is not empty, while his individual existence remains unknown to us. Geach writes:

> Aquinas' conception of esse thus depends on there being a sense of the verb 'est' or 'is' quite other than the 'there is' sense …. It is the present-actuality sense of 'est' that is involved in Aquinas's discussions of *ens* and *esse*. It corresponds to the uses of the verb 'to exist' in which we say that an individual thing comes to exist, continues to exist, ceases to exist, or again to the uses of 'being' in which we say that a thing is brought into being or kept in being by another thing.[19]

III. THE EXTENSIONAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GEACH'S PRESENT ACTUALITY AND AQUINAS' INDIVIDUAL EXISTENCE

In the previous section, we have seen Geach making a theoretical as well as a historical point. The theoretical point is that the semantic analysis of some existential sentences requires to acknowledge, alongside the standard, generic, second-order sense of existence, an individual, first-order, sense of existence, which he calls present actuality and which is restricted to entities that are present and actual (i.e. causally efficacious). The historical point is that the distinction between these two senses of existence traces back to Aquinas, insofar as Geach's there is sense corresponds to Aquinas' *esse ut verum*, whereas Geach's present actuality corresponds to Aquinas' *esse ut actus essendi*.

The aim of this section is to put the correspondence between *present actuality* and *actus essendi* into doubt, by highlighting an important difference in the extension of the two senses of existence. While Geach's *present actuality* is correctly attributed to present entities only, throughout his *corpus*, Aquinas repeatedly attributes existence in act to future entities as well.

The texts concern mainly, if not exclusively, the topic of God's knowledge of future contingents. Aquinas' line of reasoning, which recurs throughout his *corpus*, goes as follows:

(i) God knows future contingents;

19 Geach, "Aquinas", 90–91.

(ii) in order for God to know future contingents, future contingents must exist in act; hence

(iii) future contingents exist in act.

As regards (i), Aquinas affirms repeatedly that God knows future contingents, and does so infallibly. For example, in his *Scriptum Super Sententiis*, *Summa contra Gentiles*, and *In Aristotelis Libros Perì Hermenìas* he writes, respectively[20]:

> God knows not just what is present to us, but also what is past and future to us.
>
> From this we can begin to understand somewhat that God had from eternity an infallible knowledge of contingent singular facts.
>
> Hence it follows that God knows all things that take place in time most certainly and infallibly.

Aquinas takes (ii) to be true because God knows future contingents infallibly, and the only way of knowing them infallibly is to know them in themselves, which in turn implies the existence in act of what is known. Let us have a look at his line of reasoning in more detail. (I shall first break down the argument in its premises and conclusion, and then offer citations in support of each premise and of the conclusion). Aquinas holds that God can know entities in three different ways: (a) as producible by him (*in potentia Dei*), (b) in their causes (*in suis causis*), i.e. through inference from their causes and inclinations, or (c) in themselves (*in seipsis*). Aquinas is persuaded that God must know future contingents not only in the first two possible ways, but in the third as well. Indeed, if God knew future contingents merely as producible by him, he would not know them infallibly: he could not dis-

20 "Deus non tantum cogniscit ea quae sunt nobis praesentia, sed quae sunt nobis praeterita et futura" (Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Sententiis*, ed. Roberto Busa (Parma, 1856), lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5). (Translation is mine).

"Ex his autem iam aliqualiter patere potest quod contingentium singularium ab aeterno Deus infallibilem scientiam habuit" (Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (Notre Dame Univ. Press, 1975)., lib. 1, cap. 67). (The translation has been slightly modified).

„Sic igitur relinquitur, quod Deus certissime et infallibiliter cognoscat omnia quae fiunt in tempore (...)" (Aquinas, *Expositio libri Peryermeneias: Aristotle on Interpretation* (Marquette Univ. Press, 1962), lib. 1, l. 14).

tinguish between those future contingents which will be realized and those that will remain merely possible, given that both are producible by him. Neither does God know future contingents in their causes only. Once again, this source of knowledge would not be enough to account for the infallibility of his knowledge. Indeed, when it comes to future contingent facts, this source would only allow to make plausible conjectures instead of acquiring infallible knowledge.[21] Hence, God cannot know future contingents in their causes only. Aquinas writes in his *Summa Theologiae (*parallel segments in *Scriptum Super Sententiis*, and *Summa contra Gentiles*, are provided in footnote)[22]*:*

> In another way a contingent thing can be considered as it is in its cause; and in this way it is considered as future, and as a contingent thing not yet determined to one; forasmuch as a contingent cause has relation to opposite things: and in this sense a contingent thing is not subject to any certain knowledge. Hence, whoever knows a contingent effect in its cause only, has merely a conjectural knowledge of it. Now God knows all contingent things not only as they are in their causes.[23]

Given that God knows future contingents and that he cannot know them in the first two ways only, he must know them in the third way as well, i.e. in themselves. For only this third source can properly account for God's infallible knowledge of future contingents.

Crucially, while the first two ways do not imply the existence in act of what is known, the third one does. Indeed, for God to know something in

21 "Ut tamen communiter de cognitione futurorum loquamur, sciendum est quod futura dupliciter cognosci possunt, uno modo, in seipsis; alio modo, in suis causis … prout sunt in suis causis, cognosci possunt etiam a nobis. Et si quidem in suis causis sint ut ex quibus ex necessitate proveniant, cognoscuntur per certitudinem scientiae; sicut astrologus praecognoscit eclipsim futuram. Si autem sic sint in suis causis ut ab eis proveniant ut in pluribus, sic cognosci possunt per quandam coniecturam vel magis vel minus certam, secundum quod causae sunt vel magis vel minus inclinatae ad effectus" (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 86, a. 4).

22 "Dico igitur, quod intellectus divinus intuetur ab aeterno unumqoudque contingentium non solum prout est in causis suis" (Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Sententiis,* lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5). "Non enim Deus rerum quae apud nos nondum sunt, videt solum esse quod habent in suis causis" (Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 6).

23 "Alio modo potest considerari contingens, ut est in sua causa. Et sic consideratur ut futurum, et ut contingens nondum determinatum ad unum, quia causa contingens se habet ad opposita. Et sic contingens non subditur per certitudinem alicui cognitioni. Unde quicumque cognoscit effectum contingentem in causa sua tantum, non habet de eo nisi coniecturalem cognitionem. Deus autem cognoscit omnia contingentia, non solum prout sunt in suis causis" (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 14, a. 13).

itself is to know it inasmuch he created it, i.e. inasmuch as he caused the existence in act of that thing (*inquantum facit eas esse in actu*). Hence, if something is known by God in the third way, that thing must exist in act.

To illustrate, Aquinas says expressively that God knows each future contingent by seeing it in its own being (*ipsum esse rei*)[24], by seeing the being that it has in its own (*illud quod habent in seipsis*)[25], by seeing it in its own existence (*in sua existentia visum*)[26], inasmuch as it is posed by him in nature (*secundum quod ponitur esse in rerum natura*)[27], inasmuch as it exists in itself (*secundum quod est in seipso existens*).[28] In his *Summa Theologiae* and his *Compendium Theologiae*, he writes[29]:

---

24 "Dico igitur, quod intellectus divinus intuetur ab aeterno unumquodque contingentium non solum prout est in causis suis, sed prout est in esse suo determinato …. Patet enim quod Deus ab aeterno non solum vidit ordinem sui ad rem, ex cuius potestate res erat futura, sed ipsum esse rei intuebatur." (Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Sententiis*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5).

25 "Ea vero quae sunt praesentia, praeterita vel futura nobis, cognoscit Deus secundum quod sunt in sua potentia, et in propriis causis, et in seipsis. Et horum cognitio dicitur notitia visionis: non enim Deus rerum quae apud nos nondum sunt, videt solum esse quod habent in suis causis, sed etiam illud quod habent in seipsis, inquantum eius aeternitas est praesens sua indivisibilitate omni tempori." (Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles,* lib. 1, cap. 66).

26 "Rursus, cum dicitur, Deus scit, vel scivit, hoc futurum, medium quoddam accipitur inter divinam scientiam et rem scitam, scilicet tempus in quo est locutio, respectu cuius illud quod a Deo scitum dicitur est futurum. Non autem est futurum respectu divinae scientiae, quae, in momento aeternitatis existens, ad omnia praesentialiter se habet. Respectu cuius, si tempus locutionis de medio subtrahatur, non est dicere hoc esse cognitum quasi non existens, ut locum habeat quaestio qua quaeritur an possit non esse: sed sic cognitum dicetur a Deo ut iam in sua existentia visum" (Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 67). On a possible difference between *existence* and *actus essendi* in Aquinas see Cornelio Fabro, "Per la semantica originaria dello "esse" tomistico", *Euntes docete* 9 (1956) and Étienne Gilson, *L'être et l'essence* (Vrin, 1948), even though it seems to be not problematic to assume that if a substance has *existentia* it also has *actus essendi*.

27 "… contingens refertur ad divinam cognitionem secundum quod ponitur esse in rerum natura"(Aquinas, *De Veritate, q. 14*, ed. J. V. McGlynn (Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Company, 1953), q. 2, a. 12).

28 "[Deus] videt omnia quae aguntur secundum temporis decursum, et unumquodque secundum quod est in seipso existens" (Aquinas, *Expositio libri Peryermeneias,* lib. 1, l. 14).

29 "Deus autem cognoscit omnia contingentia, non solum prout sunt in suis causis, sed etiam prout unumquodque eorum est actu in seipso" (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I q. 14, a. 13). (The translation has been slightly modified). "Manifestum est autem quod hoc modo futura contingentia cognoscere, prout sunt actu in suo esse, quod est certitudinem de ipsis habere, solius Dei proprium est" (Aquinas, *Compendium Theologiae* (B. Herder Book Co, 1947), lib. 1, cap. 134). (The translation has been slightly modified).

> Now God knows all contingent things not only as they are in their causes, but also as each one of them is in act in itself.
>
> To know future contingents in this way, as they are in act in their own being, that is, to have certitude about them, is evidently restricted to God alone.[30]

Aquinas takes each future contingent, be it a substance, an event or a state of affairs, to exist in act, and thus to enjoy individual existence. Hence the difference in extension between Geach's *present actuality* and Aquinas' individual existence: while future entities are not presently actual, Aquinas takes them to exist in act.

IV. THE INTENSIONAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GEACH'S PRESENT ACTUALITY AND AQUINAS' INDIVIDUAL EXISTENCE

In the previous section, I have argued that Geach's *present actuality* and Aquinas' *actus essendi* have different extensions: while Geach's *present actuality* ranges over present entities only, Aquinas' *actus essendi* ranges over future entities too. The aim of this section is to argue in favour of yet another aspect which makes *present actuality* and *actus essendi* different: Geach's present actuality is tensed (and specifically in the present tense), whereas Aquinas' *actus essendi* is tenseless.

Before proceeding, we should briefly have a look at the relevant meaning of the dichotomy between tensed and tenseless existence and, more generally, between tensedness and tenselessness. Let us begin with three examples of propositions which are, in the relevant sense, tensed:

(3) The Great Library *was* located in Alexandria

(4) Your laptop *is still* on my desk

(5) The ITER nuclear reactor *will* be completed in ten years' time

and three propositions which are, in the relevant sense, tenseless:

(6) Three *is* the square root of nine

30 A similar conclusion might be reached if Aquinas' treatment of future contingent statements is considered from the logical point of view, insofar as Luca Gili and Lorenz Demey, "Thomas van Aquino, niet-normale modale logica's en het probleem van toekomstige contingenties", *Tijdschrift Voor Filosofie* 79, no. 2 (2017) argued that future contingent substances and properties are to feature in the semantic treatment of Aquinas' view on future contingents.

(7) 400 BC *is* before 399 BC

(8) WWII *is* after WWI

First, notice that propositions (3), (4) and (5) require to adopt the present time's perspective in order to be evaluated. This is a crucial feature of tensed propositions. As Sider puts it, "tensed propositions are those which presuppose a certain position or vantage point within the whole of time"[31]– that position being the present time. On the other hand, no particular temporal perspective is required in order to evaluate propositions (6), (7) and (8). Second, it should be clear that tense in the relevant sense, while having to do with the predicates involved in the proposition, is not simply grammatical tense: suffice it to remark that propositions such as (6), (7) and (8), while tenseless in the relevant sense, are expressed using verbs that are conjugated at the present grammatical tense.

A third important point which concerns the distinction between tenselessness and tensedness concerns the connection between tense and temporal location. Tensed propositions place the relevant individuals in time. If the Great Library was located in Alexandria, then the Great Library is somewhere in time and, more precisely, it is at a time which is earlier than the present. More generally, the use of the past/present/future tense in a tensed proposition places the relevant individuals at the past/present/future time, respectively.[32] On the other hand, tenseless propositions do not necessarily have such a consequence: while years 399 and 400 BC are in some sense placed in time (for one is before the other, and in order to be before and after, one might argue, something has to be in some sense in time), and WWI as well as WWII are definitely temporal entities, one might accept that three is the square root of nine even if one believes that numbers are not in space and time. Moreover, it should also be clear that the use of the present tense in a tenseless predication does not imply that the entities involved in the tenseless predication are to be found at the present time. To illustrate, when we say that your laptop is still on my desk, we are implying that your laptop and my desk are to be found at the present moment. On the other hand, when we say that 400 BC *is* before 399 BC, or that WWII *is* after WWI, we are not thereby

31 Theodore Sider, *Four-Dimensionalism: An Ontology of Persistence and Time* (OUP, 2001), 12.

32 Fabrice Correia and Sven Rosenkranz, "Temporal existence and temporal location", *Philosophical Studies* 57 (2019).

implying that such years or events are located at the present moment. We might therefore take the use of a predicate at the present tense positively attributed to non-present entities as a clear indicator of the fact that the resulting proposition is tenseless in the relevant sense — or at least we shall make this assumption for the rest of the paper.

It should now be evident that Geach's present actuality is intended to be a tensed notion. Geach says that present actuality is the "sense of 'exist' in which one says that an individual came to exist, still exists, no longer exists, etc."[33] Commenting on the status of a past entity vis-à-vis present actuality, he adds that "poor Fred was, and is not".[34] Hence, the use of grammatical tense here makes it clear that Geach's present actuality is intended to be a tensed notion (where the specific tense is the present one).

Geach's commentators agree on this point. For example, Lloyd writes "According to Geach there are two distinct senses of the verb 'to be' …. [The second sense] is a tensed predicative use of 'exists' which holds of temporal objects for the duration of their temporal existence but not at other times."[35] Kenny, drawing on Geach, says, about individual existence, that "Statements of this kind of existence are tensed like other subject-predicate sentences. The Great Pyramid still exists, while the Pharos of Alexandria does not".[36] And Miller writes "Geach's position on tense is bound up with the two-sense thesis of the predicate '__ exists' …. The first, which Geach calls the present actuality sense, is tensed. "[37] After all, the fact that Geach's present actuality is a tensed notion comes as no surprise given that, more generally, Geach kept a generally sceptic stance as regards tenseless talk: "Mortal men who try to speak the tenseless language of the Immortals will find their tongues confounded as at Babel."[38]

We have remarked before that the use of the past/present/future tense in a tensed proposition places the relevant individuals at the past/present/future time, respectively. So does Geach's present actuality. When Geach says that

33 Geach, "Form and Existence", 266–67.
34 Ibid., 268.
35 Genevieve Lloyd, "Time and Existence", *Philosophy* 53, no. 204 (1978): 217.
36 Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*, 190.
37 Barry Miller, "Individuals Past, Present and Future", *Philosophy* 56, no. 216 (1981): 253.
38 Peter T. Geach, *Providence and Evil* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1977), 42. I would like to thank an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this fact.

something still exists, he is implying that the relevant thing is to be found at the present moment. And when he says that something was/will be but is not, he is implying that the relevant thing is not to be found at the present moment but is to be found at an earlier/later time. This fact sits well with the intended meaning of present actuality. Present actuality amounts to being presently causally efficacious. Arguably, something needs to be found at the present moment in order to be presently causally efficacious. And the fact that present actuality is in the present tense makes sure that anything that enjoys it is to be found at the present moment.

Let us now pass to Aquinas' individual existence. Is it intended to be a tensed or a tenseless notion? Are propositions involving it tensed or tenseless? First of all, let us remind that we take the use of a predicate at the (grammatical) present tense positively attributed to non-present entities as a sufficient condition for the predicate, and the resulting proposition, to be tenseless. Now, looking back at the texts in which Aquinas attributes existence in act to future contingents, we see Aquinas constantly using the (grammatical) present tense. Here are a few examples (emphases both in the translation and the original Latin in footnotes are of course mine):

> From eternity, the divine intellect gazes over each single contingent, not only inasmuch as it is in its causes, but also inasmuch as it *is* in its own determinate being.[39]
>
> He sees in everything that is effected in the unfolding of time, and each thing as it *is* existent in itself.[40]
>
> Now God knows all contingent things not only as they are in their causes, but also as each one of them *is* in act in itself.[41]

39 "Dico igitur, quod intellectus divinus intuetur ab aeterno unumquodque contingentium non solum prout est in causis suis, sed prout *est* in esse suo determinate" (Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Sententiis*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5). (Translation is mine).

40 "Deus] videt omnia quae aguntur secundum temporis decursum, et unumquodque secundum quod *est* in seipso existens" (Aquinas, *Expositio libri Peryermeneias,* lib. 1, l. 14). (The translation has been slightly modified).

41 "Deus autem cognoscit omnia contingentia, non solum prout sunt in suis causis, sed etiam prout unumquodque eorum *est* actu in seipso" (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I, q. 14, a. 13). (The translation has been slightly modified).

Given that Aquinas makes use of the present tense while attributing existence in act to future entities, we can conclude that, unlike Geach's, his individual existence predicate is tenseless.

V. TWO WORRIES CONCERNING THE STATUS OF FUTURE ENTITIES IN AQUINAS AND GEACH

In this section, I shall address two possible worries that might arise from my reading of Aquinas and Geach on the existential status of future entities and on the notion of individual existence.

Let us begin with Aquinas. I hold that Aquinas affirms the existence in act of future entities. Still, in some passages, Aquinas says that future entities have not been created yet, and that they are in potency. A text in which this apparent difficulty emerges in a clear way is in the *Compendium Theologiae*, in which Aquinas claims[42]:

> This also makes it clear that He has a certain knowledge of contingent things, because even before they come into being, He sees them as they are in act in their own being.

How is it possible to hold together that future contingents (i) exist in act (*sunt actu in suo esse*) before they come into being (*antequam fiant*), and hence (ii) before existing? Isn't this a blatant contradiction? Some considerations offered by Aquinas' in the comment on *De Interpretatione* will help us clarify things here. First, Aquinas follows Aristotle in saying that verbs co-signify a time through their tense.[43] This means that the tense of the verb indicates that the action indicated by the verb takes place in the present time (if the tense is present), in the past (if the tense is past), or in the future (if the tense is future). This feature seems to be typical of what we have taken to be tensed predication and tensed propositions. In a tensed proposition, the tense of the proposition informs us about the temporal position of the involved entities. Then, Aquinas goes on in explaining why in everyday propositions the verb always co-signifies a time. This is due to our human condition, in which we

42 "Ex quo etiam manifestum fit quod de contingentibus certam cognitionem habet, quia etiam antequam fiant, intuetur ea prout sunt actu in suo esse" (Aquinas, *Compendium Theologiae,* lib. 1, cap. 133). (The translation has been slightly modified).

43 Aquinas, *Expositio libri Peryermeneias*. lib. 1, l. 5

come to know time successively, 'a time at a time'.[44] However, this need of knowing only a time at a time, in a successive manner, is a human cognitive limitation, which does not concern God, and becomes evident in the case of God's knowledge of future contingents. He writes

> God sees such a time inasmuch it is present, and the thing that is present in such a time. This cannot happen in our intellect, for the act of our intellect is successive with respect to different times.[45]

Hence, when Aquinas claims that future contingents 'exist in act', he does so from a divine perspective, by abstracting from any particular time at which this proposition could be stated; accordingly, in this proposition the verb 'to exist' does not co-signify a time; it is tenseless. On the other hand, when we say that future contingents exist 'before being created', and hence before existing, we are using the verb 'to exist' in the common way, in which it co-signifies the present time; it is tensed.

This reading is confirmed by other passages in which Aquinas says that future contingents do not exist yet, but they do not *for us* — not for God.[46] He writes

> For of the things that for us are not yet God sees not only the being that they have in their causes but also the being that they have in themselves, in so far as His eternity is present in its indivisibility to all time.[47]

and also

> We can talk of foreknowledge only inasmuch as [God] knows things that are future to us, not to him.[48]

---

44 "Quia igitur cognitio nostra cadit sub ordine temporis, vel per se vel per accidens (unde et anima in componendo et dividendo necesse habet adiungere tempus, ut dicitur in III de anima), consequens est quod sub eius cognitione cadant res sub ratione praesentis, praeteriti et futuri. Et ideo praesentia cognoscit tanquam actu existentia et sensu aliqualiter perceptibilia; praeterita autem cognoscit ut memorata; futura autem non cognoscit in seipsis, quia nondum sunt, sed cognoscere ea potest in causis suis"(Aquinas, *Expositio libri Peryermeneias*, lib. 1, l. 14).

45 "[Deus] videt istud tempus in quo est praesens, et rem esse praesentem in hoc tempore, quod tamen in intellectu nostro non potest accidere, cujus actus est successivus secundum diversa tempora" (Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Sententiis,* lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5). (translation is mine).

46 On the distinction of these two senses of existence in Aquinas, see also William L. Craig, *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez* (Brill, 1988).

47 "Non enim Deus rerum quae apud nos nondum sunt, videt solum esse quod habent in suis causis, sed etiam illud quod habent in seipsis, inquantum eius aeternitas est praesens sua indivisibilitate omni tempori" (Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, lib. 1, cap. 66).

48 "Sed tamen potest dici praescientia, inquantum cognoscit id quod futurum est nobis, non sibi" (Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Sententiis*, lib. 1, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5). (Translation is mine).

A similar treatment can be given to those passages in which Aquinas says that future entities are not in act, but in potency. In the already quoted article 13 of the *Summa Theologiae*, he writes:

> Since as was shown above, God knows all things; not only things actual but also things possible to Him and creature; and since some of these are future contingent to us, it follows that God knows future contingent things.[49]

Here Aquinas says that God knows not only what is actual, but also what is possible, among which future contingents. One might be tempted to conclude that future contingents are in potency, and not in act.[50] However, Aquinas clarifies that this is not what he has in mind. He continues:

> [A] contingent thing can be considered in two ways; first, in itself, in so far as it is now in act: and in this sense it is not considered as future, but as present; neither is it considered as contingent to one of two terms, but as determined to one …. In another way a contingent thing can be considered as it is in its cause; and in this way it is considered as future, and as a contingent thing not yet determined to one …. Hence it is manifest that contingent things are infallibly known by God, inasmuch as they are subject to the divine sight in their presentiality; yet they are future contingent things in relation to their own causes.[51]

In other words, future contingents are in potency, but only from our present perspective, *to us* (*nobis*), insofar as we are only able to consider them in relation to their causes, and as future to us. On the other hand, if considered in themselves, they are in act.

I shall now pass to a worry concerning my reading of Geach. I hold that Geach's notion of individual existence is presently tensed. It is crucial to real-

49 "Respondeo dicendum quod, cum supra ostensum sit quod Deus sciat omnia non solum quae actu sunt, sed etiam quae sunt in potentia sua vel creaturae; horum autem quaedam sunt contingentia nobis futura; sequitur quod Deus contingentia futura cognoscat" (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I, q. 14, a. 13).

50 I would like to thank an anonymous referee for pointing out that it might have been interesting to discuss this possible problem.

51 "Contingens aliquod dupliciter potest considerari. Uno modo, in seipso, secundum quod iam actu est. Et sic non consideratur ut futurum, sed ut praesens, neque ut ad utrumlibet contingens, sed ut determinatum ad unum … Alio modo potest considerari contingens, ut est in sua causa. Et sic consideratur ut futurum, et ut contingens nondum determinatum ad unum …. Unde manifestum est quod contingentia et infallibiliter a Deo cognoscuntur, inquantum subduntur divino conspectui secundum suam praesentialitatem, et tamen sunt futura contingentia, suis causis comparata (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I, q. 14, a. 13).

ize that in so doing, I am not only claiming that Geach's notion is tensed, but also that the specific tense is the present tense. This reading is supported by the fact that Geach calls this notion of existence *present* actuality. However, the term "*present* actuality" is used in one of Geach's publications only, namely in the relevant chapter of his *Three Philosophers*. In other publications, such as "Form and Existence" (1955) and "What Actually Exists" (1968), Geach refers to this sense of existence merely as "actuality". If individual existence is taken to be mere actuality, it might be tensed and yet positively attributed to past and future entities as well. After all, past entities *were* actual, and future entities *will be* actual.[52]

> Interpretation 1. According to Geach, an individual's existence is its present actuality.
>
> Interpretation 2. According to Geach, an individual's existence is its past, present, or future actuality.

If the second conception of individual existence is assumed, my argument falls, for both past and future entities will enjoy individual existence too (though not in the same way in which present ones do). Thus, it will no longer be true that Geach denies individual existence to past and future entities.

I see three reasons to prefer the former interpretation. First, while the fact that in some publications Geach talks simply of "actuality" might be taken not to favour any of the two interpretations, the fact that in *Three Philosophers* Geach talks of "*present* actuality" speaks clearly in favour of the former, and this fact cannot simply be ignored. Second, suppose for the sake of the argument that despite not being explicit about this, in his "Form and Existence" (1955) and "What Actually Exists" (1968) Geach intended actuality in the latter way. If that were the case, Geach must have changed his mind at least twice, given that *Three Philosophers* has been written after "Form and Existence" and before "What Actually Exists". One would expect to see signs of this double change of mind in Geach's writing, but this is not the case. Third, several scholars take Geach to adhere to the first interpretation. For example, Kenny, Miller, and Ventimiglia, in speaking of Geach's individual existence, call it "present

52 I would like to thank an anonymous referee who suggested this alternative interpretation of Geach.

actuality".[53] They give no sign of believing that the term "present" is there inappropriate, nor they mention any sign of disagreement about that; thus, one might reasonably be tempted to conclude that they *don't* disagree with him on this, and that they also take individual existence to be present actuality.

I take none of these reasons, some of which *ex silentio*, to be totally irresistible. For one might believe that Geach's use of the term "*present* actuality" was only occasional and due to inaccuracy, or that he might not have fully realized that at least two interpretations of his theory were possible. The same might hold for his commentators. However, those who like simpler explanations will probably be attracted by the hypothesis that Interpretation 1 is to be preferred.

VI. CONCLUSION

I have argued that Geach's and Aquinas' notions of individual existence are extensionally and intensionally different from one another: while the former is tensed and extends to present entities only, the latter is tenseless and extends to future entities as well. From a contemporary reader's perspective, this suggests that Geach's individual existence and Aquinas' individual existence are fundamentally different: while the former concern the temporal location, so to speak, of an entity[54] (Correia and Rosenkranz forth.), the second one concerns the sheer fact that something is part of one's ontological catalogue, no matter where in time, if anywhere.

While Aquinas does not explicitly say that his individual existence extends to past entities — and while his arguments do not allow us to draw such a conclusion — one might reasonably expect him to hold this view as well, for one might expect him to hold that God knows past, present, and future entities in the same way, namely also in themselves. If that is the case, one might be tempted to take Aquinas to be an eternalist *ante litteram* — eternalism being the view that past, present and future tenselessly exist. However, much more needs to be done before drawing such a conclusion. For, admittedly, one can find in his corpus elements that suggest a presentist stance.[55] And

53 Kenny, *Aquinas on Being*; Giovanni Ventimiglia, *To be o esse? La questione dell'essere nel tomismo analitico* (Carocci, 2012); Ventimiglia, "Aquinas on Being".

54 Correia and Rosenkranz, "Temporal existence and temporal location".

55 For a discussion of this problem, see William L. Craig, "Was Thomas Aquinas a B-Theorist of Time?", *New Scholasticism* 59, no. 4 (1985); Richard Cross, "Duns Scotus on Eternity and

even though Aquinas takes future entities to individually exist, the tenseless existence of the contemporary eternalist is usually interpreted in quantificational terms. While the latter problem might be solved, insofar as we might take individual existence always to imply generic existence, the former problem requires a comprehensive study of Aquinas' metaphysics of time — a daunting task which is of course left for future work.[56]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aquinas. 1856. *Scriptum Super Sententiis*. Edited by Roberto Busa. Parma:

—. 1920. *Summa Theologica*. second and revised edition. Edited by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. London: Oates and Washbourne.

—. 1947. *Compendium Theologiae*. St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co.

—. 1953. *De Veritate, q. 14*. Edited by J. V. McGlynn. Chicago, IL: Henry Regnery Company.

—. 1962. *Expositio libri Peryermeneias: Aristotle on Interpretation*. Milwaukee, WI: Marquette Univ. Press.

—. 1975. *Summa Contra Gentiles*. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Univ. Press.

Brock, Stephen. 2007. "Thomas Aquinas and "What Actually Exists"". In *Wisdom's Apprentice: Thomistic Essays in Honor of Lawrence Dewan, O.P*, edited by Lawrence Dewan and Peter A. Kwasniewski, 13–39. Washington, D.C.: Catholic Univ. of America Press.

Correia, Fabrice, and Sven Rosenkranz. 2019. "Temporal existence and temporal location". *Philosophical Studies* 57: 1–13. doi:10.1007/s11098-019-01295-z.

Timelessness", *Faith and Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (1997); Brian J. Shanley, "Eternal Knowledge of the Temporal in Aquinas", *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 71, no. 2 (1997); Katherin A. Rogers, "Anselm on Eternity as the Fifth Dimension", *The Saint Anselm Journal* 3, no. 2 (2006); Kevin Staley, "Omniscience, Time and Eternity: Is Aquinas Inconsistent", *The Saint Anselm Journal* 3, no. 2 (2006); Christopher Hughes, *On a Complex Theory of a Simple God: An Investigation in Aquinas' Philosophical Theology* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1989); Christopher Hughes, *Aquinas on Being, Goodness, and God* (Routledge, 2015). Ryan T. Mullins, *The End of the Timeless God* (OUP, 2016), 74–98.

56 I am grateful to David Anzalone, Giuseppe Colonna, Sir Anthony Kenny, Alessandro Giordani, Gaetano Masciullo, Kevin Mulligan, Paolo Natali and Giovanni Ventimiglia for discussion and two anonymous referees for their comments and suggestions.

Craig, William L. 1985. "Was Thomas Aquinas a B-Theorist of Time?". *New Scholasticism* 59, no. 4: 475–83. doi:10.5840/newscholas19855946.

—. 1988. *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez*. Leiden: Brill.

Cross, Richard. 1997. "Duns Scotus on Eternity and Timelessness". *Faith and Philosophy* 14, no. 1: 3–25.

Fabro, Cornelio. 1956. "Per la semantica originaria dello "esse" tomistico". *Euntes docete* 9: 437–56.

Geach, Peter T. 1955. "Form and Existence". *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 55, no. 1: 251–72. doi:10.1093/aristotelian/55.1.251.

—. 1961. "Aquinas". In *Three Philosophers: Aristotle, Aquinas, Frege*, edited by Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter T. Geach. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press.

—. 1977. *Providence and Evil*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Geach, Peter T., and Robert H. Stoothoff. 1968. "What Actually Exists". *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 42, no. 1: 7–30. doi:10.1093/aristoteliansupp/42.1.7.

Gili, Luca, and Lorenz Demey. 2017. "Thomas van Aquino, niet-normale modale logica's en het probleem van toekomstige contingenties". *Tijdschrift Voor Filosofie* 79, no. 2: 259–76.

Gilson, Étienne. 1948. *L'être et l'essence*. Paris: Vrin.

Hughes, Christopher. 1989. *On a Complex Theory of a Simple God: An Investigation in Aquinas' Philosophical Theology*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press.

—. 2015. *Aquinas on Being, Goodness, and God*. London: Routledge.

Kenny, Anthony. 2002. *Aquinas on Being*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Lloyd, Genevieve. 1978. "Time and Existence". *Philosophy* 53, no. 204: 215–28.

Miller, Barry. 1981. "Individuals Past, Present and Future". *Philosophy* 56, no. 216: 253–57. doi:10.1017/S0031819100050105.

—. 1992. *From Existence to God: A Contemporary Philosophical Argument*. London: Routledge.

—. 2009. "Existence". Last modified Fall 2009 Edition. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2009/entries/existence/.

Mullins, Ryan T. 2016. *The End of the Timeless God*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Nelson, Michael. 2012. "Existence". Last modified Spring 2019 Edition. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/existence/.

Quine, W. V. 1960. *Word and Object*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Rogers, Katherin A. 2006. "Anselm on Eternity as the Fifth Dimension". *The Saint Anselm Journal* 3, no. 2: 1–8.

Russell, Bertrand. 1903. *Principles of Mathematics*. London: Routledge.

Shanley, Brian J. 1997. "Eternal Knowledge of the Temporal in Aquinas". *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 71, no. 2: 197–224. doi:10.5840/acpq199771244.

Sider, Theodore. 2001. *Four-Dimensionalism: An Ontology of Persistence and Time*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Staley, Kevin. 2006. "Omniscience, Time and Eternity: Is Aquinas Inconsistent?" *The Saint Anselm Journal* 3, no. 2: 9–16.

Ventimiglia, Giovanni. 2012. *To be o esse? La questione dell'essere nel tomismo analitico*. Roma: Carocci.

—. 2018. "Aquinas on Being: One, Two or Three Senses of Being?". *Quaestio* 18: 509–38. doi:10.1484/j.quaestio.5.118132.

—. 2018. "Is the Thomistic Doctrine of God as "Ipsum Esse Subsistens" Consistent?". *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 10, no. 4: 161. doi:10.24204/ejpr.v10i4.2600.

A PERPETUAL PRESENT: HENRI BERGSON AND ATEMPORAL DURATION

Matyáš Moravec
University of Cambridge

Abstract. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that adjusting Stump and Kretzmann's "atemporal duration" with *la durée*, a key concept in the philosophy of Henri Bergson (1859–1941), can respond to the most significant objections aimed at Stump and Kretzmann's re-interpretation of Boethian eternity. This paper deals with three of these objections: the incoherence of the notion of "atemporal duration," the impossibility of this duration being time-like, and the problems involved in conceiving it as being related to temporal duration by a relation of analogy. I conclude that "atemporal duration" (which has unfortunately come to be regarded with suspicion by most analytic philosophers of religion) — when combined with Bergson's durée to become an "atemporal durée" — is a coherent understanding of divine eternity.

I. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that adjusting Stump and Kretzmann's "atemporal duration"[1] with *la durée*, a key concept in the philosophy of Henri Bergson (1859–1941), can respond to the most significant objections aimed at their re-interpretation of Boethian eternity.[2]

Despite the fact that a significant part of the debate triggered by Stump and Kretzmann's "Eternity" (1981) took place over twenty years ago, it remains a *locus classicus* for treatments of the relation between God and time in analytic philosophy of religion.[3] This paper positions itself in line with con-

1 See Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity", *The Journal of Philosophy* 78, no. 8 (1981).

2 Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1973), 423.

3 See for example J. Diekemper, "Eternity, Knowledge and Freedom", *Religious Studies* 49, no. 1 (2013); Ryan T. Mullins, "Simply Impossible: A Case Against Divine Simplicity", *Journal*

PP. 197–224
DOI: 10.24204/EJPR.V0I0.2629
AUTHOR: MM2153@CAM.AC.UK

structive developments of the notion of eternity as "atemporal duration" proposed by Stump and Kretzmann, which has now been predominantly abandoned by the majority of analytic philosophers. Responding to the objections by strengthening their intuitions about divine timelessness with Bergson's philosophy could reintroduce "atemporal duration" as a legitimate option when considering the nature of eternity.

Recent years have seen a resurgence of interest in Bergson's philosophy of time outside the continental tradition to which he is most usually consigned.[4] Bergson's thought seems worth investigating within the context of analytic philosophy of religion, not only because of Bergson's connection with Boethius through his interest in Neoplatonism,[5] but also because Bergson and analytic philosophy of religion share an extensive list of common questions (e.g., the problem of free will,[6] the disanalogies between space and time, or the nature of possibility and necessity). This paper will show that a Bergsonian understanding of divine time can neutralise the apparent antinomic trichotomy between the following: (i) regarding God's time as a static, frozen, lifeless instant,[7] (ii) claiming that God's life is not such an instant, that

of Reformed Theology 7, no. 2 (2013); C. De Florio and A. Frigerio, "In Defense of the Timeless Solution to the Problem of Human Free Will and Divine Foreknowledge", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 78, no. 1 (2015); Paul Helm, "Eternity and Vision in Boethius", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 1, no. 1 (2009).

4 See for example A. Mutch, "The Limits of Process: On (Re)Reading Henri Bergson", *Organization* 23, no. 6 (2016); Stephen E. Robbins, "On Time, Memory and Dynamic Form", *Consciousness and Cognition* 13 (2004), 762–88; Clifford Williams, "A Bergsonian Approach to A- and B-Time", *Philosophy* 73, no. 285 (1998); Sonja Deppe, "The Mind-Dependence of the Relational Structure of Time (or: What Henri Bergson Would Say to B-Theorists)", *Kriterion - Journal of Philosophy* 30, no. 2 (2016); Sebastian Olma, "Physical Bergsonism and the Worldliness of Time", *Theory, Culture & Society* 24, no. 6 (2007), 123–37; Adam Riggio, "Lessons for the Relationship of Philosophy and Science From the Legacy of Henri Bergson", *Social Epistemology* 30, no. 2 (2016).

5 See W. J. Hankey, *One Hundred Years of Neoplatonism in France: A Brief Philosophical History* (Peters, 2006), 106–19; Rose-Marie Mossé-Bastide, *Bergson et Plotin* (Presses Universitaires de France, 1959); Henri Bergson, *Histoire de l'idée de temps. Cours au Collège de France 1902–1903* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2016).

6 See for example Michael Rota, "The Eternity Solution to the Problem of Human Freedom and Divine Foreknowledge", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 2, no. 1 (2010); Christoph Jäger, "Molinism and Theological Compatibilism", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 5, no. 1 (2013).

7 For a critique of the "lifelessness" of the eternal instant, see William Kneale, "Time and Eternity in Theology", *Proceedings of The Aristotelian Society* 61 (1985); Richard Swinburne,

it has extended duration, although this duration cannot be divided into subphases (Stump and Kretzmann), (iii) regarding "atemporal duration" as not consisting of discrete subphases and yet as having ordered relations between its points (Brian Leftow's *quasi-temporal eternity*[8]). Such a project requires some crucial qualifications:

First, I will not engage with the debate about A- and B- series. This is because — unless indicated otherwise — the considerations of God's relation to time which I will be discussing below apply to A- and B-theories of time equally. Perhaps more importantly, despite my partial reservations about his interpretation of Bergson, I side with the conclusion of C. Williams' argument which attempts to show that Bergson's critique applies to both sides of the A-B distinction.[9] It might be still be said, however, as R. T. Mullins does,[10] that although the A- and B-series may not be crucial to debates about God and time, there still remains a fundamental *ontological* difference between presentism, eternalism and the growing-block theory. This is a general problem for any conception of the God-time relation that insists on omniscience. I will briefly discuss this issue in section V.

Second, it is important to note that there is a threefold movement in the trajectory of the Bergsonian corpus. In his earliest works, *la durée* is used primarily as an epistemological category pertaining to the phenomenology of time in consciousness.[11] Later, it "moves outwards" and is attributed to the external world,[12] concluding with the claim about a hierarchy of durations,

The Coherence of Theism (OUP, 2016), chapter 12; Robert C. Coburn, "Professor Malcolm on God", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 41, no. 2 (1963), 155–56; William Hasker, *God, Time and Knowledge* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1989), 151; Richard Swinburne, "God and Time", in *Reasoned Faith: Essays in Honor of Norman Kretzmann*, ed. Eleonore Stump (Cornell Univ. Press, 1993), 216; Paul Helm, *Eternal God. A Study of God without Time* (OUP, 2010).

8 See Brian Leftow, "Boethius on Eternity", *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 7, no. 2 (1990).

9 See Williams, "A Bergsonian Approach to A- and B-Time"; Clifford Williams, "The Metaphysics of A- and B-Time", *The Philosophical Quarterly* 46, no. 194 (1996).

10 See Ryan T. Mullins, *The End of the Timeless God* (OUP, 2016), 22–30.

11 See Henri Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2013).

12 See Henri Bergson, *Matière et mémoire. Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2012).

creating a "super-science"[13] of *durées* in *Creative Evolution*.[14] The question about where it is legitimate to stop this move from an ontological perspective is rather complicated.[15] For the purposes of this paper, where I will be talking about divine *duration* as a mode of God's being, it suffices to limit Bergson's views to the first stage. That is, I identify *durée* with the time of consciousness immediately accessible by introspection.

Third, I will not be engaging with the problems of ET-simultaneity: my aim is solely to investigate "atemporal duration" which I take to be separate and separable from it.[16]

In what follows, I will first provide a short account of the relevant features of Bergson's philosophy of time. Second, I will outline key aspects of Stump and Kretzmann's "atemporal duration" and objections against it. In the third part, I will stipulate that the "duration" in "atemporal duration" be taken as equivalent to Bergson's *la durée* and demonstrate how such a stipulation responds to these objections.

II. BERGSON ON TIME

The main emphasis of Bergson's thought is on the radical difference between time and space:

> All through the history of philosophy time and space have been placed on the same level and treated as things of a kind; the procedure has been to study space, to determine its nature and function, and then to apply to time the conclusions thus reached. … To pass from one to the other one had only to change a single word: 'juxtaposition' was replaced by 'succession.'[17]

13 Jean Milet, *Bergson et le calcul infinitésimal ou La raison et le temps* (Presses Universitaires de France, 1974), 100.

14 See Henri Bergson, *L'Évolution créatrice* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2007).

15 See Frédéric Worms, "Les trois dimensions de la question de l'espace dans l'œuvre de Bergson", *Épokhè* 94, no. 4 (1994), especially 101–109.

16 For a survey of objections against ET-simultaneity, see Delmas Lewis, "Eternity Again: A Reply to Stump and Kretzmann", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 15, no. 1/2 (1984); Helm, *Eternal God. A Study of God Without Time*. I fully endorse Helm's claim that 'ET-simultaneity has no independent merit or use, nothing is illuminated or explained by it. Its sole purpose is to avoid the alleged *reductio* [by Kenny and Swinburne], which it does' (idem, 33) and that 'while [it] is formally consistent it does not actually advance understanding.' (idem, 97)

17 Henri Bergson, *Creative Mind* (Dover Publications, 2007), 4.

Bergson thinks that this confusion is most pertinent in the way philosophy since Kant has understood the time of consciousness. Symptomatic of this confusion, Bergson says, is the frequent appeal to the analogy of a line as a helpful tool to schematise the progression of mental states in our mind:[18]

> we set [our states of consciousness] side by side in such a way as to perceive them simultaneously, … alongside one another; in a word, we project time into space, we express duration [*la durée*] in terms of extensity, and succession thus takes the form of a continuous line or a chain, the parts of which touch without penetrating one another.[19]

Specifically, the moment we start to think about mental states given to our consciousness as forming a succession, we presume that some of them come "before" or "after" others. However, Bergson argues that for two of our mental states to be related by a "before and after" relation, they both have to be accessible to consciousness at once, i.e., at the same time, similarly to the way that objects in space coexist.[20] The "time" that we normally appeal to when considering the temporal development of our consciousness is a primary example of what Bergson calls "spatialized time" (*le temps spatialisé*).[21] Understanding our consciousness as line-like (analogous to and representable by a line progressing in space) and potentially homogeneous (i.e., divisible into intervals equal in length) is primarily driven by practical utility. One need only to realise how useful it is to conceive time in this way: our calendars are based on the possibility of representing past, present and future appointments "coexisting together" on a single page of our journal, laid out simultaneously in two-dimensional space.

18 See for example Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (CUP, 1998), A33/B50.

19 Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will. An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (George Allen & Co, 1913), 101.

20 Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, 76; Henri Bergson, *Durée et Simultanéité. À Propos de La Théorie d'Einstein* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2009), 46.

21 The charge of "spatialised time" refers to the application of spatial categories to consciousness: it is not equivalent to the frequent charge, directed at eternalists or B-theorists, that they "spatialise time." Bergson's charge of spatialising applies to A- and B-theorists equally, since it is not a claim about temporal ontology, but a claim about the temporal representation of consciousness. See especially Philippe Soulez and Frédéric Worms, *Bergson. Biographie* (Flammarion, 1997), 56; Worms, "Les trois dimensions de la question de l'espace dans l'œuvre de Bergson".

Bergson argues that the notion of homogeneity is simply a reaction against the heterogeneity that lies at the bottom of our conscious experience.[22] This heterogeneity consists of Bergson's key concept of *la durée*. *La durée* is a concept notoriously difficult succinctly to describe, not least due to its opposition to ordinary conceptual ways of thinking implicated by language — it is precisely its resistance to a simple description by language, similarly to the difficulty in describing the content of *qualia*, for example, that has contributed to its neglect in early analytic philosophy.[23] Nevertheless, similarly to *qualia*, it is not an obscure concept, and language can very successfully point us to what the term itself refers to.

In *Creative Mind*, Bergson provides the following account of *la durée*, as the gradual movement of mental states in our consciousness:

> It is … [an] indivisible and indestructible continuity of a melody where the past enters into the present and forms with it an undivided whole which remains undivided and even indivisible in spite of what is added at every instant … [A]s soon as we seek an intellectual representation of it we line up, one after another, states which have become distinct like the beads of a necklace …[24]

> It is a succession of states each one of which announces what follows and contains what precedes. Strictly speaking they do not constitute multiple states until I have got beyond them and turned around to observe their trail.[25]

In *Time and Free Will* Bergson describes *la durée* as a

> qualitative multiplicity, with no likeness to number; an organic evolution … ; a pure heterogeneity within which there are no distinct qualities. In a word, the moments of inner duration are not external to one another.[26]

In *la durée*, the preceding states of consciousness have a qualitative influence on the ones that follow. For example, whenever we read a new book, our attitude and aesthetic feeling derived from the act of reading contain the series

22 Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, 72–73.

23 See Bertrand Russell, "The Philosophy of Bergson", *The Monist* 22, no. 3 (1912); Karin Costelloe, "An Answer to Mr Bertrand Russell's Article on the Philosophy of Bergson", *The Monist* 24, no. 1 (1914); see also Frédéric Worms, "Bergson entre Russell et Husserl: Un troisième terme?", *Rue Descartes* , no. 29 (2000).

24 Bergson, *Creative Mind*, 55.

25 Bergson, *Creative Mind*, 137.

26 Bergson, *Time and Free Will. An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, 226.

of mental states (emotions, memories) leading up to its reading. Similarly, whenever we read the same book again, the memories of past instances of its reading are "included" in the act of reading it at the present time; "included" not in the sense of containment, but "included" in that the present reading of the book would have been different without the past one. For this reason, *la durée* is unrepeatably different at every point of its development. Bergson also describes *la durée* with the seemingly contradictory phrase of "qualitative multiplicity," which is clarified by Pilkington as follows:

> The notion of 'qualitative plurality' might seem a contradictory one, since to speak of a 'plurality' at all is to envisage the particulars which compose it as being in some sense juxtaposed, … . Bergson however is compelled to use whatever resources language offers him, in order to describe duration; to grasp the notion of 'pure duration,' one must conceive of a succession, which is not separated into a series of discrete states; it is a series of qualitative transformations which flow into each other …[27]

Furthermore, Bergson instructs us to observe that this ever-changing development of our consciousness must be construed as *indivisible*. Take Bergson's example of falling in love with someone: when introspecting ourselves, we can never clearly pinpoint the moment at which our feeling of mild affection "turned" into love — the transition from one to the other is as gradual as the progression from one colour to another on the colour spectrum. Where does one colour end and the other begin? The colour spectrum[28] can also be used to illustrate the following seemingly incompatible claims: according to Bergson, *la durée* (i) can never be precisely divided into distinct segments, (ii) proceeds in "succession" and (iii) it is a multiplicity. (i) The colour spectrum consists of a gradual change from one colour to another — all divisions of the spectrum into distinct colours ("green," "light blue," "yellow"), will always be imprecise. They result from the casting of a "spatial" net over the heterogeneous continuity of the spectrum in order to extract distinct elements from it. Once we divide it into separate colours, we lose the distinct feature of gradual progression, almost an imperceptible shift from one to the other. This is what Deleuze has in mind when he says that *la durée* cannot be divided without changing in kind.[29] (ii) Nevertheless, the fact that the elements composing

27 A. E. Pilkington, *Bergson and His Influence. A Reassessment* (CUP, 1976), 3–4.

28 See Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, 42.

29 Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism* (Zone Books, 1991), 40.

the spectrum cannot be divided does not exclude their *succession*, the change that happens as we go from one side of the spectrum to another; thus there is, paradoxically, a succession (i.e., continuous change) with no distinct elements that succeed (since in our immediate phenomenological perception of change, as opposed to its retrospectively broken-up representation, there are no *distinct* elements). (iii) Despite the fact that the spectrum is indivisible (or rather, that *any division* we impose upon it will always be imprecise and incapable of capturing the immediate phenomenological impact the spectrum has on us as we gradually move our attention from one colour to the next), it is nevertheless a multiplicity (otherwise it would simply be one, consisting of a single colour).

The metaphor of the colour spectrum can further be used to illustrate another paramount concept of Bergson's philosophy, that of what Vladimir Jankélévitch refers to as "the illusion of retrospectivity."[30] Consider the experience of looking at an LED lamp that changes so that it gradually goes through the entire colour spectrum. What is the most accurate description of the way our consciousness perceives the LED lamp? At the moment of looking at it, its changing *qualia* form a continuous shift of one quality to another — we can only isolate distinct colours in it by "jumping back" in our mind by a few seconds and identifying that the colour, say, green has just turned into blue. Furthermore, we can lay out all of our memories of the colours in the past and turn them into the colour spectrum itself which becomes spread out in two-dimensional or three-dimensional space. It is only *on this* spectrum itself that we may impose imperfect divisions of colours and establish relations of before and after. This is what Bergson has in mind when he says that "Strictly speaking [states of consciousness] do not constitute multiple states until I have got beyond them and turned around to observe their trail." The present of *la durée* is indivisible: "when we think we are dividing it, we are dividing its spatial transcription … ."[31] Similarly, when looking at the lamp, we cannot differentiate the individual colours. The relation between the LED lamp and the spatially represented colour spectrum it goes through is analogous to that between *la durée* and the image it has left of itself in our memory.

30 Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Henri Bergson* (Duke Univ. Press, 2015), 11–17.

31 "Quand on croit la diviser, on divise [sa] transcription spatiale …." Milet, *Bergson et le calcul infinitésimal ou La raison et le temps*, 55 my translation.

The relation between *la durée* and the trace of its development in our memory also partially clarifies the claim about indivisibility of *la durée* from point (i) above; the prohibition on construing *la durée* as indivisible is not a contribution to the debate about whether time is discrete (i.e., that a moment of time cannot be further divided into smaller moments) or continuous (i.e., that for any two moments of time, there is another moment between them), it is rather an observation that the negotiation of these questions applies to spatialised time only (which constitutes the form through which we perceive our past), but cannot apply to the phenomenology of our immediate temporal experience.[32] Regardless of whether objective time measured by clocks in the external world is divisible or indivisible, *la durée*, or the time of consciousness, is indivisible. Similarly, although it might be objected that the colour spectrum can always be divided, albeit imperfectly, Bergson's point is to stress that the division cannot be accomplished without changing the nature of the thing being divided. Before the division, we have a gradual qualitative progression from one colour to another (either as we move our eyes from one side of the spectrum to another or as we observe the LED lamp), after the division we move from one colour to another in sudden jumps. While the gap between the quality of the thing before division and after division may not seem so strange in the case of colours, in the case of the feeling of falling in love with someone that I have mentioned above, we can notice a much more radical difference between the presently lived experience of a continuous development of our mental states (e.g., emotions towards the person loved), the indivisible process of falling in love with someone, and the retrospective identification of various stages of this process ("vague interest" at t_1, "strong affection" at t_2, and "love" at t_3).

Apart from stipulating the realm of *la durée* and that of spatial multiplicity, which intrudes into the pure heterogeneity of our mental states as a "ghost of space haunting the reflexive consciousness,"[33] Bergson also provides an analysis of how this intrusion takes place. He argues that the phenomenon

32 As I have mentioned above, in Bergson's later works, *la durée* moves outwards and, as a category, is applied to the totality of physical reality. The limitations of this paper force me to put questions of temporal ontology on the side; here I am primarily limiting Bergson's contribution to questions of the phenomenology of temporal experience and thus focus mainly on his earlier works.

33 Bergson, *Time and Free Will. An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, 95.

of *movement* is one where space and *la durée* come dangerously close; *dangerously* so, because they become mixed. Frédéric Worms describes the process of our consciousness grasping movement in a twofold manner. On the one hand, there is what he calls "temporalisation of space" (*temporalisation de l'espace*[34]) — the moving body is grasped by our *durée*; it is only thanks to our memory as conscious beings that movement and change can be perceived in the external world in the first place. Imagine watching the movement of a clock pendulum from left to right:

> Outside of me, in space, there is never more than a single position of the hand and the pendulum, … It is because *I endure* … that I picture to myself what I call the past oscillations of the pendulum at the same time as I perceive the present oscillation. Now, let us withdraw for a moment the ego which thinks these so-called successive oscillations: there will never be more than a single oscillation, and indeed only a single position, of the pendulum, and hence no duration.[35]

On the other hand, this process also causes the "spatialisation of *la durée*" (*spatialisation de la durée*[36]). Now, Bergson claims that movements of objects are given to consciousness as undivided singular qualities.[37] By shifting our attention from the indivisible qualitative impression of movement of the moving object (best observed in the example of quickly moving objects, e.g., of a falling star[38]) to the trajectory in space traversed by that movement, we inevitably come to identify it with the trajectory itself. Furthermore, since the moments of our *durée* are connectible with positions of space where the object was at different points of the trajectory and since this trajectory (*qua* a curve or a line in space) is geometrically divisible, we come to think that this divisibility applies to the *durée* which constituted the original experience of perceiving the movement as well.[39] Thereby we make two mistakes: first, we fail to see that all movement is given to our consciousness as pure quality;

34 Worms, "Les trois dimensions de la question de l'espace dans l'œuvre de Bergson", 93.
35 Bergson, *Time and Free Will. An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, 108.
36 Worms, "Les trois dimensions de la question de l'espace dans l'œuvre de Bergson", 93.
37 Bergson, *Matière et mémoire. Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit*, 209–15.
38 Bergson, *Durée et Simultanéité. À Propos de La Théorie d'Einstein*, 93.
39 This is treated at length in Bergson, *Durée et Simultanéité. À Propos de La Théorie d'Einstein*, 41–67; see also Henri Bergson, *La Pensée et le mouvant. Essais et conférences* (Presses Universitaires de France, 2013), 157–62.

second, we import all the categories pertaining to the completed trajectory of the moving object to *durée*.

On a side note, it is for all these reasons that Bergson argues that *la durée* is inaccessible to mathematics. For example, in measuring speed, we focus on simultaneities between the positions of moving objects in space to establish relations between them, but the *durée* which constituted our being able to perceive movement in the first place does not appear in the equations.[40] Once the movement has taken place, we note the position of the body at point A and then at point B and compare these with the positions of, say, the hands of a clock; the movement itself which happens between the end and starting point disappears. "Velocity is therefore only a measurement of immobilities in comparison, it indicates the extremities of movement, not the interval."[41] Furthermore, mechanics, Bergson argues, always operate with facts taken as accomplished, never with acts *being* accomplished[42] and since, as has been argued above, the *fait accompli* refers merely to the trace which *la durée* has left in its past and not to *la durée*, *la durée* itself does not and cannot appear in mechanical equations. It is here important to keep in mind that Bergson's accusation against the objective mathematical description of time is not that it is logically inconsistent, but rather that it fails to grasp the phenomenological aspect of change in our consciousness. The difference between the time of physics and the time of consciousness can be clarified by considering Le Poidevin's discussion of a psychological experiment with children conducted by Jean Piaget, which demonstrated that despite an objectively homogeneous movement of water between two flasks of different shapes, the children report that the time it took for the water to move was different, depending on the shape of the flask, thus pointing to a gap between external objective temporality and time of consciousness.[43] Le Poidevin says:

> For these children, suggests Piaget, …, time is *plastic*: it expands when the movement of water is slow, and contracts when the movement is fast.

40 Bergson, *Durée et Simultanéité. À Propos de La Théorie d'Einstein*, 67.

41 John Mullarkey, *Bergson and Philosophy* (Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1999), 16.

42 Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, 89.

43 Robin Le Poidevin, *The Images of Time. An Essay on Temporal Representation* (OUP, 2007), 34–35.

> A greater displacement of water, or, more generally, a greater amount of activity, must, on this view of the world, take more time.[44]

Piaget interprets this rather bizarre phenomenon superficially appearing to involve "an incorrect understanding of the relationships between motion (or change in general), speed, and duration"[45] by the child's egocentric understanding of time, an understanding which has not yet reached the stage of grasping time as homogeneous and uniform.[46] Bergson, on the other hand, would phrase the meaning of the above experiment differently. He would claim that although the position and physical "speed" of the water moving from the top vessel to the bottom one may have been equal, the internal experience that this has caused in the children's *durée* was different — nevertheless, the children's subjective perception of the water moving was required for them to talk about temporal experience in the first place.

III. ATEMPORAL DURATION

Putting Bergson aside for the time being, I will now provide a brief outline of Stump and Kretzmann's concept of "atemporal duration" and the most significant objections against it following the publication of "Eternity" in 1981.[47]

Stump and Kretzmann's discussion of eternity begins by identifying four aspects of Boethius' famous definition of eternity as "simultaneous and perfect possession of boundless life" (*interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio*).[48] (i) God has a *life*. Eternity is not comparable to the mode of existence of, for example, universals, numbers or truths.[49] (ii) God's life is *illimitable*: it has neither a beginning nor an ending in time. While Stump and Kretzmann briefly consider the possibility of this "illimitability" referring to the lack of limits of a *single instant of time* ("what cannot be extended, cannot be limited in its extent"[50]), in the end, they read Boethius' understanding

44 Le Poidevin, *The Images of Time. An Essay on Temporal Representation*, 35.
45 Le Poidevin, *The Images of Time. An Essay on Temporal Representation*, 35.
46 J. Piaget, *The Child's Conception of Time* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 48.
47 As I mentioned in my introduction, this section is concerned only with atemporal duration and not with ET-simultaneity, which I take to be separable from it.
48 Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, 422–25.
49 Stump and Kretzmann, "Eternity", 431.
50 Stump and Kretzmann, "Eternity", 432.

of eternity as "beginningless, endless, infinite duration."[51] (iii) God's life is a duration. While they do acknowledge that it is a duration of "a special sort,"[52] this follows directly from their understanding of "illimitability" from the preceding point. (iv) God possesses his entire life *at once* (*tota simul*). According to them, all the "events" of God's life are mutually simultaneous. These four points, in turn, lead them to conclude that eternity is an "atemporal duration," which is characterised by the following four features:

First, there is no earlier or later in God's life: its events are mutually simultaneous and present, but cannot be sequentially ordered.[53] They also argue that there cannot be subphases of this duration.[54] Second, while eternity is a duration, it is a duration that does not consist of a succession of events: "no eternal entity has existed or will exist, it *only* exists."[55] Third, the sense of "duration" in "atemporal duration" cannot be taken to mean "persistence through time," as it is used in common parlance. Stump and Kretzmann acknowledge that such a sense of "duration" "violates established usage: but [that] an attempt to convey a new philosophical or scientific concept by adapting familiar expressions is not to be rejected on the basis of its violation of ordinary usage."[56] Moreover, they believe that atemporal duration grounds all other forms of duration. Replying to Nelson who criticises them for being caught in either an equivocal or a univocal use of "duration" in relation to God and temporal phenomena,[57] Stump and Kretzmann argue for an *analogical* use of "duration" and conclude that

> [a]temporal duration is the genuine, paradigmatic duration, of which temporal duration is only the moving image. … [I]t is the basis of all temporal duration, any instance of which is correctly called duration only *analogically* since it is only a partial manifestation of the paradigmatic, genuine duration … ."[58]

51 Stump and Kretzmann, "Eternity", 433.
52 Stump and Kretzmann, "Eternity", 433.
53 Stump and Kretzmann, "Eternity", 434.
54 Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Atemporal Duration. A Reply to Fitzgerald", *The Journal of Philosophy* 84, no. 4 (1987), 219.
55 Stump and Kretzmann, "Eternity", 434.
56 Stump and Kretzmann, "Eternity", 446.
57 Herbert J. Nelson, "Time(s), Eternity, and Duration", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 22, no. 1/2 (1987), 12.
58 Stump and Kretzmann, "Atemporal Duration. A Reply to Fitzgerald", 219.

Fourth, despite atemporal duration's indivisibility, successionlessness and complete simultaneity, Stump and Kretzmann believe that Boethius' duration is an *extended* duration, an "infinitely *enduring*" present.[59]

Soon after the publication of "Eternity," objections against "atemporal duration" began to appear. While it is impossible to capture the entirety of the debate, the three strongest objections against Stump and Kretzmann's position can be classified under three headings:

The first objection states that "atemporal duration" cannot be a "duration" at all, since a "duration" is an extension and "atemporal duration" does not satisfy conditions for extensionality. For example, Fitzgerald observes that for any duration, it must be possible that "two particulars may both have the same or a different *amount* of the mode of extension in question."[60] This means that even if atemporal duration is infinitely extended, there must, at least in theory, be distinct *subphases* of duration, otherwise to apply the term *extension* to atemporal duration does not make sense. However, as has been mentioned above, Stump and Kretzmann reject the possibility of "atemporal duration" having distinct subphases. Fitzgerald concludes that for this reason in atemporal duration "we do not really have an extensive mode in eternality at all, given not only that past and future and earlier and later are inapplicable, but that there is no analogue of them."[61]

The second objection concerns the problem of "atemporal duration" being a *time-like* extension. In 1990, Leftow observed that "duration" in the Stump-Kretzmannian reading is supposed to be a *timelike* extension, although the use of "timelike" in this sense is of course highly analogical, as Stump and Kretzmann themselves concede.[62] However, one cannot coherently speak of atemporal duration as a *timelike* extension in the way that they imagine because it leads to the following problem: "Arguably, what contains no distinct points is not an extension at all [see Fitzgerald], and what contains distinct points, but not points ordered as earlier and later, may be an extension, but lacks the traits distinctive of *temporal* extension."[63]

59 Stump and Kretzmann, "Atemporal Duration. A Reply to Fitzgerald", 219.

60 Paul Fitzgerald, "Stump and Kretzmann on Time and Eternity", *The Journal of Philosophy* 84, no. 5 (1985), 262.

61 Ibid.

62 See Stump and Kretzmann, "Atemporal Duration. A Reply to Fitzgerald".

63 Leftow, "Boethius on Eternity", 128.

The third objection attacks the possibility of "duration" in "atemporal duration" being used in a sense analogical to "duration" in the temporal realm. This option was proposed by Stump and Kretzmann in their response to Fitzgerald to avoid the charge that "duration" in "atemporal duration" is used in an extremely deviant sense that has nothing in common with ordinary usage.[64] Unfortunately, as Rogers observes,[65] the appeal to analogy does not help. It does not seem like our experience, where we first encounter perfections predicable of God, presents us with *anything at all* that we could use to get a hold of atemporal duration or to use as a basis for analogising up to "atemporal duration:" "If we cannot, in however limited a way, show where the similarity lies between Creator and creature, we may use the same word of both, but we are using it equivocally."[66]

IV. ATEMPORAL DURÉE

The temporal development of our consciousness is roughly divided into two segments, with imprecise boundaries between them. On the one hand, there is that part of our consciousness consisting of the present moment. This roughly corresponds to what is sometimes referred to as the "specious present."[67] On the other hand, there is the past of our consciousness, accessible by memory. Now, the proportion of these two parts of our conscious history is different from person to person — some people can focus their attention for two or three seconds, some for more. Nevertheless, for all creatures whose consciousness develops in time, there is a qualitative difference between perception and memory. Now, Bergson states that this distinction must be held in conjunction with the conceptual difference between *la durée* and its trace in the past. It is only when we remember the past development of *la durée* that we may attempt to identify distinct moments in its trace, stipulate relations of "before"

64 Stump and Kretzmann, "Atemporal Duration. A Reply to Fitzgerald"; see also Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity, Awareness, and Action", *Faith and Philosophy* 9, no. 4 (1992).

65 Katherin A. Rogers, "Eternity Has No Duration", *Religious Studies* 30, no. 1 (1994).

66 Rogers, "Eternity Has No Duration", 14.

67 For a discussion of this notion endorsed by Bergson, see William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1983); see also Le Poidevin, *The Images of Time. An Essay on Temporal Representation*, 80; Sean Enda Power, "The Metaphysics of the 'Specious' Present," *Erkenntnis* 77, no. 1 (2012): 121–32.

and "after," similarly to the way that we may split the memory of the immediate phenomenological perception of the LED lamp into distinct colours. In *la durée*, as it is *developing*, no such divisions can be made.

Now, imagine gradually extending the present attention of our consciousness into the past. For example, most people are able to focus their attention on one or two sentences at a time — imagine someone who could hold in one act of consciousness the entire act of reading a book, then a library etc. As we keep extending this present attention of *la durée*, the proportion between memory and present perception decreases. Finally, let us imagine a consciousness with such perfect attention that its *durée* would perfectly coincide with its memory. The entirety of its conscious life (which is for human beings separated into the past and the present) would always be *present*, still developing (as the phenomenological *qualia*-like impression of the LED lamp) as a constant movement of consciousness. Bergson himself hypothesises such a *durée* as follows:

> An attention … sufficiently powerful … would thus include in an undivided present the entire past history of the conscious person, — not as instantaneity, not like a cluster of simultaneous parts, but as something continually present, which would also be something continually moving: such, I repeat, is the melody which one perceives as indivisible, and which constitutes, from one end to the other … a perpetual present, although this perpetuity has nothing in common with immutability, or this indivisibility with instantaneity. What we have is a present which endures.[68]

My claim is that "atemporal duration" should be understood as such a "perpetual present," i.e., *la durée*. This special instance of *la durée* can be characterised as follows:

First, the "time" of divine life as understood along Bergsonian lines is radically opposed to the temporal categories of mathematical or physical time. It is the time of consciousness, *not* a potentially infinitely divisible continuum with clear outlines, subphases, instants and points since divisions can only be effected imperfectly on the trace in the past of our *durée*. In this respect, God is *temporal* if "time" is taken as the time of consciousness, that is, *durée*, but God is *timeless* if "time" is taken as the objective time applicable to the external world. God's life is an *indivisible partless change*.

68 Bergson, *Creative Mind*, 127.

Second, whenever we find ourselves speaking of distinct separable events in God's life (e.g., of His "speaking to Moses" *before* "sending His Son"), we are only looking back at the time passed in our *durée*, directly accessible by memory, and not time *passing*. We cannot separate such events *in* God's *durée in se*, only in the trace it has left in our *durée, quoad nos*. That is because when we consider that God's time is a "perpetual" continuously developing indivisible present, we realise that to speak of distinct events in God's *durée* is as contradictory as identifying distinct subphases in the development of our present attention.

We cannot individuate mental states in our *durée*, but only once they have taken place and have become memory. This awareness of the difference between growing memory and perception is precisely what constitutes our awareness of the passage of time. Similarly, the development of God's *durée* is indivisible as it is happening (which is always, i.e., the entirety of his *durée* is "ET-simultaneous" with every point of our *durée*), but we can conceive of its traces in our past being divided once certain events have happened from our temporal perspective and have become part of the memory of our *durée*. We see them in our past because our "specious present" is complemented by our memory. In the case of God, on the other hand, there is no separation between present and past.[69] The reason why we cannot ask about the trace of past moments in God's life *in se* is that, *in se*, there is no such trace — God's memory perfectly overlaps with his present phenomenological attention. However, we may do so *quoad nos*, since those moments that have manifested themselves in our past are now retained by *our* memory and are thus subject to the topology of spatialised time. In this sense, there is "order" of events in divine life, but we must constantly be aware that when speaking of such an order, we are moving at the level of events that have been retained in our own memory. Now, the claim that God's time is a perpetual, continuously

69 For a brief discussion of the possibility of conceiving God's knowledge of the world as specious present, see William P. Alston, "Hartshorne and Aquinas: A Via Media", in *Divine Nature and Human Language. Essays in Philosophical Theology* (Cornell Univ. Press, 1989), 136; Stump and Kretzmann, "Eternity, Awareness, and Action", 468. Cf. Alston: "Even though I perceive one-twentieth of a second all at once, I, and my awareness, are still in time, … But a being with an infinite specious present would not, so far as his awareness is concerned, be subjected to temporal succession at all. … Everything would be grasped in one temporally unextended awareness." (Alston, 136)

developing, indivisible present seems to involve blatant contradictions. How can something change without going through stages of change? Responding to the charge of contradictions in Bergson's definition of *la durée* would involve going into Bergson's theory of language, and the way it relates to *la durée*, which is beyond the scope of this paper. However, in passing, it should be stressed that the objective of Bergson's method is not to provide a precise definition of *la durée*, but rather to use language to point us to the fundamental experience of temporality immediately furnished by our consciousness, which has been covered up by inappropriate forms of thought borrowed from a realm inapplicable to it. When we are in the act of perceiving change, we are perceiving it as indivisible — in this respect, the change in our *durée* is indivisible and yet changing. The *prima facie* self-contradictory move of holding together both the notion of an "infinite specious present" and "temporally unextended awareness" suggested by Alston (see footnote 69) is further commented on by him as follows:

> The psychological concept of the specious present is intended to embody the possibility that one might be aware of a process without successively being aware of its temporal parts. But this does not imply that the awareness itself is a process without succession. … [T]he various stages of [God's] life will not occur successively in time but will occur or 'be given' in one unity of felt immediacy.[70]

Third, the experience of such a *durée* is phenomenologically inaccessible to us. Some *durées* are completely unimaginable to ours because their rhythm is faster, more intense than that of our own, for example, the consciousness of a hypothetical human being able to perceive the spinning of electrons. Others are inaccessible because they are far slower, e.g., that of a hypothetical human able to perceive the movement of continents.[71] Moore provides a fascinating illustration of this point:

70 Alston, "Hartshorne and Aquinas: A Via Media", 138–39.

71 Here the term "faster" is used merely metaphorically to capture the difference between the "intensity" of different *durées*, i.e., the dimensions of their "specious present" in proportion to its memory and the number of impressions or perceptual inputs that the specious present is capable of capturing. A good illustration can be supplied by Le Poidevin's discussion of a patient with a brain injury for whom ordinary movements of objects would be happening too fast to perceive. See Le Poidevin, *The Images of Time. An Essay on Temporal Representation*, 107–8.

> The story is told how Wittgenstein was walking with friends, and suggested that they should act out the solar system. … The real difficulties [of this game] are temporal. For to keep an apparent circular motion round my sun, I shall have to change my speed at each moment, going faster when I am going in the direction of the sun, and slowing down when I am going in the other direction. … If moon-Wittgenstein is to go at a feasible speed, the earth-husband will have to be going very slowly, and the motion of the sun-wife will need to be imperceptible. ... *In short, the experience of temporal process required by the game is inaccessible to us.*[72]

Fourth, God has a life. But His life must be construed as an *indivisible progress*. The seemingly contradictory description of *la durée* as "indivisible change" has been clarified in section II with regards to the LED lamp and colour-spectrum examples; the paradoxical notion of "indivisible progress" refers to the phenomenological awareness of change in our present attention which is indivisible. Our "specious present" is given to us as an indivisible unit of qualitative change, which is only divisible retrospectively, once the specious present has become part of our memory. By looking back at God's past dealings with the world, in which we can isolate events and speak of "God's knowing something at 15:00" and "God's knowing something at 15:01," we are not operating at the level of God's *durée*. An understanding of divine "time" as *la durée* means that there is "change" and development in God, but not a separation into temporal parts. He is "timeless" insofar as He is not divisible into temporal parts pertaining to physical time (since dividing His life in such a way implies operating on the mere shadow of the *durée*), but not "timeless" in the sense of there not being change in Him, although "change" here is used in the Bergsonian sense applicable to the phenomenology of temporal experience in consciousness.

How does identifying "atemporal duration" with *la durée* respond to the objections against Stump and Kretzmann raised at the end of section III? First, from a Bergsonian perspective, Fitzgerald's requirement for atemporal duration to consist of different "amounts" of duration does not make sense — we can speak of "amounts" of space (centimetres, metres), or amounts of physical time (hours, minutes), but not of *durée*, which is pure heterogeneous quality and therefore unquantifiable. By the same token, since God's atemporal duration is *durée* which is happening, it does not make sense

72 Francis Charles Timothy Moore, *Bergson: Thinking Backwards* (CUP, 1996), 60 my italics.

to speak of "positions" or "points" in it — when we are conceptualising divine eternity in such a way, we are merely looking back at God's actions in *our* time as they happened in our own temporal perspective and as they are retained by *our* memory. In this respect the separation between our *durée* (separated into present attention and memory) and divine *durée* (the attention of the perpetual present) maps onto the following distinction posited by Stump and Kretzmann:

> [atemporal duration] is not made up of components at all, actual or potential; instead, it is *potentially divisible conceptually*. … [I]n his own nature God is pure actuality, but nothing in that claim prohibits our conceiving of God as successively actualizing various potentialities, *when we conceive of him from our temporal point of view*.[73]

Furthermore, this divisibility *quoad nos* only refers to the traces that God's being has left in our memory. Whilst Stump and Kretzmann in the quote above speak of conceiving, in the present, of God as actualising possibles, on the Bergsonian reading this should only be limited to referring to the past as it is remembered by humans, to actions that God has performed before the present we are currently perceiving.

Second, similar considerations apply to Leftow's objection — the atemporal *durée* does not contain points, either in succession (as he accuses Stump and Kretzmann of claiming) or points ordered by earlier/later relations. These can only be specified in retrospect. Nevertheless, its time-likeness is constituted by the analogical process of gradually overlapping our present attention and memory (which are clearly in a time-like relation). On the other hand, its "atemporality" is constituted by the impossibility of separating it into subphases in itself, but merely in its manifestation to our *durée* in the created realm.

Third, this way of conceiving God's *durée* provides sufficient grounds for describing it as analogical. God's *durée* is *analogical* to ours since our *durée* shares with His complete indivisibility. The indivisibility of the present attention constitutes the overlap, the similarity, with divine *durée*, the separation of our *durée* into present attention and memory constitutes the difference. We could imagine a hierarchy of *durées* (from Le Poidevin's patients with

73 Stump and Kretzmann, "Atemporal Duration. A Reply to Fitzgerald," 216, first italics original, second mine.

brain injuries, through hypothetical people observing the movement of continents) going all the way up to God. In this way, God's *durée* is at least conceptually related to ours. Nevertheless, it is also qualitatively different from ours, since it is always attentive to itself, with no separation between present perception and past memory in its perpetual present. By positing hypothetical entities whose attention spans longer and longer portions of human time, we can imagine ascending up to it, though never fully grasping it, since our own thought, even when perceiving our own selves, let alone conceiving of God, will always be subject to the separation of (i) the retrospectively divisible, line-like memory of our consciousness isolatable into distinct mental states and (ii) our present attention.

V. OBJECTIONS

It may be argued that although the identification of *la durée* with atemporal duration solves the three objections from above, it generates problems of its own.

The first problem concerns the ontological relationship between divine *durée* and our *durée*, which poses the following dilemma. On the one hand, Bergson argues that our consciousness clearly presents us with a "now" constituted by the conscious present and that for our *durée* the future does not exist in any sense. This seems to commit Bergson to presentism or the growing-block theory of time. On the other hand, I have argued that God's *durée* merges memory and perception into a single indivisible perpetual present. Since God's knowledge of Himself is identical with His knowledge of the world, it seems that (our) future must in a way exist in order for Him to know it.[74] This seems to commit the model outlined above to eternalism. Which one do we accept? As I have mentioned above, this is not a problem unique to the Bergsonian take on "atemporal duration" presented in this paper, but a problem for any conception of divine eternity which insists both on omniscience and free will. However, Bergson aside, I agree with Shanley who claims that the focus on the debate about temporal ontology *and God* should

74 See for example D. H. Mellor, "History Without the Flow of Time", *Neue Zeitschrift Für Systematische Theologie Und Religionsphilosophie* 28 (1986); William Lane Craig, "Was Thomas Aquinas a B-Theorist of Time?", *New Scholasticism* 59, no. 4 (1985).

be shifted to the utter dependency of creation on its Creator.[75] For example, the question of whether God knows the future depending on whether it is already "there," as eternalism seems to imply[76] or whether He does not because it does not yet exist, as presentism or growing-block seem to suggest, is simply the wrong type of question to ask. God knows the future because He *creates it*, not because it is there or will be there for his "perceptual knowledge" to access. Theologians should move away from the tendency to first picture independently existing temporal reality (Bergsonian or not), then an independently existing God and trying to establish epistemic relations between them, especially considering the fact that this project usually tends to fail. Once we shift our focus from independent temporal ontology to God's creative action, it does not seem so surprising that, as Mullins points out, most of the medieval theologians insisting on eternity, omniscience and free will, were, rather counterintuitively, presentists.[77]

The second objection concerns the difference between divine atemporal duration (or atemporal "*durée*") and human duration. I have shown that there is sufficient overlap between our *durée* and divine *durée*. But has the distinction between them not collapsed? If our *durée* is indivisible and God's *durée* is too, also characterised by a perpetual change, does anything prevent us from saying that our own consciousness is also an example of atemporal duration? Here the response is rather simple; there is an analogy between our *durée* in the present moment and the divine atemporal duration, but ours is different since we are subject to progression in time and the separation of present perception and memory. Nothing of this sort applies to the divine *durée*.

Third, it may be objected that we cannot identify time with consciousness. Some philosophers indeed draw a tight connection between consciousness and time (thus qualitatively differentiating time from space which, arguably,

75 See Brian J. Shanley, "Eternal Knowledge of the Temporal in Aquinas", *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 71, no. 2 (1997); see also Brian J. Shanley, "Aquinas on God's Causal Knowledge: A Reply to Stump and Kretzmann", *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (1998); Brian J. Shanley, "Divine Causation and Human Freedom in Aquinas", *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (1998); Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity and God's Knowledge: A Reply to Shanley", *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (1998).

76 See for example Mellor, "History Without the Flow of Time".

77 See Mullins, *The End of the Timeless God*, 74–86.

can be conceived without appeal to the presence of a human mind).[78] I have not shown that time is dependent for its existence on the human mind. To respond to the first objection, I must reiterate the claim from my Introduction where I have intentionally limited Bergson's *durée* to consciousness. As has been demonstrated above, to move away from physical time as a means of fleshing out the content of "atemporal duration" and instead model its properties on *la durée* as a more accurate way of capturing the phenomenological *qualia* of consciousness provides a more coherent way of conceiving atemporal duration. This move away from physical time to *la durée*, with its concomitant distinction between perception and memory (i.e., the present and past of consciousness) also explains why certain topological features of physical time (e.g., its divisibility into distinct segments, points etc.) are inapplicable to *la durée* and, by extension, to Stump and Kretzmann's "atemporal duration."

VI. CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, it might be objected that I have merely blurred the distinctions between divine timelessness and divine temporality. In what respect is the "perpetual present" a version of divine tim*eless*ness? Was not Stump' and Kretzmann's intention from the beginning to preserve the idea of a *timeless* duration? But here, it must be repeated that we are forced to make a distinction between timelessness and duration only if we accept physical, objective time as somehow providing the means for capturing the divine mode of being: it is time modelled on objects existing in the physical universe that forces us to decide between (i) God existing outside of physical time, thus having none (or not all) of the properties applicable to physical time or (ii) a God existing somehow in this physical time but not subject to some of its limitations.[79] Neither of these has so far provided a satisfactory way of understanding what "atemporal duration" is. On the contrary, by moving to the phenomenology of time of *consciousness*, captured by Bergson's concept of *la durée*, we can not only remove some of the contradictions caused by import-

78 See for example J. R. Lucas, *A Treatise on Time and Space* (Methuen & Co, 1973), 7–16.

79 See e.g., Robert Pasnau, "On Existing All at Once," in *God, Time and Eternity*, ed. Christian Tapp and Edmund Runggaldier (Routledge, 2016), 11–28.

ing the topology of physical time into "atemporal duration," but also use our own immediately accessible consciousness as a tangible bedrock on which to establish relations of analogy between human *durée* and divine *durée*. The Bergsonian "perpetual present" is atemporal in that it is not subject to change in physical time, but it is a "duration" in that it has a *durée*.[80]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alston, William P. 1989. "Hartshorne and Aquinas: A Via Media". In *Divine Nature and Human Language. Essays in Philosophical Theology*, 121–43. Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press.

Bergson, Henri. 1913. *Time and Free Will. An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*. Translated by F. L. Pogson. London: George Allen & Co.

—. 2007. *Creative Mind*. Translated by Mabelle L. Andison. New York: Dover Publications.

—. 2007. *L'Évolution créatrice*. Édition critique dirigée par Fréderic Worms. Volume edité par Arnaud François. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

—. 2009. *Durée et Simultanéité. À Propos de La Théorie d'Einstein*. Édition critique dirigée par Frédéric Worms. Volume edité par Elie During. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

—. 2012. *Matière et mémoire. Essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit*. Édition critique dirigée par Frédéric Worms. Volume edité par Camille Riquier. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

—. 2013. *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*. Édition critique dirigée par Frédéric Worms. Volume edité par Arnaud Bouaniche. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

—. 2013. *La Pensée et le mouvant. Essais et conférences*. Édition critique dirigée par Frédéric Worms. Volume édité par Arnaud Bouaniche, Arnaud François, Frédéric Fruteau de Laclos, Stéphane Madelrieux, Claire Marin, Ghislain Waterlot. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

80 I am greatly indebted to Sarah Coakley, Ryan Mullins, Jacob Sherman, anonymous reviewers of the EJPR and participants of the *Summer School on The Nature of God: Personal and A-Personal Concepts of the Divine* (Innsbruck, Austria, 25th July — 9th August 2018) for comments on earlier versions of this paper. This paper was supported by funding from a studentship hosted by the Cambridge Arts and Humanities Research Council Doctoral Training Partnership and Pembroke College, Cambridge.

—. 2016. *Histoire de l'idée de temps. Cours au Collège de France 1902–1903*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Boethius. 1973. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Translated by S. J. Tester. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press.

Coburn, Robert C. 1963. "Professor Malcolm on God". *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 41, no. 2: 143–162. doi:10.1080/00048406312341151.

Costelloe, Karin. 1914. "An Answer to Mr Bertrand Russell's Article on the Philosophy of Bergson". *The Monist* 24, no. 1: 145–155. doi:10.5840/monist191424130.

Craig, William Lane. 1985. "Was Thomas Aquinas a B-Theorist of Time?" *New Scholasticism* 59, no. 4: 475–83. doi:10.5840/newscholas19855946.

De Florio, C., and A. Frigerio. 2015. "In Defense of the Timeless Solution to the Problem of Human Free Will and Divine Foreknowledge". *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 78, no. 1: 5–28. doi:10.1007/s11153-014-9471-4.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1991. *Bergsonism*. Translated by Hugh Tomlison and Barbara Habberjam. New York: Zone Books.

Deppe, Sonja. 2016. "The Mind-Dependence of the Relational Structure of Time (or: What Henri Bergson Would Say to B-Theorists)". *Kriterion - Journal of Philosophy* 30, no. 2: 107–24.

Diekemper, J. 2013. "Eternity, Knowledge and Freedom". *Religious Studies* 49, no. 1: 45–64. doi:10.1017/S0034412512000170.

Fitzgerald, Paul. 1985. "Stump and Kretzmann on Time and Eternity". *The Journal of Philosophy* 84, no. 5: 260–269. doi:10.2307/2026491.

Hankey, W. J. 2006. *One Hundred Years of Neoplatonism in France: A Brief Philosophical History*. Leuven, Paris and Dudley: Peters.

Hasker, William. 1989. *God, Time and Knowledge*. London and Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press.

Helm, Paul. 2009. "Eternity and Vision in Boethius". *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 1, no. 1: 77–97. doi:10.24204/ejpr.v1i1.331.

—. 2010. *Eternal God. A Study of God without Time*. Second edition. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Jäger, Christoph. 2013. "Molinism and Theological Compatibilism". *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 5, no. 1: 71–92. doi:10.24204/ejpr.v5i1.249.

James, William. 1983. *The Principles of Psychology*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press.

Jankélévitch, Vladimir. 2015. *Henri Bergson*. Translated by Nils F. Schott. London and Durham: Duke Univ. Press.

Kant, Immanuel. 1998. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by Allen W. Wood and J. Paul Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Kneale, William. 1985. "Time and Eternity in Theology". *Proceedings of The Aristotelian Society* 61: 87–108. doi:10.1093/aristotelian/61.1.87.

Le Poidevin, Robin. 2007. *The Images of Time. An Essay on Temporal Representation*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

Leftow, Brian. 1990. "Boethius on Eternity". *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 7, no. 2: 123–42. www.jstor.org/stable/27743927.

Lewis, Delmas. 1984. "Eternity Again: A Reply to Stump and Kretzmann". *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 15, no. 1/2: 73–79. www.jstor.org/stable/40024825.

Lucas, J. R. 1973. *A Treatise on Time and Space*. London: Methuen & Co.

Mellor, D. H. 1986. "History Without the Flow of Time". *Neue Zeitschrift Für Systematische Theologie Und Religionsphilosophie* 28: 68–76.

Milet, Jean. 1974. *Bergson et le calcul infinitésimal ou La raison et le temps*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Moore, Francis Charles Timothy. 1996. *Bergson: Thinking Backwards*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Mossé-Bastide, Rose-Marie. 1959. *Bergson et Plotin*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Mullarkey, John. 1999. *Bergson and Philosophy*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press.

Mullins, Ryan T. 2013. "Simply Impossible: A Case Against Divine Simplicity". *Journal of Reformed Theology* 7, no. 2: 181–203. doi:10.1163/15697312-12341294.

—. 2016. *The End of the Timeless God*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Mutch, A. 2016. "The Limits of Process: On (Re)Reading Henri Bergson". *Organization* 23, no. 6: 825–40.

Nelson, Herbert J. 1987. "Time(s), Eternity, and Duration". *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 22, no. 1/2: 3–19. doi:10.1177/1350508415622698.

Olma, Sebastian. 2007. "Physical Bergsonism and the Worldliness of Time". *Theory, Culture & Society* 24, no. 6: 123–137. doi:10.1177/0263276407078715.

Pasnau, Robert. 2016. "On Existing All at Once". In *God, Time and Eternity*, edited by Christian Tapp and Edmund Runggaldier, 11–28. New York: Routledge.

Piaget, J. 1969. *The Child's Conception of Time*. Translated by J. A. Pomerans. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Pilkington, A. E. 1976. *Bergson and His Influence. A Reassessment*. London, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Power, Sean Enda. 2012. "The Metaphysics of the 'Specious' Present". *Erkenntnis* 77, no. 1: 121–32. doi:10.1007/s10670-011-9287-x.

Riggio, Adam. 2016. "Lessons for the Relationship of Philosophy and Science From the Legacy of Henri Bergson". *Social Epistemology* 30, no. 2: 213–26. .

Robbins, Stephen E. 2004. "On Time, Memory and Dynamic Form". *Consciousness and Cognition* 13: 762–788. doi:10.1016/j.concog.2004.07.006.

Rogers, Katherin A. 1994. "Eternity Has No Duration". *Religious Studies* 30, no. 1: 1–16. doi:10.1017/S003441250002268X.

Rota, Michael. 2010. "The Eternity Solution to the Problem of Human Freedom and Divine Foreknowledge". *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 2, no. 1: 165–86. doi:10.24204/ejpr.v2i1.359.

Russell, Bertrand. 1912. "The Philosophy of Bergson". *The Monist* 22, no. 3: 321–47. doi:10.5840/monist191222324.

Shanley, Brian J. 1997. "Eternal Knowledge of the Temporal in Aquinas". *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 71, no. 2: 197–224. doi:10.5840/acpq199771244.

—. 1998. "Aquinas on God's Causal Knowledge: A Reply to Stump and Kretzmann". *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 72, no. 3: 447–57. doi:10.5840/acpq199872330.

—. 1998. "Divine Causation and Human Freedom in Aquinas". *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 72, no. 1: 99–122. doi:10.5840/acpq19987216.

Soulez, Philippe, and Frédéric Worms. 1997. *Bergson. Biographie*. Paris: Flammarion.

Stump, Eleonore, and Norman Kretzmann. 1981. "Eternity". *The Journal of Philosophy* 78, no. 8: 429–57. doi:10.2307/2026047.

—. 1987. "Atemporal Duration. A Reply to Fitzgerald". *The Journal of Philosophy* 84, no. 4: 214–19. doi:10.2307/2027159.

—. 1992. "Eternity, Awareness, and Action". *Faith and Philosophy* 9, no. 4: 463–82. doi:10.5840/faithphil19929433.

—. 1998. "Eternity and God's Knowledge: A Reply to Shanley". *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 72, no. 3: 439–45. doi:10.5840/acpq199872329.

Swinburne, Richard. 1993. "God and Time". In *Reasoned Faith: Essays in Honor of Norman Kretzmann*, edited by Eleonore Stump, 204–22. Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press.

—. 2016. *The Coherence of Theism*. Second edition. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Williams, Clifford. 1996. "The Metaphysics of A- and B-Time". *The Philosophical Quarterly* 46, no. 194: 371–81. doi:10.2307/2956448.

—. 1998. "A Bergsonian Approach to A- and B-Time". *Philosophy* 73, no. 285: 379–93.

Worms, Frédéric. 1994. "Les trois dimensions de la question de l'espace dans l'œuvre de Bergson". *Épokhè* 94, no. 4: 89–116.

—. 2000. "Bergson entre Russell et Husserl: Un troisième terme?" *Rue Descartes*, no. 29: 79–96. www.jstor.org/stable/40978610.

JOHN DAVENPORT
Fordham University

Sylvia Walsh, *Kierkegaard and Religion: Personality, Character, and Virtue*. Cambridge: CUP, 2018, 245 pp.

I. Brief Background and book themes.

Sylvia Walsh is among the most important writers on Kierkegaard in English in recent decades. Her monographs and essays have focused on themes in Kierkegaard's later more explicitly Christian work and late journals, from *Sickness Unto Death* onwards, which have received less attention in recent discussions of psychological and ethical ideas in his earlier pseudonymous works and "upbuilding discourses." For anyone seeking to understand Kierkegaard's late religious thought and themes such as "dying to the world," Walsh's scholarship is indispensable.

The same remains true in her new monograph, *Kierkegaard and Religion,* which is informed throughout by Walsh's detailed and sympathetic grasp of Kierkegaard's most demanding writings on Christian discipleship. However, here she also engages with themes in the earlier pseudonymous texts and "ethico-religious" discourses, including personal identity, character, virtues, or other "spiritual qualities." Her novel take on these topics adds to Walsh's significant contributions to recent debates on how Kierkegaard conceives neighbor-love and its relations with other types of love in the less universal (or "special") relationships. I will focus on Walsh's challenge to readings of Kierkegaard as a virtue ethicist, given abundant recent interest in this debate.

As the Prologue makes clear, much of Walsh's interest lies in clarifying how Kierkegaard understands "character" in contrast with work in empirical and philosophical psychology more broadly. In particular, her thesis is that Kierkegaard contributes a distinctively Christian understanding of character that is largely absent even in recent "characterology" (my term) informed by ethical theory and conceptions of ethical virtues. Thus chapter 5 on "Christian character in Kierkegaard's later" Christian writings form "the heart of this study" (15).

Chapter 1 begins with a few remarks on contemporary personality theories such as the Big Five factors of temperament model, before turning to a comprehensive summary of important themes in Kierkegaard's early works; this provides an excellent introduction for readers who are interested in per-

sonality and character but less familiar with Kierkegaard's moral psychology. Notably, while stressing Abraham's absolute obedience to God, Walsh backs the "eschatological" (my term) interpretation of faith in *Fear and Trembling* as focused on the miraculous fulfillment of the ethical ideal beyond any power of human agency (38; compare 64, 113). For Kierkegaard, personality requires "life-development" and even rebirth as one becomes rightly oriented towards the eternal or highest good. Walsh finds in the pseudonymous works "a continuous emphasis on human freedom, choice, resolution, and individual striving along with receptivity to and cooperation with the divine in the formation of personality" (48). This is vital, because it implies that the human will matters: we have some germ of *aseity* in St. Anselm's sense — something that has to arise spontaneously from us, rather than only from God. There is tension here with Walsh's later detailed arguments that Kierkegaard's mature Christian view aims to oust any possible vestige of merit from the faithful human person. I return to this below.

II. Personality, Character, and Virtue

Chapter 2 begins with further brief reflections on contemporary theories. The situation is confusing because, of course, psychologists and philosophers use the relevant terms in a variety of different ways. In many contexts today, "personality" refers to stable aspects of temperament displayed in social interactions that may continue even when morally significant aspects of character, such as one's loves and personal projects, alter drastically. For example, someone may have a morose demeanor throughout life while being courageous in youth and cowardly later on. The idea that true personality is an achievement that requires working with our temperament and rising above aesthetic carelessness and hedonist self-distraction is a uniquely Kierkegaardian contribution in response to the twisted artificiality of the bourgeois salon and narcissistic forms of romanticism.

Similarly, in comparing Kierkegaard's themes and contemporary studies of "moral character traits," it might help to emphasize that Kierkegaard uses "character" in *Two Ages* for the more fundamental condition of taking any serious stand with deep implications for our moral worth, or conceiving oneself according to any robust identity-defining commitments with full acceptance of their ethical implications (see 66–69). This is a constitutive requirement for any particular character-traits or dispositions that make our very person,

rather than our particular actions, either good or evil. Thus Kierkegaard may agree that dispositions or cross-situationally stable traits involving motivations and emotions must be to some extent under our control, so that we can be responsible and morally evaluable for them (51). But he still introduced a distinctive sense of "character;" none of the mainstream accounts today imagine that someone could have morally admirable or reprehensive traits — e.g. being generous or stingy, friendly or surly, polite or rude, kind or cruel — without having owned and worked on such traits as part of a life-view or set of ethically qualified commitments that constitute *existential character*. In fact, Kierkegaard's aesthetes do exemplify a variety of such traits without having a "self" or inner, volitional character. Similarly, ethically engaged agents in Kierkegaard's depictions display different temperamental tendencies and morally evaluable traits, but they all "have character" in the same constitutive sense.

Nevertheless, Walsh's three "portraits of character" are quite helpful. Her analysis of Mr. "A" from *Either/Or* explains how the different narratives in volume I hang together to show how hollow and meaningless aesthetic strategies become once they move beyond the totally unreflective childlike sensuousness. Walsh's treatment of the faithful tax collector helpfully explains journal entries distinguishing "purely personal…existential faith" from faith in goods promised according to a doctrine with its own distinctive demands (65–66). She argues that Kierkegaard's explanation of "character" in *Two Ages* requires the religious inwardness or relation to God that is stressed in his later work. I have argued in *Love, Reason, and Will* that Kierkegaard's "Present Age" essay focuses most on the inwardness achieved *by self-choice* in the Judge's sense, i.e. the mode of commitment or infinite pathos that is the precondition of character. This is closely related to the "fall" from innocence as ignorance mediated by initial anxiety in *The Concept of Anxiety.* These themes suggest, perhaps *pace* Walsh, that the *ethical stage* in Kierkegaard's moral psychology has some independent value or enduring importance in itself, even though it will be incorporated into faith in his final Christian conception. This means that many insights of *Either/Or*, *Two Ages*, the *Concept of Anxiety*, *Stages on Life's Way*, and the *Postscript* can all help people who currently lack faith in religious promises and consolations.

This issue underlies the debate about virtues in chapter 3. I have argued that Kierkegaard is "a kind of virtue ethicist" who focuses on "proto-virtues" needed to overcome aestheticism, such as earnestness, commitment, integrity, and authenticity; yet I agree with most of Walsh's reasons for distinguishing

Kierkegaard's positions on moral character from those typical of recent work on virtues in ethical theory. "Dydig" in Danish connotes excellence, or merits, or even expertise, much as "virtue" in English can suggest a "paragon" of ethical superiority inconsistent with the humility that Kierkegaard stresses throughout his religious writings. Walsh's detailed evidence confirms that Kierkegaard associated talk about natural and even infused virtues with eudaimonism understood as enlightened self-interest, or a sagacious concern for one's own self-realization that is actually self-defeating because it is incompatible with loving other persons or God entirely for their own sake (78, 89, 102–3, 144). Still, even if Kierkegaard shunned the term because of these associations, reconstructing some of his points in the language of virtues as ethically good dispositions could be helpful in explaining his insights and defending the possibility of non-eudaimonist forms of virtue ethics in which the telos is reconceived in terms of a fully meaningful life — at the ethical stage, before its full religious conditions become apparent to the striving agent. The proto-virtues are the qualities involved in becoming a definite personality or "single individual" (107). The same point applies to other terms like "autonomous agency," which Kierkegaard followed Luther in avoiding because of its associations with autarky, even though most forms of self-determination are implied in his work. Patience, purity of heart, earnestness, and faith can be described as human virtues in a similar moderate sense that requires constant volitional effort to sustain (88), and that is humbled in surrendering or resigning all hopes to succeed on our own. Agape may be more complex (see below).

But this point about contemporary appropriations of Kierkegaardian themes to enrich current debates in moral psychology does not refute Walsh's main point that, in several places, Kierkegaard develops the strictest Lutheran view that we are capable of literally nothing, not just outwardly in the concrete earthly realm, but even inwardly — as if all the choices involved in faith are also caused solely by God without anything originating from our own aseity. We do not voluntarily accept "the condition" for faith that God gives, or bring anything of our own into preserving these gifts through our striving (87, 100–2). Crucially, this implies *more* than that we cannot avoid the "totality of guilt" described in the *Postscript* or recover from sin on our own, or become faithful without divine aid — ideas found throughout Kierkegaard's work after *Either/Or*. It is the more extreme doctrine that ethical character and faith do not depend on any initiative for which we are ultimately responsible. A reconstruction

in terms of existential virtues would have to oppose this view, and emphasize instead that "the person himself shall do everything to use what God rightly gives him" (*Christian Discourses*, Discourse on Luke 22:15, Hong ed. p. 254).

Walsh offers good evidence for this strand in Kierkegaard's thought, from early discourses on "Every Good and Perfect Gift" to his later works and journals — see especially Walsh's analysis of his responses to Clausen and Martensen on grace and free will. However, there are other strands in Kierkegaard's work that seem to run counter to this extreme, e.g. remarks implying that we alone choose our non-resistance to grace (avoidance of "offense"). For otherwise, how can human spirits refuse God to the end, even in demonic defiance, as the *Sickness Unto Death* teaches? Walsh's point that Kierkegaard rejects reliance on habits accrued by good actions (see the discussion in *The Crisis*), and instead emphasizes "earnestness" understood as a continually willed or repeated disposition, confirms the importance of the human will, suggesting the existence of *volitional* virtues.

In short, Kierkegaard often appears to *agree* with Martensen that even if, from an external standpoint (as in the *Fragments*), the learner is utterly helpless, from the "subjective, practical standpoint" of a person engaged in living, our continually repeated efforts to pursue good ends and to conform our aims and methods to moral duty are essential (101). Without ethically conscious striving, we could never rediscover the limits the prompt resignation. Thus the young need to strive to the utmost before they can learn how far they are from ethical perfection, or how deep human guilt goes (105–6; compare 146). This is the paradox that David Aiken (following C.S. Lewis) called a "pilgrim's regress." In this sense, we remain God's "co-workers" (89) although our best efforts will only clarify our inadequacy without God. Thus the ethical stage with its volitional aspects is retained within existential faith; it is not like a ladder that is thrown away. We must "personally will" to have faith (88); it is a risk we willingly maintain. So the paradox of humility has two sides: we have to strive for good ends, which may suggest positive qualities and potentials within us, in order for our taking no final credit to mean anything.

III. Conclusion: Christian Character

The crucial fifth chapter seems to confirm this finding. Walsh explains the paradox that, for Kierkegaard, Christians must embrace their "infinite or ideal self" in the likeness of God as their true self, even while recognizing

the infinite difference from this ideal implied by sin. The Christian thus seeks to imitate Christ for God's sake rather than as a means to her own virtue or merit (131). However, in trying to explain this, Walsh inevitably has to do some reconstructing — emphasizing some suggestions in the texts over others — to avoid possible objections to Kierkegaard's late views. For example, if we interpret renouncing the world or self-denial as retreating entirely from social relations or politics, we again lose ethically informed striving and the higher "immediacy" of faith as well. Instead, Walsh argues that it means giving up all desires for "money, success, honor, esteem, prestige, possessions" and confidence in our own agency (132).

This seems to leave some room for caring about finite goods that affect our neighbors' well-being, even if they can never be entirely equalized. For we have to "communicate" our solidarity with others in true neighbor-love, which is a willingness to perish (134–5) or put aside all our personal pursuits if necessary for our neighbors (so much for Bernard Williams's Gauguin). Neighbor-love so understood can still hope for reciprocation from neighbors and involve proper self-love (136). But this must include caring about — and thus recognizing some value in — one's own efforts, striving, and choices. To deny this would put us into the demonic state of asserting that God made a mistake in creating us with free will. Our value lies in our loving unselfishly, and we are commanded to believe that all others (even the outwardly worst) can love. Likewise, while loving others as neighbors is sharing the highest (God) with them (137), our agapic duties cannot be simply to urge them towards worship (for example), or we are back to complete monastic withdrawal from the finite world (149).

In discussing key themes in *Works of Love*, Walsh accepts that agapic love can become a kind of disposition; but it is not a capacity of ours, or an enhanced version of our natural dispositions, like Aquinas's "charity." However, imagining that the Holy Spirit acts directly through us without acts of love coming from our heart or self might be taking the metaphor of becoming "an instrument of God's will" too literally — as if we were merely a colorless window for God's light to shine through. We do have some aseity: for Kierkegaard, "human beings are always free to accept or reject God's gift" (142). Still, Walsh must be correct that for Kierkegaard, we cannot conceive agape as the fulfillment of our natural longing for completeness (144). Although Kierkegaard's Climacus stressed infinite concern for our highest good, Kierkegaard's late works seem to clarify that this can only be understood as salvation *with*

all others. The eternal happiness is the most common or necessarily shared of all goods (145). This is my favorite insight in the book.

There is more to say than space allows about the last parts of Walsh's account. But in sum, this is a provocative account of Kierkegaard's mature conception of character that clarifies many important topics. While it may remain controversial, Walsh's persistence in questioning "virtue" interpretations has put new issues on the agenda in Kierkegaard scholarship.

KENNETH SEESKIN
Northwestern University

James A. Diamond, *Jewish Theology Unbound*. Oxford: OUP 2018, 304 pp.

In the interest of full disclosure, let me say two things. First, I am a long-time friend of James Diamond and greatly admire his work. Second, I am a proponent of doctrines that he firmly rejects, e.g. negative theology and creation ex nihilo. So it is with a good measure of objectivity that I say that *Jewish Theology Unbound* is a highly learned and intricately researched effort to construct a workable theology on a wide range of questions including love, death, freedom, and evil as well as metaphysical issues like the names and nature of God. Diamond's passion for his subject matter, close reading of biblical passages, and thorough knowledge of rabbinic sources are apparent on every page of the book.

Broadly speaking, the book takes on the Christian prejudice that originated with Paul at Galatians 3.13 ("Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.") and carried through to such "enlightened" figures as Kant and Hegel. Against this, Diamond argues that Judaism places heavy emphasis on, even demands, freedom, more specifically freedom from God. In his words (p. 5): "The title of this book, Jewish Theology Unbound, captures a fierce opposition to these theological and philosophical corruptions of Judaism. Jewish 'unbound' theology conveys a sense of vitality and creativity that is anything but passive, slavish, and legalistic."

Freedom from God? Diamond is on solid ground in showing that biblical characters like Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Job feel perfectly free to question God, and in Jacob's case, even wrestle with God. Their questions are philosophical in nature, and in many instances, cause God to relent in the face of human

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

GRAHAM OPPY
Monash University

P. Copan and Craig, W. (eds.) *The Kalām Cosmological Argument Volume Two: Scientific Evidence for the Beginning of the Universe*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2019, 376 pp.

The book under review is the second volume in a two-volume set. The structure of the two volumes mirrors the structure of Craig's standard discussions of 'the Kalām cosmological argument'. *Volume One* divides into three parts: Part 1: Whatever Begins to Exist has a Cause; Part 2.1: The Impossibility of Existence of an Actual Infinite; and Part 2.2: The Impossibility of the Formation of an Actual Infinite by Successive Addition. *Volume Two* also divides into three parts: Part 2.3.1: Expansion of the Universe; Part 2.3.2: Thermodynamic Properties of the Universe; and Part 3: Conclusion: The Universe has a Cause. Collectively, parts 2.1, 2.2, 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 make up the case for the claim that The Universe Began to Exist. Parts 2.1 and 2.2 are grouped together as Deductive Arguments; 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 are grouped together as Scientific Confirmation (Inductive Arguments).

Part 2.3.1 contains the following four chapters: W. Craig and J. Sinclair (2009) 'The Kalām Cosmological Argument: "Science" Excerpt'; B. Pitts (2008) 'Why the Big Bang Singularity Does Not Help the Kalām Cosmological Argument for Theism'; W. Craig and J. Sinclair (2012) 'On Non-Singular Spacetimes and the Beginning of the Universe'; and A. Vilenkin (2015) 'The Beginning of the Universe'. The first Craig and Sinclair chapter is excerpted from the *Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*; the second Craig and Sinclair chapter is reprinted from Yujin Nagasawa (ed.) *Scientific Approaches to the Philosophy of Religion*. There is significant overlap in the content of these two chapters; they differ primarily because the latter is constructed as a critical response to Pitts. The Vilenkin chapter is very short.

Part 2.3.2 contains the following four chapters: F. Adams and G. Laughlin (1997) 'The Long Term Fate and Evolution of Astrophysical Objects';

G. Kutrovátz (2001) 'Heat Death in Ancient and Modern Thermodynamics'; M. Ćirković (2002) 'Entropy and Eschatology: A Comment on Kurovátz's Paper "Heat Death in Ancient and Modern Thermodynamics"'; and A. Wall (2013) 'The Generalised Second Law Implies a Quantum Singularity Theorem'. Again, the chapters differ significantly in length: the Kutrovátz and Ćirković chapters are very short. The Wall paper is poorly titled: Wall concludes only that:

> There is a reasonable possibility that the Penrose singularity theorem can be proven even in the context of full quantum gravity. (286) … There are some — necessarily speculative — indications that these results might hold in the full theory of quantum gravity. (287)

Part 3 contains the following three chapters: J. Moreland (1997) 'Libertarian Agency and the Craig/Grünbaum Debate about Theistic Explanation of the Initial Singularity'; Q. Smith (1996) 'Causation and the Logical Impossibility of a Divine Cause'; and W. Craig (2006) 'Beyond the Big Bang'. A significant focus of the Craig chapter is criticism of the Smith chapter.

Discussion in the Craig and Sinclair chapters is framed by the Hawking-Penrose and Borde-Guth-Vilenkin singularity theorems.

The Hawking-Penrose singularity theorems show that singularities are generic in general relativistic universes, given certain conditions. In order to avoid the conclusion that our universe is singular, while retaining the assumption that it is general relativistic, we have four options: (1) we might suppose that there is no closed trapped surface in our past; (2) we might suppose that certain generic energy conditions are violated; (3) we might suppose that there can be closed time-like loops; and/or (4) we might suppose that certain strong energy conditions are violated. Finally, there is a fifth option: (5) we might suppose that our universe is not general relativistic, but rather quantum-gravitational.

Craig and Sinclair dismiss (1) and (2). Concerning (3), they say that 'while it is true that no one has been able definitively to rule out closed time-like loops, the evidentiary burden lies upon those defending the viability of spacetimes and models predicated upon their reality' (23). Discussion of (4) turns our attention to eternal inflationary models, which leads us on to consideration of the Borde-Guth-Vilenkin singularity theorem.

The Borde-Guth-Vilenkin singularity theorem shows that singularities are generic in inflationary models provided only that the average expansion rate is positive along all geodesics. In order to avoid the conclusion that our universe is singular, while retaining the assumption that it is general relativistic, we have

four options: (1) we might suppose that there is an infinite contraction prior to expansion; (2) we might suppose that the average expansion rate over history is zero because it is zero at infinity; (3) we might suppose that the universe is cyclical, with an average expansion of zero in each cycle; or (4) we might suppose that the arrow of time reverses at a $t=-\infty$ hypersurface.

Craig and Sinclair give short shrift to (2) and (4). Concerning (1), they say that there appears to be a dilemma: 'On the one hand, one could have the reality of a past infinite timeline without a beginning. But then one must assert brute contingency. … Further, one must do this with respect to apparent fine-tuning. This seems implausible.' (33) And, at the end of their discussion of (4), they note that, while these cosmologies 'do represent a frontier worth exploring, there seem to be unanswered questions as to the viability of such an approach. The field is too young to pass full judgment.' (43)

Among the quantum-gravitational approaches, Craig and Sinclair discuss (1) string models; (2) loop quantum gravity; and (3) semi-classical creation ex nihilo models. In their view, the semi-classical models 'are supportive of the universe's having had a beginning' (69) and the string models 'do not predict that the past is infinite' (53) and are such that, in them, the universe 'can safely be said to begin to exist' (56). Their view of loop quantum gravitational models is less clear; they cite Bojowald's claim, in personal correspondence, that 'we are not sure if entropy … increases from cycle to cycle' (61), and conclude that 'building a genuinely beginningless cyclic LQG model seems to be a … difficult challenge' (62).

Craig and Sinclair ultimately conclude that their survey 'is quite supportive of the second premise of the Kalām cosmological argument. Further, this conclusion is not reached through ferreting out elaborate and unique failure conditions for scores of individual models. Rather, the repeated application of simple principles seems effective in ruling out a beginningless model.' (69) But, in fact, as the above summary shows, there are various points where their discussion simply leaves it uncertain whether a beginningless model is viable. Moreover, it is hardly a secret that the entire field to which all of this modelling belong remains in a very unsettled state. I think that we can be pretty certain that we do not live in a general relativistic universe; and I think that that renders moot any conclusion that we might draw about generic features of general relativistic universe. Furthermore, I think that it is uncontroversial that we are still a long way from securing agreement on a quantum-gravitational successor to general relativity. So, I think, we should

be very cautious in any claims that we make about *scientific* support *from* expansion of the universe for the further claim that the universe began to exist.

Thermodynamic considerations enter into the alleged consequences of expansion: according to Craig and Sinclair generic difficulties for cyclic models can be sheeted home to the second law. The main import of the first three papers in Part 2.3.2 seems to be that, while we would go wrong if we suppose that the second law entails that our universe is destined for 'heat death' — i.e. reaching a state of maximum entropy from which it subsequently does not depart — we are nonetheless right in thinking that our universe is destined to become a dull and lifeless place in which no physical work can be done— 'cosmological heat death'—even though entropy will go on increasing forever. It seems to me to be artificial to suppose that there are two separate arguments here — one from expansion and one from thermodynamic considerations. Rather, there is a single argument, to which various kinds of considerations contribute. (Readers whose curiosity is piqued by the very interesting paper by Adams and Laughlin might like to also look at their book: *The Five Ages of the Universe* New York: The Free Press, 1999.)

The last part of the book seems to me to be something of a lost opportunity. In his contribution to this part of the book, Craig — very briefly — claims that, if there is a supernatural ('transcendent') cause of the universe, then that cause is atemporal, non-spatial, changeless, immaterial, beginningless, uncaused, and personal (336–7). I think that it would have been good to make the concluding part of the book a focussed discussion of this further claim. Suppose that Craig is right. Then we have two pictures of causal reality to consider:

God → Initial Singularity → …. Initial Singularity → ….

Craig thinks that, on the left hand side, we must and can take the leftmost item ('God') to be beginningless, uncaused, and personal. But what is there to prevent us from taking the leftmost item on the right hand side ('Initial Singularity') to be beginningless, uncaused, and non-personal? That looks to be theoretically less-committing; and it looks to have all of the explanatory virtues to be found on the left hand side. Whence, straightforwardly, it seems to be the better theory. Perhaps there are other attributes that Craig might want to add on the left-hand side; perhaps, for example, he wants to add that the initial item exists of necessity. But that option is equally available on the

right-hand side, too. If we can legitimately suppose that God exists of necessity, why can we not legitimately suppose that the initial singularity exists of necessity? Whatever concerns we might have about allowing for contingency can be met in the same way on either side: we can allow that casual evolution is chancy, and we can allow that some of the properties of the initial items are contingent. (Note that 'Initial Singularity' is just a convenient label for whatever it is that exists in the initial state of natural reality. It would work equally well to use, instead, the label 'Initial Natural Thing'.)

Perhaps it is worth noting that, if we do suppose that there is a necessarily existing initial thing, then we are supposing that every possible world has a certain kind of commonality with the actual world: every possible world begins with that thing. We could go further: we could suppose that every possible world shares some initial history with the actual world: every possible world begins with the same thing, and that thing has the same initial properties in every possible world. I think that it is quite attractive to suppose that every possible world shares initial history with the actual world, departing from the actual world only after chances play out differently. This supposition gives a theoretically lean account of both metaphysical possibilities and metaphysical chances; and that looks theoretically virtuous. Allowing unexplained contingency in the properties of the initial thing, while not ruled out, should seem theoretically undesirable to anyone with any kind of *pro tanto* attraction to principles of sufficient reason. (Of course, I do not expect proponents of Kalām cosmological arguments simply to agree with the claims that I have just made. Rather, the point is that it is these kinds of questions that should have been the subject matter of the final part of the book. The Kalām cosmological syllogism is trivially valid; there is nothing interesting to discuss under that head. So, interesting discussion not focused on the *premises* of the Kalām cosmological syllogism should be focused on the consequences of *acceptance of its conclusion*.)

In the *Foreword*, the work under review is said to be an *anthology*. I'm not convinced that it succeeds under that description. Much of the material in Volume Two is already quite dated; a decade is a long time in scientific cosmology. On the other hand, the work does provide a useful window onto Craig's current understanding of the hypothesis that natural reality has a finite past.

all others. The eternal happiness is the most common or necessarily shared of all goods (145). This is my favorite insight in the book.

There is more to say than space allows about the last parts of Walsh's account. But in sum, this is a provocative account of Kierkegaard's mature conception of character that clarifies many important topics. While it may remain controversial, Walsh's persistence in questioning "virtue" interpretations has put new issues on the agenda in Kierkegaard scholarship.

KENNETH SEESKIN
Northwestern University

James A. Diamond, *Jewish Theology Unbound*. Oxford: OUP 2018, 304 pp.

In the interest of full disclosure, let me say two things. First, I am a long-time friend of James Diamond and greatly admire his work. Second, I am a proponent of doctrines that he firmly rejects, e.g. negative theology and creation ex nihilo. So it is with a good measure of objectivity that I say that *Jewish Theology Unbound* is a highly learned and intricately researched effort to construct a workable theology on a wide range of questions including love, death, freedom, and evil as well as metaphysical issues like the names and nature of God. Diamond's passion for his subject matter, close reading of biblical passages, and thorough knowledge of rabbinic sources are apparent on every page of the book.

Broadly speaking, the book takes on the Christian prejudice that originated with Paul at Galatians 3.13 ("Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law.") and carried through to such "enlightened" figures as Kant and Hegel. Against this, Diamond argues that Judaism places heavy emphasis on, even demands, freedom, more specifically freedom from God. In his words (p. 5): "The title of this book, Jewish Theology Unbound, captures a fierce opposition to these theological and philosophical corruptions of Judaism. Jewish 'unbound' theology conveys a sense of vitality and creativity that is anything but passive, slavish, and legalistic."

Freedom from God? Diamond is on solid ground in showing that biblical characters like Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and Job feel perfectly free to question God, and in Jacob's case, even wrestle with God. Their questions are philosophical in nature, and in many instances, cause God to relent in the face of human

protest. Again from Diamond (p. 14): "God reacts, defers, experiences defeat, demonstrates emotion, and projects himself as a parent …" But rather than follow Aristotle in holding that philosophy begins in wonder, Diamond maintains that for these characters, it begins in pain, despair, anxiety, and frustration.

He is also on firm ground when he shows how the rabbis gave themselves considerable freedom when they proclaimed that the age of prophecy is over. If there are no more prophets, then there is no way for God to instruct humanity on how to interpret or apply the law. Put otherwise, the interpretation and application of the law are entirely in human hands, even when it goes well beyond what might seem like the plain sense of the original text. Accordingly (p. 186): "Their [the rabbis] role is shot through with a hermeneutical freedom that is the flip side of the political freedom God originally obtained for Israel."

To take an obvious example, the Bible permits capital punishment; but in the hands of the rabbis, the conditions needed to apply the law became so formidable that capital punishment is all but impossible. To take another example, the Bible allows slavery, but close readings by generations of commentators either eliminate it or point in the direction of its elimination. To take yet another, as Diamond sees it, Judaism greatly restricts the circumstances in which one can martyr himself and looks much more kindly on dying for the sake of other people than dying for the sake of God. Even something as basic as lighting candles on Friday night derives from rabbinic enactment rather than biblical legislation.

Needless to say, a God who relents in the face of human protest is not the omniscient, omnipotent, omnibenevolent God championed by rationalist philosophers. Here (p. 64) Diamond distinguishes between a constant, stable, fixed God unaffected by anything external to himself and a God who is vulnerable, growing, learning, influenced, and subsisting in a reciprocal relationship to what is external to him. Rejecting the austerity of Maimonides' rationalism in favor of the more traditionally minded theology of Nachmanides, Diamond finds support for an evolving God in the Bible, rabbinic midrashim, kabbalah, and a distinguished list of modern scholars and theologians, including Buber, Heschel, Fackenheim, Levenson, and Fishbane. The God of Maimonides is immutable, devoid of emotion, and while he is the object of our love, he does not return that love in any obvious or direct way. Diamond is right to say that this conception of God is out of step with what one might term the mainstream of Jewish self-understanding. How, for example, could one pray to such a God?

It is to Diamond's credit that he does not avoid the subject of the Holocaust and follows Job in rejecting simplistic theodicies that belittle the unspeakable horror of the event. He asks (p. 211): "Is there really an essential difference between a theism that rationalizes a God that abandoned humanity (or consciously ignored it) and atheism?" Instead of a rationalization, Diamond opts for (p. 213) protest, outrage, anxiety, and distress with the way things are." His Tenth Chapter is therefore a moving tribute to Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Shapira (1889–1943), a Hasidic master commonly known as the Warsaw Ghetto Rabbi.

Shapira's sermons were written down and hidden in a canister. They were uncovered after the war and published in 1960. In these sermons, we see a spiritual leader who is no longer able to offer comfort to his follower and lapses into silence. Citing Elie Wiesel, who also speaks of a "nocturnal silence," Diamond echoes his teacher Fackenheim in saying that (p. 222): "Discursive thought, theological or philosophical, finds no air to breathe in the vacuum of this silence.

Yet through all of this, Shapira exemplified what Diamond (p. 227) terms "the Mosaic paradigm of speaking and writing to redirect the course of divine governance." This is another way of saying that Shapira attempted to (p. 323) "cajole God out of His internal mode of confidence in the ultimate outcome of His original plan and into an interventionist mode to abort that plan in the face of the horrors He himself has unleashed." Although he did not succeed, Shapira's sermons constitute (p. 233) "an unparalleled sustained act of supreme resistance to the evil that engulfed him." By any estimation, he died a hero.

Diamond has done an excellent job in presenting Shapira as one in a long tradition of biblical characters, rabbis, and theologians who fought for and achieved human freedom from God. Though devout, Shapira was anything but a mindless follower trapped in a strict, legalistic conception of religion. This still leaves open the question of God's silence even indifference to the awful suffering and near destruction of his people. As Diamond admits, slavery under Pharaoh pales in comparison with death at Auschwitz. Where was the God who evolves over time, is influenced by his people, and engages in a reciprocal relationship with them? Diamond does not say. To his credit, neither does anyone else because in the way I have posed it, the question is unanswerable.

Instead of turning to theodicy ("Why did God not get involved?"), Diamond follows Fackenheim in shifting to focus of the discussion to from a theoretical level to a practical one

("What is an authentic human response?"). The precedent for this move was set as early as the Book of Job, when the voice from the whirlwind refuses to say why an innocent man has been brought to the limit of human endurance for no apparent reason. But here, if I may push back ever so slightly against the mainstream tradition, we open the door to negative theology. Let us not forget that while the Bible has God freeing Israel from Egyptian bondage, it also has God giving a highly enigmatic answer when asked his name, telling Moses that no mortal can see his face and live, and telling Job that we should not assume that God is there to do our bidding or even to answer our questions. These passages show that even in ancient times, there were people who sought to demythologize religion.

At bottom, negative theology puts serious limits on what we can say about God and suggests that the only authentic response is to follow Job by admitting humility in the face of something too great for us to comprehend. Diamond makes a convincing case that negative theology is an outlier in Jewish tradition. Anyone who is interested in Jewish theology will benefit from reading this book. Certainly I have benefitted and intend to go back to it again as I work through my own position. But outlier or not, negative theology has a way of making its presence felt whenever the question of divine involvement or non-involvement is raised.