

The Reformation of Philosophy

Edited by
MARIUS TIMMANN MJAALAND

*Religion in
Philosophy and Theology*
102

Mohr Siebeck

Religion in Philosophy and Theology

Editor

Ingolf U. Dalferth (Claremont)

Advisory Board

Jean-Luc Marion (Paris/Chicago)

Thomas Rentsch (Dresden)

Heiko Schulz (Frankfurt a. M.)

Eleonore Stump (St. Louis)

102



The Reformation of Philosophy

The Philosophical Legacy of
the Reformation Reconsidered

Edited by

Marius Timmann Mjaaland

Mohr Siebeck

Marius Timmann Mjaaland is Professor for Philosophy of Religion at the University of Oslo.
orcid.org/0000-0003-2182-4095

ISBN 978-3-16-156870-1 / eISBN 978-3-16-159218-8
DOI 10.1628/978-3-16-159218-8

ISSN 1616-346X / eISSN 2568-7425 (Religion in Philosophy and Theology)

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliographie; detailed bibliographic data are available at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2020 Mohr Siebeck Tübingen, Germany. www.mohrsiebeck.com

This work is licensed under the license “Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International” (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). A complete Version of the license text can be found at: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>. Any use not covered by the above license is prohibited and illegal without the permission of the publisher.

The book was typeset by epline in Böblingen using Minion typeface, printed on non-aging paper by Laupp & Göbel in Gomaringen, and bound by Buchbinderei Nägele in Nehren.

Printed in Germany.

Preface

What is the philosophical legacy of the Reformation? How could we possibly understand its political, religious, cultural and intellectual impact in philosophical terms? These questions were raised by a group of philosophers and theologians attending the 6th Nordic Conference for Philosophy of Religion at the University of Oslo from 30 May to 1 June 2017 under the title “Critique, Protest and Reform: The Reformation 1517–2017 and its Significance for Philosophy, Politics and Religion”. A selection of papers was further elaborated for the present volume called *The Reformation of Philosophy*.

The idea running as a golden thread through this volume is that the basic principles of philosophy were re-formed in the period of the Lutheran Reformation, basically redefining the focus of study from ‘things’ to ‘consciousness’, ‘word’ and ‘scripture’, and that such a critical re-formation has become one of the hallmarks of modern philosophical inquiry. Each contribution raises a philosophical question significant for the development of modern, critical philosophy. In the first section, the three articles venture a contemporary reconsideration of the *modes* of thought characteristic of the Reformation, a re-formatting of key categories in philosophy and theology, and even comparing these modes of thought to philosophers within the Islamic tradition. The second section focuses on the period of German Idealism and the critique thereof by Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Jewish philosophy in the 20th century. The third section focuses on contemporary phenomenology, aesthetics and metaphysics, whereas the fourth and final section raises questions within pragmatism and political philosophy on critique, protest and reform.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Norwegian Research Council for generously supporting the conference and this volume. I am equally grateful to the University of Oslo for practical and human support for the conference and for economic support for the forthcoming Open Access edition of this volume, and to all the contributing scholars for their original and novel approaches to a challenging and inspiring topic. This volume identifies a field of study that deserves further inquiry in the years to come. Thanks therefore to the editor of the series, Prof. Ingolf Dalferth, and the excellent and friendly staff at Mohr Siebeck for accepting this book in the prestigious series on *Religion in Philosophy and Theology*, inviting further intellectual dispute and examination of the issue.

As we have argued in this book, the Reformation of Philosophy is not simply an event of the past, but also an event to come. Insofar as such re-formation in-

spires change and critique, let me simply remind the reader of Luther's words, words which may also serve as a motto for this book: *If you want to change the world, pick up your pen and write.*

Oslo 24 December 2019

Marius Timmann Mjaaland

Table of Contents

Preface	V
<i>Marius Timmann Mjaaland</i>	
Introduction	1
I. Re-Formation of Philosophy in Christianity and Islam	
<i>Philipp Stoellger</i>	
Reformation as Reformatting Religion: The Shift of Perspective and Perception by Faith as Medium	19
<i>Safet Bektovic</i>	
The Signs of a Hidden God: Dialectics of Veiling and Unveiling God in Islam	49
<i>Marius Timmann Mjaaland</i>	
On the Path of Destruction: Luther, Kant and Heidegger on Divine Hiddenness and Transcendence	61
II. Philosophy in the Wake of the Reformation	
<i>Burkhard Nonnenmacher</i>	
Hegel's Philosophy of Religion and Luther	77
<i>Stian Grøgaard</i>	
A Note on Revelation and the Critique of Reason in Schelling's Late Philosophy	87
<i>Jayne Svenungsson</i>	
Idealism Turned against Itself: From Hegel to Rosenzweig	97
<i>Jörg Disse</i>	
Immediate Certainty and the Morally Good: Luther, Kierkegaard and Cognitive Psychology	109
<i>Jan-Olav Henriksen</i>	
The Reformer in the Eyes of a Critic: Nietzsche's Perception and Presentation of Luther	119

III. Reformation, Phenomenology and Metaphysics

Rasmus Nagel

Continuing the Discontinuity: Luther, Badiou and the Reformation 133

Patrick Ebert

A Phenomenological Inquiry about Transcendence as Radical Alterity 145

Taylor Weaver

Revolution of Passivity: Agamben on Paul and Politics 163

Svein Aage Christoffersen

The Beginning: K. E. Løgstrup's Metaphysics of Existence in the 1930s 175

Dorthe Jørgensen

Protestantism and Its Aesthetic Discontents 193

IV. Critique, Protest and Reform

Ulf Zackariasson

Religious Agency as Vehicle and Source of Critique:

A Pragmatist Contribution 209

Timo Koistinen

The Personal in Philosophy of Religion 221

Atle Ottesen Søvik

Are the Lutheran Confessions Inconsistent in

What They Say on Free Will? 233

Sven Thore Kloster

Community of Conflict: Towards an Agonistic Theology

with Chantal Mouffe and Kathryn Tanner 241

Øystein Brekke

Critique of Religion, Critique of Reason: Criticising Religion

in the Classroom 259

List of Contributors 271

Index of Authors 273

Index of Subjects 277

Introduction

Marius Timmann Mjaaland

The Reformation, beginning in 1517, was a caesura in the history of Europe, with huge political consequences in the subsequent centuries. The explicit reasons for Luther's protest against the Church were theological, connected to the doctrine of justification by grace alone and the authority of scripture versus tradition. The Reformation, then, was an undoubtedly theological event that has influenced theological discourse and rationality until this day. But was it a *philosophical* event, too, or at least one of the conditions for the major changes in philosophical approach that took place in the period between medieval scholastic philosophy and the modern era, often connected to the Cartesian doubt and the *cogito*?

Martin Heidegger, with his emphasis on German thinkers who dominated the history of modern philosophy, pointed at Martin Luther in order to explain substantial changes in philosophical approach, and in anthropology and epistemology.¹ He even argued that there were still significant philosophical insights to be discovered in Luther's thought that remained unnoticed among theologians. Reiner Schürmann, political philosopher at New School for Social Research and author of a major opus on the history of Western philosophy, went one step further and argued that Luther introduced the new paradigm for philosophical inquiry that later came to dominate the modern hegemony:

[Luther] is reorienting an entire mode of thinking; he does so by directing the axis of inquiry elsewhere, thus rendering the old problems problematic in a different way; and he is no less explicit about the old orientation, hereafter senseless, than he is about the new, henceforth the only sensible one: to think no longer according to "things," but according to "consciousness."²

Generally speaking, Schürmann's point of view is philosophical rather than historical.³ Historically and politically, Luther belongs to the Late Medieval world,

¹ Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Supplements*, trans. John van Buren (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002), 124–26.

² Reiner Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, trans. Reginald Lilly (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 373.

³ For a detailed discussion of Schürmann's argument and point of view, cf. Marius T. Mjaaland, "Does Modernity Begin with Luther?," *Studia Theologica* 62, no. 1 (2009): 42–66; David Kangas, "Luther and Modernity: Reiner Schürmann's Topology of the Modern in Broken Hegemonies," *Epoché* 14, no. 2 (2010): 431–52.

with the feudal system of patrons and clients and mutual dependence between church and state. Many historians have pointed out that Luther's anthropology, his cosmology and his political ideas have little in common with modern European standards.⁴ Frederik Stjernfelt argues that Luther was anti-Semitic (or at least anti-Judaic), anti-democratic and against freedom of expression in the modern sense, and thus sees no reason to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.⁵ These discussions have become rather polarized on the occasion of the anniversary and while they are certainly interesting in understanding Luther's historical role and influence, they are not vital for the perspective adopted here. This volume will focus on the *philosophical* influence of the Reformation, and in particular the Lutheran Reformation. The authors have taken the term 're-formation' literally and inquire into the new conditions for philosophical inquiry, but also for anthropology and theology, that follow in the wake of the Lutheran Reformation.

A common objection to the study of Luther and philosophy is Luther's harsh critique of philosophy in general and Aristotle in particular, an example of which is found in his *Disputation against Scholastic Theology* (1517), where thesis 52 runs as follows: "In short, the entire Aristotle relates to theology as darkness to light. Against the Scholastics."⁶ However, Luther's critique of philosophy is generally connected to the scholastic attitude of presupposing philosophical conditions from metaphysics, logic and dialectics in theological arguments. The presuppositions thus adopted are often misleading, Luther argues, since the ontology and anthropology of Aristotle at some key points run counter to Christian thinking. He does not reject philosophy or rational reasoning as such, but a particular kind of philosophy. Consequently, Luther is actually involved in philosophical arguments, first of all as a critic of the heritage from medieval scholastic theology, and secondly as a thinker who argues in favour of clearer separation between the disciplines of theology and philosophy. His theology is not bluntly anti-philosophical, as demonstrated by his controversy with Erasmus, in which he blames Erasmus for being a bad philosopher before identifying the standard philosophical questions connected to freedom of will himself.⁷ Thus, he paves the way for a new approach to philosophy, by rejecting the old way of thinking and suggesting a new way of perceiving phenomena and analysing the human condition.

⁴ E. g. Heinz Schilling, *Martin Luther: Rebel in an Age of Upheaval*, trans. Rona Johnston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁵ Frederik Stjernfelt, *Syv myter om Martin Luther* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2017).

⁶ Martin Luther, *Disputatio contra Scholasticam Theologiam*, WA 1, 226. My translation. Quotations and references to Luther's works refer to the Weimar Edition [WA], followed by volume and page: *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. by Hermann Böhlau et al. (Weimar, 1883–1929).

⁷ Cf. Luther, *De servo arbitrio*, WA 18, 645.

This is the key point in Schürmann's analysis of Luther's role at the transition from medieval to modern thinking: he rejects the thinking that is based on 'nature' and turns towards 'consciousness.' This turn is directly connected to Luther's critique of Aristotle. When theology takes Aristotle for granted, it accepts a particular metaphysical definition of the human being, of the order of things and even of God. Schürmann argues that the topology of justification by faith establishes a new focal point, a new framework, a new understanding of perception and representation. Scripture is referred to in a different way, not only as a source of truth, but also as a way of organising time and space, metaphysics and responsibility – in short, Scripture structures how we may *perceive* and *represent* phenomena in general.⁸ I would therefore add, with an oblique glance to Derrida, that this re-presentation is founded in writing, according to a generalised understanding of the principle *sola scriptura* – scripture alone. It pertains to practical philosophy and responsibility, but also to theoretical philosophy and the understanding of human beings, of nature and of God.

Schürmann reads Luther backwards, from the basic principles that occupy philosophers in the centuries after Luther, rather than comparing him to the medieval philosophers such as Ockham, Scotus or Biel.⁹ Adopting this perspective, it is not difficult to see that Luther left a number of questions and paradoxes open for posterity. He was not a systematic thinker, like Melancthon or Calvin; he delved into the issues he found most *questionable* and *problematic*. As a result, there are new problems that break open in his thought, connected to the difference of life and death, activity and passivity, power and weakness, of being as gift (of grace) and being as responsible action and reconstruction of sense. Looking at Luther through the lens of modern philosophy, we discover different problems than the inquirer who seeks to understand his political convictions or his theological ideas in late medieval philosophy. And, simultaneously, we discover some of the deep structures of modern philosophy that are prefigured in Luther, whether we read Kant or Fichte, Hegel or Schelling, Kierkegaard or Nietzsche, Heidegger or his Jewish contemporary Rosenzweig – and even if we take into account late-modern philosophers such as Derrida, Waldenfels, Agamben, Badiou, Levinas or Mouffe.

These philosophers are all discussed in the present volume, hence the title points at a re-formation of philosophy in the double sense. First of all, philosophy was re-formed and the conditions for doing philosophy were transformed in the period of the Reformation, although it took centuries to recognise all the consequences. Yet the title betrays another meaning, too: there is not only a re-formation of theology but also a re-formation of philosophy that comes to the

⁸ Cf. the argument developed in: Mjaaland, *The Hidden God: Luther, Philosophy and Political Theology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016), 113–24.

⁹ E. g. Heiko A. Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986); Theodor Dieter, *Der junge Luther und Aristoteles* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2001).

surface among philosophers of rationalism and Enlightenment, of idealism and existentialism, and even of nihilism, feminism and post-structuralism. Some of them are connected to a rediscovery of Paul the Apostle in contemporary philosophy, whereas others are related to pragmatism and critique of religion. For someone who is well acquainted with the thoughts of the Reformation, it is not difficult to recognise its traces, in the past and in the present. In the following, I will give a short presentation of each chapter and identify some cross-references, points of disagreement and shared perspectives that run throughout the book.

1. Reformation as Reformatting

Philipp Stoellger presents an article on “Reformation as Reformatting of Religion: The Shift of Perspective and Perception by Faith as Medium.” He argues that faith is a “medium” of understanding and perception, and thus he suggests that we focus on *mediality* in order to understand the Reformation – not only historically but as a transition of religion and art, politics and perception, materiality and function. He argues that the consequences implied in such a medial turn are threefold: (i) methodological, (ii) a change of perspective, (iii) a clear emphasis on the *forms* of perception and understanding in terms of embodiment and iconicity. In short, a focus on mediality encourages a re-formatting of the form. “If *religion* is a *medium*,” he contends, then “*reformation* was a *reformatting* of this medium.” And he continues by formulating the challenge: “to explain what it means to be a medium: not just the *media* of religion, but religion as a medium, and therefore Reformation as a reformatting of religion.” The short answer suggested by Stoellger is that religion is a form of perception, and as such re-formation means re-formatting this form. This is the case when it comes to Christianity during the historical Reformation(s), but in principle this is the case for any re-formatting of religion.

The rather extensive argument presented by Stoellger draws trajectories back to antiquity and medieval theories of iconicity and mediality. He points out that Protestantism has always existed in a culture of pictures and representations. Examples of such medial representations run from the iconic paintings of the Reformation by Lucas Cranach the Elder and up to contemporary social media. Even though Luther and the other Reformers emphasised the Word of God, a phrase that was picked up by Karl Barth and later by hermeneutic theology, Stoellger wants to extend the scope towards the *media* of God, and thus proceeds to the problem of perception and the Reformation as re-formatting perception. Still, he sticks to the Word of God as the *leading* media [*Leitmedium*] of the Reformation, which conveys Christ in the reception of faith, and in turn takes the form of image and embodiment (e. g. in the sacraments) in order to express “justification”.

None of these are *immediate*, Stoellger argues, and so the dream of immediacy and the immediate presence of God ought to be rejected. Every presence of the divine, of the other, and even the “self-presence” that secures Descartes’s absolute certainty of perception, is a delusion, Stoellger contends. Even when we talk about immediate self-presence, he argues that we basically refer to a *mediated* immediacy. He thus demonstrates the philosophical relevance of a key element of the Reformation that runs counter to theological doctrine (of the immediate presence of Christ) in the centuries after Luther. On the other hand, he sees doctrine as a systematic *reduction* of this insight into the mediated immediacy, and thus as a way of preserving this insight through various paradigms of understanding and perception. The article thus underscores the double meaning of ‘re-formation’ as studied in this volume: the Reformation of the sixteenth century as philosophical challenge and the continuous re-formatting of philosophy in the encounter with the *mediated immediacy* of the Reformation.

2. Hiddenness and Interpretation

Another approach to the question of mediation and immediacy is adopted by Safet Bektovic in his article “The Signs of a Hidden God: Dialectics of Veiling and Unveiling of God in Islam.” He discusses the relationship between the hidden and the revealed God, a topic that occupied medieval Christianity, Judaism and Islam, and later became a key question in the controversy between Luther and Erasmus. The doctrine of God in medieval Islam was influenced by Neo-Platonism, in particular Plotinus’s philosophy of the One as supreme transcendent Being. In the thought of Ibn Arabi (1165–1240), Bektovic finds a philosophical reflection on hiddenness and revelation that distinguishes between ontology and epistemology and thus comes closer to the problems that occupy Luther: God’s unity is connected to his being, which remains unavailable for human knowledge. But his manifestations in creation and in scripture are perceived as ‘*ayat*,’ i. e. *signs* of God that reveal *aspects* of God’s presence.

Ibn Arabi was a philosopher, theologian and mystic of Arabic origin, who lived and worked in Sevilla in the vibrant cultural, political and religious atmosphere of Al-Andalus. Throughout the late medieval and modern era, he remained an important authority within the various traditions of Islam, both Sunni and Shiite and various Sufi traditions. According to Bektovic, it is not an easy task to give an unambiguous interpretation of Ibn Arabi, since the Andalusian mystic contends that all God’s manifestations and the revealed ‘*ayat*’ have a double meaning. On the one hand they unveil God’s *presence*; on the other they veil His *essence*. Bektovic thus describes the following dialectic as characteristic of this complex ambiguity: “Everything, including the names of God, and human desire to look behind the veil, is a veil, but because everything dis-closures God’s existence, it

appears as a sign of God. This is like a paradox: What conceals God's essence reveals His existence, in a form that is not Him. In other words, God's creatures function as both signs [*ayat*] and veils [*hijab*]."

Ibn Arabi is not a typical Islamic thinker. He criticises the traditional schools from the eighth and ninth centuries but he also accepts and adopts some of their positions. By insisting simultaneously on opposite principles, he destabilises the traditional systems of Islamic theology by introducing a different philosophical perspective. Thus, he is actually re-formatting Islam in terms of a radical reduction of ontological claims, but also re-constructing Islam by emphasising ambiguous signs [*ayat*] and imagination in order to understand God's revelation. Bektovic compares this de-stabilizing approach to Derrida's deconstruction of texts and signs, while insisting on an irreducible difference between the signifier and the signified. However, there are also some key concerns in Ibn Arabi's thinking that point towards Meister Eckhart's mysticism and even Martin Luther's reflections on the hidden God and the masks of God [*larva Dei*], both veiling and unveiling the hidden presence of the divine.

The third article, "On the Path of Destruction: Luther, Kant and Heidegger on Divine Hiddenness and Transcendence," which is my own contribution to this volume, takes up this thread by focusing on Luther's reflections on divine hiddenness and its seminal influence on modern philosophers. The article refers to Martin Heidegger's claim (1922) that Luther's hermeneutics delivered some of the most important premises for Kant and German Idealism, while indicating that there are still "immanent possibilities" in Luther's thought to be discovered by contemporary philosophy. The very term 'destruction,' which Heidegger applies here, is picked up from Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518) in order to describe the process of destructing a theology of glory in favour of a theology of the cross.

The argument runs as follows: when 'God' is understood metaphysically as *ens entium*, as powerful and glorious (*theologia gloriae*), the philosopher or theologian unavoidably interprets him- or herself in the same glorious and powerful image. Consequently, his or her understanding of God ought to be destructed or *de-constructed* by the cross in order to give a true representation of the God/(wo)man relation. The philosopher or theologian cannot withdraw from the process of interpretation, since her self-understanding is part of the rational process of understanding. This description of the problem in Luther corresponds to Heidegger's description of hermeneutics as the path of destruction, upon which "the present needs to encounter itself in its own movements."¹⁰ Luther describes three forms of divine hiddenness, first of all "beyond" being, as in negative theology, secondly the powerful hiddenness of the almighty and thirdly in weakness and *sub contrario* on the cross. He presents the latter as an interpretive

¹⁰ Heidegger, *Supplements*, 124.

key for the former two. The article takes this hermeneutics of destruction three steps further, via (i) early modern philosophy in Descartes and Pascal, to (ii) the philosophical critique of tradition by Immanuel Kant, to (iii) the question of whether we need another destruction of Kant's notion of transcendence today.

Whereas Wilfried Joest, Rudolf Malter, Reiner Schürmann and others have argued for a clear connection between Luther and Kant's practical philosophy, the argument advanced in this article focuses on his theoretical philosophy and, in particular, upon the distinction between *noumena* and *phenomena*. Kant questions the possibility of any rational argument for God's existence, since God cannot be reduced to an entity among others. Consequently, his being can neither be presupposed (as is the case with the *Ding an sich*) nor proved. The notion of God thus remains problematic, as an ultimate difference of possibility and necessity. Kant adopts this notion exactly in its problematic sense in order to discuss the ultimate ends of human existence, as individuals and as community. However, there are also some new problems surfacing with Kant's understanding of God as transcendent and thus delimited [*ausgegrenzt*] *outside* the phenomenal world. Accordingly, the article draws attention to Kant's influential notion of transcendence and the need for a destruction or de-construction of this term in contemporary philosophy, i. e. as another re-formation of philosophy on the path of destruction.

3. Re-Formation of Philosophy in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

In the second section, three articles focus on German Idealism and its relation to Protestantism in general and Martin Luther in particular, whereas two articles discuss the Lutheran legacy by the post-Hegelian philosophers Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. First, *Burkhard Nonnenmacher* discusses Hegel's philosophy of the absolute in his article "Hegel's Philosophy of Religion and Luther." He argues that Luther and Hegel share a concern for God's omnipotence and omnipresence. In Luther, this concern is connected to the hidden God. Yet, in contrast to Luther, Hegel draws the question of the Absolute into an extensive speculative consideration on transcendence and immanence, and argues against Kant that the Absolute ought to be accessible by human consciousness, i. e. as Spirit. Thus, when philosophers are active in reflecting upon God and recognise him as the Absolute, Hegel sees this as an expression of God's self-consciousness. Nonnenmacher therefore concludes that philosophy and faith are intertwined in Hegel's philosophy of religion, before he returns to the critical question of whether Hegel was a truly Lutheran philosopher. There is little doubt that Luther had a significant impact upon Hegel's ways of thinking, not only in relation to his philosophy of religion, but his entire philosophical enterprise. There is, then,

a definite connection between the two thinkers, but the question of the extent to which the two can be said to share ideas is, nevertheless, difficult to answer, and Nonnenmacher leaves it for the reader to decide.

Schelling's philosophy of revelation is the topic of *Stian Grøgaard's* article, "A Note on Revelation and the Critique of Reason in Schelling's Late Philosophy." He argues that Schelling and Kierkegaard are the last two great defenders of Protestantism in the history of philosophy, and they both combined this defence with sharp criticism of modernity and of the rationality advanced by Enlightenment philosophers. In contrast to Kant's negative philosophy, Schelling sets out from the presupposition that God is, and is *outside* of reason, as he argues in his *Philosophy of Revelation*. Grøgaard points out that he must therefore reject both Kant's scepticism and Hegel's speculative philosophy of spirit. Schelling insists on God's freedom in a way similar to Luther, prior to the schemes of reason in transcendental philosophy and idealism. The logic of revelation emphasised by the late Schelling appeals to an "a priori" empiricism that allows the logic of experience to "permeate pure thought," Grøgaard argues. Schelling's rejection of Aristotelian, Kantian and Hegelian logic thus represents a repetition of a key point in Luther: the critique of philosophy is itself philosophical and gives space for a theology or philosophy of revelation.

Jayne Svenungsson takes a more critical approach to German Idealism and discusses its relationship to Judaism and Jewish philosophy in her article "Idealism Turned against Itself: From Hegel to Rosenzweig." As is well known, Luther wrote some aggressively anti-Judaic texts in his later years, and Svenungsson discusses whether these stereotypes of Jews and Judaism were inherited and transmitted by the philosophers. She points out that such stereotypes are not exceptional for Luther; they dominate Christian thinking from the earliest centuries of Christianity, when it began to distance itself from its Jewish origins. In an early work, Hegel is critical of the Jewish people as an embodiment of heteronomy, but later he becomes less dismissive and more interested in the positive contributions of Judaism to the history and philosophy of religion. According to Svenungsson, Schelling allows Judaism to become even more important in his *Philosophy of Revelation*, based on a series of lectures from 1841. The Jews play a key role in his political vision of a kingdom of God.

According to Svenungsson, German Idealism was significant for Jewish philosophers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but they adopted an ambiguous attitude to its representation of Jews and Judaic thinking. Svenungsson argues that when Franz Rosenzweig develops his history of philosophy in *The Star of Redemption*, he takes Schelling's idea of the kingdom of God one step further; it is still a historical vision of peace and harmony among the peoples, but it becomes a *Messianic* vision, which is effectively turned against the idea of Christianity as superior to other religions, and the nationalist idea of one people – be it Jewish or German – as superior to all others. Rosenzweig sees

the special task, indeed the *calling* of the Jewish people in rejecting this national exclusivism, even the rejection he finds in political Zionism. As Svenungsson points out, Rosenzweig thereby adopts the vision of universal history from Hegel and Schelling, but gives it an ethical twist that remains a challenge of interrupting, deconstructing and thus re-defining such historical lines of division (Christians against Jews, Protestants against Catholics, etc.) that have dominated the history of philosophy since the Reformation.

“Immediate Certainty and the Morally Good: Luther, Kierkegaard and Cognitive Psychology” is the title of Jörg Disse’s article on Luther and Kierkegaard. He takes Luther’s certainty of salvation as a point of departure, and argues that such certainty is not the result of a cognitive process but a feeling of being touched by God’s promise and God’s spirit. Moreover, it is not merely an interior feeling but a certainty that comes from the outside, *extra nos*. Disse labels such certainty an *immediate* certainty, thus contradicting Stoellger’s argument that there cannot be any such immediacy that is not mediated by the Word of God or some other medium. Moreover, Disse compares it with Descartes’s *cogito*, which is also an immediate certainty, but one that conveys intuitive knowledge. With reference to Wittgenstein, Disse argues that Luther’s certainty is characteristic because it becomes the ground for a particular *way of life*. He then proceeds to Kierkegaard’s *Either-Or* and argues that the choice of the ethical analysed there implies the universalisation of Luther’s certainty. Finally, Disse delves into modern cognitive psychology in order to analyse the different forms of cognitive processing that characterise these certainties. He finds that both Luther and Kierkegaard appeal to universal goodness for its own sake. Although admitting the lack of empirical evidence, he suggests that it may be plausible to understand the certainty of faith as a “feeling of conformity with our highest conative and cognitive possibilities.”

Finally, Jan-Olav Henriksen focuses on the tension between affirmation and criticism in Nietzsche’s comments on Luther in “The Reformer in the Eyes of a Critic. Nietzsche’s Perception and Presentation of Luther.” According to Henriksen, Nietzsche is generally sympathetic to Luther’s anti-moralism and his contributions to the German language. More surprising, perhaps, is his quotation of the last verse of Luther’s *Ein feste Burg* as an example of the will to power. This is also an example of the ambiguity of Nietzsche vis-à-vis Luther: the context gives the last verse a rather different sense than it had as a hymn in the sixteenth century. However, when it comes to key topics of the Reformation, such as truth, faith and grace, Nietzsche is highly critical. Finally, Henriksen points out that Nietzsche saw the Reformation basically as an epoch in the history of ideas, and as such he offers a relatively nuanced picture of Luther as reformer, despite some fierce criticism.

4. Phenomenology, Reformation and Revolution

The third section covers more recent and contemporary contributions to a philosophical understanding of Luther and the Reformation. The five articles represent continental philosophy or phenomenology in the broad sense of the term, but the focus varies from the problem of subjectivity via transcendence and hiddenness to aesthetics and metaphysics.

Rasmus Nagel introduces his article, “Continuing the Discontinuity: Luther, Badiou and the Reformation,” with a discussion of the term ‘Reformation.’ He emphasises the discontinuity expressed by the notion, and yet he finds much continuity in the ‘re’ of the Reformation: it represents a radical break while standing in continuity with the previous tradition. Nagel argues that the paradigm shift that took place during the Reformation can be philosophically understood as a change from “the universal-particular paradigm to the paradigm of universal singularity.” The definition is compatible with Stoellger’s understanding of the Reformation as re-formatting, but it specifies the question of form in philosophical terms. Moreover, this definition represents an interesting supplement to Schürmann’s argument on Luther and modernity.

For the understanding of singularity referred to here, Nagel draws on Alain Badiou and the ‘universal singularity’ presented in Badiou’s book on Paul the Apostle. According to Nagel, the subjectivity analysed as ‘the singular’ cannot be subsumed by the universal, as Kierkegaard uncompromisingly argues in *Fear and Trembling* and *Postscript*. For Nagel, the Re-formation in this qualified sense is all about how to “formalize the content of faith – universally instead of particularly.” He challenges common understandings of ‘faith’ and ‘church’ before Luther by contrasting them to Luther’s definition of faith as ‘truth event’ (a term adopted from Badiou), an event that universalises the singular. Despite Nagel’s emphasis on discontinuity, this notion is able to explain the continuity of Christian thought from late medieval to early Reformation thought, but it also gives renewed emphasis on the breaks and ruptures, in an event that “reconstitutes and reorients Christian existence.”

Patrick Ebert returns to the philosophical relevance of divine hiddenness, *deus absconditus*, already discussed by Bektovic and Mjaaland. Ebert wants to differentiate between the hidden and the revealed God by analysing the implied notion of transcendence. In “A Phenomenological Inquiry about Transcendence as Radical Alterity,” he discusses the possibility of understanding this notion of the hidden God as an expression of radical alterity or radical strangeness. Ebert sets out from a problem discussed by Karl Barth and Eberhard Jüngel concerning whether there is any possibility at all of relating to the God who is hidden in majesty. According to Jüngel, this notion as presented by Luther causes an unacceptable dualism in the very notion of God. Both theologians solve the problem by referring to the logic of the Heidelberg Disputation,

i. e. by *including* hiddenness in the epistemic and Christocentric notion of revelation.

Ebert takes recourse to phenomenology in order to analyse the notion of ‘transcendence’ differently than Barth and Jüngel, first by turning to Heidegger and then to Michel Henry. Finally, he proceeds to the problem of radical alterity as discussed by Waldenfels, Levinas and Derrida. This alterity is defined as extraordinary (exceeding the order of orders) and bound to a passive or *pathetic* response. It cannot be constructed; it simply affects or invades us. If and when we respond to radical alterity, we respond to something alien which affects our bodily existence and eventually demands us to take responsibility for others. In order to understand Luther’s radical notion of God’s hiddenness, Ebert suggests that we take into consideration these aspects of transcendence as radical alterity. He argues, therefore, that in doing so, the re-formation of recent phenomenology would open up to a new understanding of transcendence even in theological terms, in the sense of a faith that leaves space for radical alterity.

The article by *Taylor Weaver* is called “Revolution of Passivity: Agamben on Paul and Politics.” It is concerned with Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben and his reading of Paul’s letters as an expression of political philosophy. Weaver underscores passivity and withdrawal as central trajectories in Agamben’s political thinking. In key works such as *The Coming Community* and *Homo sacer*, Agamben introduces “inoperativity” and “impotentiality” as central for his understanding of political change, even of revolution. This counter-intuitive turn is connected to his expectation of a messianic coming of the other, in the unexpected future. This is Agamben’s alternative to economic rationality, and hence the only way towards a true revolution, which escapes the mutually enhancing dialectic of capitalism and communism.

Weaver connects this messianic strand in Agamben’s philosophy to the latter’s experiences with political activism and anarchist movements in Italy and France in the 1960s and ’70s. Weaver argues that Agamben probably had close connections to (or even was member of) an anarchist movement in Tarnac in France and its Invisible Committee. This committee published a manifesto in 2008 called *The Coming Insurrection*, which bears close similarities to Agamben’s political philosophy, in particular *The Coming Community*. The manifesto formulates a messianic expectation inspired by Paul, and describes a double scenario of catastrophe and redemption. Finally, this is according to Weaver characteristic of the way Agamben reads Paul in texts like *The Time that Remains*: he seeks to avoid identitarian politics in favour of messianic expectation, expressed through inoperativity. If we follow Agamben’s view of messianic political theology, such impotentiality and withdrawal appears to be even more revolutionary, and even more radical, than agitation and active protest.

In the article by *Svein Aage Christoffersen*, we return to the problem of metaphysics – and the critique of metaphysics – although with an original twist. The

title of his essay, “The Beginning. K. E. Løgstrup’s Metaphysics of Existence in the 1930s” points towards the Danish phenomenologist’s return to metaphysical problems after Heidegger’s critique of onto-theology, an endeavour he pursued throughout his career. Løgstrup’s thinking is not metaphysical in the traditional sense, but it addresses the metaphysical questions that arise within phenomenology, in particular by Hans Lipps and Martin Heidegger. Christoffersen describes how Løgstrup travelled to Germany in the 1930s in order to visit all the major universities and listen to the leading philosophers and theologians of the time, including Heidegger, Lipps, Bergson and Gogarten. He discussed metaphysical problems as early as 1934 in the first version of his dissertation, where he parts company with Heidegger. Whereas Heidegger rejects the ethical task within metaphysics, Løgstrup argues that ethics belong to any responsible analysis of the human condition. This conviction follows him throughout his career, via his work on the ethical demand and political consideration until he begins publishing his *Metaphysics* in four volumes from 1978–1985.

Christoffersen argues that the lack of ethical considerations present in his work became fateful for Heidegger’s efforts at renewing the entire history of metaphysics from level zero. The *Black Notebooks* reveal a philosopher who became blinded by his own genius and the idea that his own thinking represented a brand-new start. Heidegger raised all the basic metaphysical questions concerning who we are, what we will do, what being is, etc., but he forgot to ask the ethical and political questions about humanity and respect for human life. The deep rupture that runs through the metaphysical endeavours of Heidegger and Løgstrup are thus ethical and political, and they are represented visually in art and aesthetics.

There is no detailed and conclusive analysis of these two metaphysical thinkers in Christoffersen’s essay, but he points out that whereas Heidegger wants to get “behind” and prior to the Christian tradition with its metaphysical foundation, Løgstrup delves into the Lutheran tradition in order to uncover its phenomenological understanding of the human being, between creation and annihilation. This approach makes Løgstrup deeply sensitive to the question of the human condition and the respect for human vulnerability and destruction, questions that are given priority in his metaphysics, too. Christoffersen illustrates the difference with a subtle reference to Picasso’s *Guernica* (1937). He describes how Picasso needs the religious symbols in order to capture the human tragedy of Guernica, where innocent civilians, mostly woman and children, were attacked by Franco’s terror regime. He draws on Peter Berger’s book, *A Rumor of Angels*, in order to show how religious figures and patterns of understanding make sense within a secular world. And similarly, he points back to Løgstrup, who raised the metaphysical questions within the framework of human experience and phenomena. If there is such a thing as a Lutheran metaphysics, and thus a reformation of metaphysics within modernity, Christoffersen argues that it would

require an approach that is very different from Heidegger's. Like Picasso, it would have to invoke "religious imagery to express [...] anger and abhorrence," an approach which is more in accordance with Løgstrup's metaphysical considerations, not only in the 1930s but even in his late works on metaphysics.

The last article in this section is written by *Dorthe Jørgensen*: "Protestantism and Its Aesthetic Discontents." Jørgensen's take on the relation between aesthetics and metaphysics differs radically from Christoffersen's approach. She regards the aesthetic experience as presenting (not just representing) metaphysical truth. Jørgensen thus shows that philosophical aesthetics and hermeneutic phenomenology are pathways to a philosophy termed "the metaphysics of experience." She also identifies a Protestant ambivalence towards aesthetic experience that was the source of Hegel's rejection of aesthetics and Kierkegaard's devaluation of the aesthetic, and which even marks the philosophy of Løgstrup. Jørgensen suggests that this ambivalence was one of the historical prerequisites for A. G. Baumgarten's introduction of philosophical aesthetics as a systematic discipline. She explains that his aesthetics combines the subjective perspective with the idea of something metaphysically given. According to Jørgensen, it is *phantasia* (Baumgarten) or *Einbildungskraft* (Kant) that makes possible a kind of dialogue between God and humans. She regards aesthetic sensitivity as a precondition for the experience of a spiritual surplus and the ability to receive faith. Accordingly, religious and aesthetic experience are intimately related; both are experiences of transcendence that provide insight and meaningfulness. However, we have lost the aesthetic sensitivity and the openness to beauty that distinguished early times, hence our tendency to exclude revelation, explains Jørgensen. The re-formation she is looking for would therefore be a re-discovery of the sensitivity and openness that would enable us to experience a deeper truth, but this re-formation presupposes an aesthetic formation.

5. Critique, Protest and Reform

The remaining five chapters address contemporary issues in philosophy of religion, focusing on Reformation as critique of religion, and the kind of continuous critique that seems to become characteristic for philosophy after the Reformation. The first two articles presuppose the framework of philosophical pragmatism and Wittgenstein's philosophy of ordinary language; the third ventures into a metaphysical argument based on the Augsburg Confession; and the final two presuppose the continental approach to philosophy of religion.

In "Religious Agency as Vehicle and Source of Critique: A Pragmatist Contribution," *Ulf Zackariasson* argues for a pragmatic approach to philosophy of religion, focusing on how people actually experience their religious life in community rather than how they ought to experience it. Two examples given

by Zackariasson indicate that critique of content may lead to a change of form, and thus a re-formation of the actual practices and beliefs of a group. The first concerns feminists joining the Living Wage Movement in North America, and addressing the “gender blind” analyses of poverty, including Christian theologies of sacrifice that would give women more disadvantages than men. This represents critique and reform of religion on a very basic level, but the concrete *effects* of this changed praxis may be bigger than any external critique or official statements on religion and gender equality. The second example, this time from South Korea, shows how protests against a military base helped women from different religions (Christians, Buddhists) and grassroot movements join forces. As a result of the demonstrations, they were able to establish a front against militarism with political impact. According to Zackariasson, it is not always easy to distinguish between external and internal critique, but the latter seems to be more effective, and religious traditions can sometimes offer an important corrective to liberalism, capitalism, traditionalism and xenophobia. Critique in this pragmatic sense therefore implies protest and re-formation in ways resembling the early Reformation, which applied scripture and other religious sources in a critique of suppressive and exploitive religious practice.

Timo Koistinen discusses various approaches to philosophy of religion in his article “The Personal in Philosophy of Religion.” He considers two concepts that have been presented over the last few decades: John Cottingham’s plea for a more “humane” approach to philosophy of religion and D. Z. Phillips’s focus on religion as a “way of life” in Wittgenstein’s sense of the term. Both are critics of analytic philosophy of religion, which sets out from an abstract argument for God’s existence and sticks to an ideal of scientific objectivity. Such arguments are structurally similar to what Luther called a metaphysical theology of glory, and the turn to a more *humane* philosophy points towards experience and respect for the suffering and weakness that characterise the human condition. Koistinen thus comes close to Christoffersen’s argument for a Lutheran metaphysics. There is still an important difference, he argues, between the detached “coolness” of Phillips and the engaged “faith seeking understanding” in Cottingham, but they share Luther’s concern for a re-formation of philosophy, focusing on what it means to live as a human being *coram Deo* and *coram hominibus*. The re-formation of philosophy would then have to come from below, and yet it changes the religious and metaphysical questioning in philosophy of religion.

Atle Ottesen Søvik takes a different stance in his discussion of free will and salvation in the Lutheran Confession, more specifically the *Augsburg Confession* and the *Book of Concord*. In the article “Are the Lutheran Confessions Inconsistent in What They Say on Free Will?” Søvik takes the confessional claims at face value and discusses their logical and metaphysical consistency. He has presented his own theory in the contemporary debates on the compatibility of determinism and free will, called event-causal libertarianism. He rejects

universal determinism but defends a causal theory, where free will sometimes influences future events and persons may be responsible for their actions and choices, even when they could not do otherwise. Based on this theory of free will, there is no contradiction in claiming that God alone creates faith, and yet people are to blame if they do not believe in God. Søvik argues that there may be many ways in which people can be blamed for their choices (also in relation to God), but 'faith' does not belong to the options which humans are capable of choosing, at least not on their own. They remain entirely dependent on God. Søvik proceeds to two other apparent contradictions and demonstrates that they are dissolved when the difference between God's activities and the choices of (a relatively) free will is taken into account. Søvik thus offers a contemporary philosophical defence of the Lutheran confession which is almost in the style of early modern Lutheranism.

In his plea for an *agonistic ecclesiology*, *Sven Thore Kloster* advances a rather different argument with respect to the church in "Community of Conflict: Towards an Agonistic Theology with Chantal Mouffe and Kathryn Tanner." He is more concerned with how controversies are handled and disagreements solved or endured within a faith community. His initial example is the controversy between Erasmus and Luther, where the former argues for a peaceful, friendly and respectful dialogue, whereas the latter insists on his right to make assertions and confessions and thereby provoke conflict. Indeed, Luther famously claims that the Holy Spirit is no sceptic – and nor should Christians be. Kloster consequently points out that, for Luther, there is a clear connection between form and content, and when the controversy is about God, *assertions* are the required form. Drawing on the theology of Kathryn Tanner and the political philosophy of Chantal Mouffe, he makes a case for an antagonistic struggle over the truth, even in theological discourse. Kloster follows Mouffe rather than Tanner and refers to Luther's "agonistic" theology as an ideal for contemporary discussions of theological issues – particularly when it comes to conflicting ideas and interpretations within a defined community.

Finally, *Øystein Brekke* discusses the question of how to teach and discuss critique of religion in Religious Education classes from a philosophical point of view in the article "Critique of Religion, Critique of Reason: Criticising Religion in the Classroom." Kant's essay on Enlightenment (1784) serves as a basis for this plea for more sophisticated critique in the classroom. Kant argues for the need to overcome immaturity [*Unmündigkeit*] by using one's own understanding and critical reasoning rather than blindly trusting authorities. Enlightenment is therefore defined as self-enlightenment, particularly in questions of religious faith. According to Brekke, Kant understands this as a Lutheran way of criticizing religious power, which leads to a process of liberation and intellectual independence. Hegel explicitly supports this understanding of Enlightenment, but he sees it in contrast to the French Revolution and its critique of religion. The

revolutionaries do not see the need for self-enlightenment (since they have seen the light, *la Lumière*), but they want to enlighten *others*. They are convinced of the superiority of secular reason and therefore seek to erase or suppress all traces of religion in society. For Hegel, this is another example of radical enthusiasm, similar to the revolutionary spirit of Müntzer and other enthusiasts that were condemned by Luther. Brekke follows Hegel in a plea for the Lutheran position: to let reason criticise various forms of religion and superstition, but also to insist on the need for religious critique of the hubris of secular reason. With the help of Kant's first *Critique* and Ricoeur's hermeneutics, he develops three basic arguments for a balanced Religious Studies education, which follows the trajectory from the Reformation and the Enlightenment by encouraging mutual critique of faith and reason.

I. Re-Formation of Philosophy in Christianity and Islam

Reformation as Reformatting Religion

The Shift of Perspective and Perception by Faith as Medium

Philipp Stoellger

1. Introduction: Topic, Method and a Proposal for Philosophy of Religion

My topic is a redescription of 'Reformation' – not as the 'glorious Reformation' as it is celebrated these days, but as a '*crucial reformatting of religion*'. Not as a mere historical event but as a paradigm of religious reformatting. Not as a mere theological (re)invention but as a *shift in the mediality* of religion. This means, the *form and mode of perception* were changing, may it be by faith or by God (experience or revelation?), may it be by the *mediality between* God and men.

This is the thesis in behind: rethinking the old dual of God's and man's work as mediated by mediality. The mode of description shows the mode of perception. How to understand and analyze a religious movement, not just in historical terms and not 'immediately' by and as theological concepts but 'in-between' from the viewpoint of mediality – as a perspective of philosophy of religion?

The task seems to be threefold:

1. There is at first a methodological question: we are used to working with historical methods – or with pure concepts and theories. Theorizing the Reformation is one way to deal with a religious phenomenon – but by means of which philosophy or methods?
2. Therefore, I suggest a *new perspective*: Mind the mediality, materiality and iconicity of Reformation (and i. e. of religion 'in general'). If *religion* is a *medium* (of communication), *reformation* was a *reformatting* of this medium. This means that mediality matters and therefore iconicity and materiality matter – as in christology (if Christ is the embodiment of God, of God's love). The challenge, then, is to explain what it means to be a medium: not just the *media of religion*, but religion *as* a medium, and therefore reformation as a reformatting of religion. In advance: I suggest understanding 'medium' as a form of perception (in the line of Fr. Heider, N. Luhmann, D. Baecker and L. Engell).
3. The *methodological suggestion* is to expand the methods of philosophy of religion: To understand religion not just by language and speech or concepts

and propositions, but as medium, i. e. also as visual culture and embodiment. Therefore, there is a need for new methods: *media* studies, *image* studies and phenomenology of *embodiment*.

In all three regards, the 'continental voices' developed strong innovations in the last two decades. In media studies there is the so called 'German media theory' (F. Kittler and his pupils, N. Luhmann and the IKKM in Weimar as well). In image studies there was the iconic turn (G. Boehm, cf. W. J. T. Mitchell; H. Bredekamp, H. Belting). And in embodiment-theory there was the theory of embodied cognition (in the line of M. Merleau-Ponty and E. Cassirer: J. M. Krois; in the line of Fr. Varela: Th. Fuchs u. a.). To make it clear: When I am asking about images (media of showing in difference to saying), or embodiment or mediality, this already *is* doing philosophy of religion through these new perspectives and methods.

Once upon a time, philosophy of religion was dominantly *analytical* philosophy of religion. The hegemony of one concept of philosophy dominated the questions, methods and topics. This monoculture has been questioned since the 1990s by other philosophies: on the one hand neoplatonist and idealist traditions (Hegel and Schleiermacher-Renaissance), Aristotelian and neothomistic traditions (Radical Orthodoxy), Kantian and neokantian traditions (Cohen, Cassirer) – but others as well: semiotics and pragmatism, Jewish philosophy of religion (in the line of Rosenzweig, Levinas), deconstruction (Derrida, de Man and others) and as well *contemporary* phenomenology and hermeneutics (of difference). Different philosophies evoke different philosophies of religion.¹

4. New *topics* challenge to find appropriate methods, and new methods make us ask for different topics and redescriptions. This means: shifts and changes in philosophy of religion may be evoked by topics, which challenge new methods.

This is evident for example in the contemporary '*political turn*' everywhere: in art and science, in cultural studies and philosophy or even in theology (sometimes). Understanding not only actual politics, but 'the political' as a dimension of Reformation needs political theory and a sense for the interpretive power [*Deutungsmacht*] of and in religion: 'Deutungsmachtanalyse' (analysing the symbolic and deictic powers of religion).

To ask for the *significance* of the Reformation for art, culture, media, politics and others implies to ask for its 'powers' (like influence, effects, dispositions etc.). The *historical* perspective would ask for the political powers (potestas) the Reformation was an effect of. Then the Reformation is an effect of the political constellations in Europe. The *theological* perspective would perhaps think about

¹ And vice versa: Do different religions evoke different philosophies of religion as well?

the powers of theology, may it be theological *authority*, Luther's charisma or the power of 'words' in the name of God (or the religious figuration of Luther as the true prophet). Both perspectives prefer power as *potestas* and authority (or charisma), like Max Weber differentiated.

I would suggest that the Reformation was not just conditioned by political *potestas*, theology's or scripture's authority or Luther's charisma, but the Reformation was a *shift in symbolic and medial powers* (where power means *potentia*): a *shift in mediality* with effects for perception, practice, thoughts, cultures of emotion, and law and politics as well.

'Deutungsmacht' (symbolic and deictic power of words, images etc.) means: to let us see something differently, to make us see or perceive (God, world etc.) in a new way, to make us act, think and feel differently – and to change the world-view and way of life.

Reformation or French Revolution or the 'new media' like Apple and Google as well are not merely changes in *potestas* and *auctoritas* but more in *potentia* (the *key* idea of 'power' already in nominalism up to Luhmann). *Deutungsmacht* is the change in 'potentia': *to make something possible* (thinkable) and others impossible and *to realize* new possibilities (and to extinguish others). The shift in modalities from impossible to possible, from possible to real, from real to not real – that is the basic shift of power as *potentia*.

To approach these basic shifts between possibility, reality and irreality, the quest for mediality is one means to an end. By mediality I think not only of words, but of images and embodiment as well. Or to say it in a Wittgensteinian frame: don't look only at the telling but the showing as well. What is said and what is shown (in and by media) is not less important.

2. From Art to Image to Mediality

'Luther and the Consequences for Art', a project from 1984, broadened horizons: a turn of perspective to an alleged side issue of the Reformation. The Reformation was not only interpreted anew, as an event of art; but also, artistic practices were analyzed and presented as carrier media for the Reformation.

The 'iconic turn', which started in the 80s, was necessary in order to see and understand that this was not 'only' about art but about the image and iconocity. For a reformatory movement staging itself decidedly as the religion *of the word* or *scripture*, it is not self-evident and all the more important to notice the forms and functions of *visual communication*, which are fundamental – even if 'sola scriptura' and 'solo verbo' are programmatic.

Belting's (as well as Boehm's and Bredekamp's) expansion of art studies to image studies, allowed to distinguish the image from art and to examine the visual media (not only) of religion, apart from the aesthetically normative question

about their ‘artistic value’. The inherent logic of images *as images* is a research question in its own right – without playing it off against aesthetic qualities or starting an unnecessary controversy between image and *word*.

To begin with, this is only about being aware of a difference: Image and art are two different things, so that the image is also relevant for worship, politics or in reformatory movements – without necessarily being ‘art’ right away.

“Luther and the consequences for art” would be expandable then: Luther and the consequences for the *image cultures* we live in. Protestantism may cultivate centres for sermon culture [*Predigtkultur*] – but it has been living all along and is living all the more in visual cultures.² “Luther and the consequences for *visual culture*” is both capable and in need of extension: Luther and the *consequences for media* – this remains to be done. From art to image and iconicity to mediality, the history of science advances theology as well as a philosophy of religion in reformatory tradition.

Thereby, we have made some crucial distinctions and extensions:

- from Luther to the Reformation to reformatory movements,
- from art to image to media,
- and finally, to understand not only the ‘consequences for ...’ but also the reformatory movements *themselves as media events*.

If we want to understand the reformatory movements as media events in a new and different way, we have to determine more precisely the innovative perspective. This cannot be done solely on the grounds of history or dogmatics but requires reflections on *media theory*. Whoever talks about media events, has to say something about the concept of media, particularly if it claims to expand the horizon of word and image to mediality. According to this need for clarification, the following thoughts are not a historical inquiry but rather a systematically-theological and media-hermeneutical reflection for orientation and specification.

3. About the Concept of Medium

3.1. *Thomas’ Invention of the Medium and the Ants in the Sky*³

The concept of the medium is a theological invention by Thomas Aquinas – this is what historical semantics says. Thomas integrated the concept of the medium

² Oddly, the visual culture of Protestantism isn’t worth a ‘center’ to the EKD. Fortunately, it works without such a center: For instance Anselm Steigers recent documentation and interpretation of the visual culture of Protestantism in Northern Germany in two volumes. Cf. Johann Anselm Steiger, *Gedächtnisorte der Reformation. Sakrale Kunst im Norden (16.–18. Jahrhundert)*, 2 vols. (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2016).

³ Following Wolfgang Hagen, “Metaxy. Eine historiosemantische Fußnote zu einem Medienbegriff,” in *Was ist ein Medium?*, ed. Stefan Münker and Alexander Roesler (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), 13–29.

in his translation and his commentaries on Aristotle's 'Peri psyches'. This conjecture has dominated media theory until the 19th century.

The second book in Aristotle's 'On the Soul' is about the theory of perception, more precisely about the perception of colors. "[W]hat is visible is colour and [...] [that] which can be described in words but which has no single name"⁴. In other words, color is visible only in or through something which Aristotle has no name for. Hence, he talks here about the anonymon (an unnamable) – which he calls shortly afterwards 'the transparent' (ti diaphanés), though. This had some historical impact because it became the medium of *light*, *in* which we see, and later it became the Aether, the quintessence, or 'ano somati', the matter surrounding the gods.⁵

In Aristotle himself, it is 'only' about a simple difference: that between the elements of perception and their function of perception (i. e. that we perceive in or through them). Hence, we hear sound (air pressure) *in* or *through* the air. We see colors but only *within the transparent*, of which light is the 'perfection'.

Here, Aristotle quotes Democritus making a thought experiment: We could still see even an ant in the sky if and only if 'the in-between' was empty (to metaxy). However, according to Aristotle, it is this in-between that makes perception *possible* in the first place. For without a gap, without a distance, without this strange 'in-between' we could not see anything at all: You do not see the blinders on your eyes. Only from a certain distance the perception of things and colors becomes possible. "Something anonymous, diaphanous, something likewise transparent and intransparent", as Wolfgang Hagen framed it, is necessary for the perception of color and shape.⁶

Metaxy, 'in-between', seems to be owed to the lack of a better word, something un-conceptual where there is otherwise only anonymity. It is a loanword, which Aristotle borrows from Democritus in order to name the 'diaphanous'. There is no talk of the medium in ancient Greek. This observation made by Aristotle, that color is only perceivable within light and anything at all only from a certain distance, becomes the start of the medium's history as a concept through Thomas' invention. Thomas had to read his Aristotle in Latin because he could not read him in Greek. It was exegetically illegitimate when he inscribed this systematically crucial term, naming *the 'in-between' medium*. The unnamable got a name, which it bears to this day.

The ant in the sky would thus be visible if there was no medium between it and us – if we could perceive unmediatedly and immediately. We must keep in mind the corresponding theological figures of 'God's immediacy'. However, instead of justifying such a desire for immediacy, Thomas argues for the inevitability of me-

⁴ Aristotle, *The Works of Aristotle. De Anima*, trans. J. A. Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), 418 a 26.

⁵ Hagen, 'Metaxy', 20 f.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 22 (trans. P. S.).

diality. Apparently, the medium *blurs* perception as well as it makes it possible. According to Thomas, the medium is a necessity since everything perceivable at all becomes perceivable only *in and through* media. As an inscription that was exegetically illegitimate but systematically highly productive, this invention became canonized and passed on as school knowledge until the 19th century.

A systematic query is possible here: Could Thomas have called this ‘in-between’, this ‘distance’ between heaven and earth ‘God’? Could he have put the name of God as the name of the ‘anonymous’? Then God would be the one through whom everything visible becomes visible after all, through whom perception becomes possible while at the same time maintaining and bridging the distance (and blurring it as well)? This would have become a doctrine of absolute as well as general mediality, for instance of God’s mediality by virtue of his creation as the basic tenet of natural theology. This could have been justified (or expanded) with a special, or more precisely, a singular mediality: Christ as the medium through whom this becomes accessible in the first place.

For Thomas, such a ‘medialization’ of the concept of God was understandably impossible to accept because he pursued a theory of principles and a metaphysics of origin: God is *principium primum*, the *arché* of everything – rather than medium. He is first, not second or an intermediary term.

However, if we understand God not in terms of a metaphysical logic of origin but rather think God strictly in the face of Christ, the following interpretation of John 1,1 becomes possible: ‘In the beginning was the medium, and the medium was with God, and *God* was the medium.’ God’s medialization lets us understand the beginning in a new way as well as the history of the covenant as ‘in-between’: God as ‘metaxy’ – as ‘Jahveh passing by’ at the Sinai, who is recognized in his *traces*, or, in the Christian perspective, in the trace of Christ (and in his post-Easter traces).

It is one of the burdens of the conceptual history of mediality that Thomas’ ‘counterfeit’ of Aristotle – to ‘translate’ the *diaphanous as medium* and to transfer his own concept of media into Aristotle’s text – has led to endless *metaphysics about media* (in conjunction with neoplatonist and idealist metaphysics). The medium has become the “great concept to enforce Christian-occidental metaphysics”, Wolfgang Hagen critically noted.⁷ The aether or sentiment (Novalis), knowledge (Hegel) or art (Rilke), all the highest goods or values could become the ‘Leitmedium’.

For metaphysicians of light or spirit the following holds:

- Spirit is medium, God is spirit, God is medium, or
- truth is light, light is medium, truth is medium, or, more modern,
- religion is meaning, meaning is medium, religion is medium – and so on.

⁷ Ibid., 28 (trans. P. S.).

The neoplatonist and mystic traditions – desiring the *visio beatifica* – may be recalled only briefly here: the metaphor of the soul spark or the theory about the nous as the highest part of the soul, in which God and man are always already and still *one*.

The early modern transformation of the doctrine of the soul into its reduced form of the theory of subjectivity continued this project after Descartes, holding the view that anyone (reflecting on him- or herself properly) could find the consciousness of God in his or her immediate self-consciousness. As a side effect the result of this was a soul such divinely charged that it actually no longer needed neither confession nor scripture, and much less the Old Testament, let alone the church, in order to cultivate its certainty of God.

Since Descartes, the ‘immediacy’ of *self*-consciousness is the main figure of ultimate grounding and infallible certainty. What is immediately given, is immune to fallacy. To what end do we need religious media that are all too vulnerable to fallacy? The immediacy of God becomes certainty of God by virtue of self-certainty. – Can subjectivity be such a reliable medium of salvation?⁸

This is opposed by art, image and media studies, which ask for the materiality, historicity, embodiment and sociality of media practices, resulting in a precarious opposition: either infallible, immediate media of spirit, subject and meaning – or the ‘spiritless’ materialities in their all too relative historicity?

3.2. Fritz Heider: *Medium as a Form of Perception*

In what follows, ‘media’ are neither understood primarily as instruments or means, nor as mass media or the internet, nor, regarding the reformation period, as printing technology or pamphlets. Of course, we could call all this media. However, then we think of media as ‘means to an end’, subscribing to an instrumental concept of media.

If the reformatory movements are to be understood as media events, an instrumental concept of media is not enough.

By the way, this is no new objection. The hermeneutical theology in reformatory tradition has insisted again and again on *word*, *scripture* and *language* not only being means to an end, ‘tamquam per instrumenta’. What is called here ‘media event’, has once been the ‘speech-event’ – including an emphatic notion of event (which is *not* followed here). There is a reformatory background to this, insofar the ‘*media salutis*’ are *not* to be understood only as means to an end, or even as arbitrary or reducible. If in reformatory theology *solus Christus* means that Christ is the medium of all media (*medium medians et mediatum*), our con-

⁸ Cf. Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, *Christmas Eve. A Dialogue on the Celebration of Christmas*, trans. William Hastie (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1890), 68–72. Cf. also Dietrich Korsch, “Weihnachten – Menschwerdung Gottes und Fest der Familie. Systematisch-Theologische Gedanken zu gelebter Religion,” *IJPT* 3:2 (1999), 213–228.

cept of media has to be more sophisticated than that of a means – even though theological and philosophical traditions have mostly conceptualized ‘medium’ as a means or an instrument.

Medium is here understood as a form of perception that can become a form of living. Medium is that *wherein, whereby and wherewith* we ‘perceive’, speak, think – and that, which *lets and makes* us see as we see then. This is why media are so eminently *powerful* with regard to interpretation: they let and make us see (think, speak, act, feel) in a certain way. Metaphors and metonymies are able to let and make us see, for instance the metaphor of the justifying or of the suffering God; images and embodiments are able to do this as well; also patterns of interpretation and thought. The ‘new public management’ with ratings and controlling, for example, lets us see the university and even the church in a different way than before, and it makes us live differently – *nolens volens*.

Fritz Heider (in his study from 1926) simply distinguished *thing and medium*⁹. According to Heider, a medium is not a perceivable *thing, something perceived* or perceived *forms* but rather *the form of perception* and its forming, that is, whereby it *is formed* and as it itself is forming. Heider’s media theory is the basis of a theory of perception and grants a perceptive gain that broadens the horizon. No longer only things and their causal relations are visible, not only things and “the ‘nothing’ around them”¹⁰ but the ‘in-between’, which is no thing but not nothing but rather media, as *loose couplings* (in Luhmanns terms).

“Air becomes ‘visible’ [...] the expectations become ‘sensible’”, Dirk Baecker noted.¹¹ What was *invisible* before becomes *visible* in the light of this media theory. This sounds like a healing miracle. The blind see, a ‘mysterious transubstantiation’ of reality, consisting no longer of things and causality but of things and *medial couplings*. ‘Whatever holds the world together in its inmost folds’ seems to be revealed: media (understood as the epitome of these couplings). By his idea, Heider, the ‘seer’, ‘reveals’ an access to the once inaccessible, he discloses a mystery – and whoever follows this revelation sees what was once invisible.

This revelatory pattern is not ‘merely’ rhetorics but a symptom of an (un-) specific effect of Heider’s media theory. It is effective, if we follow it, ‘*ex opere operato*’ because it changes our perception. As if it was theoretical LSD, we are confronted with a ‘perception-expanding distinction’. The general rule of functioning perception is to perceive without perceiving the perception itself (its formation and forming power).¹² Heider’s suggestion is, however, to switch our *theoretical* perception to that which is otherwise invisible: that wherein

⁹ Fritz Heider, “Thing and Medium,” in *On Perception, Event, Structure, and Psychological Environment. Selected Papers* (Guildford, CT: International Universities Press, 1959).

¹⁰ Fritz Heider, *Ding und Medium* (Berlin: Kadmos, 2005), 15 f. (trans. P. S.).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹² Or in a medial reformulation: Not to perceive the mediality of media practices, since mediality stays (or is made) invisible.

and whereby we perceive. The air becomes 'visible' means: the medial is a *loose coupling*.¹³

4. Reformatting the Form of Perception

Understanding the medium as the form of perception enables us to comprehend the *Reformation as a reformatting of the form of perception*, and thus to comprehend the media practices of the Reformation as communication of a *form of perception*: That, which is perceived or whereby we communicate, may stay the same or surprisingly similar, institutions and techniques may develop and shift, however, *how we perceive* changes – maybe subtly at first but with potentially serious consequences (analogous to the 'iconic turn' from the presented to the ways of presentation).¹⁴

The form of perception is reformatted, like the form:

- of the perception of God as *solely* soteriologically potent, as *soteriological* omnipotence (not as logical omnipotence),
- of self-perception as soteriologically impotent: the human as sinner is *mors et cadaver*,
- of the *Christian* as *simul iustus et peccator*,
- of *grace* as gift instead of exchange,
- of the Gospel, not being a different law but rather as different from the law,
- of consciousness as free (and justified to resistance),
- of the church as a transitory institution,
- of reality, not as substance but as relation,
- of the relation to God as a relation of passivity, or
- of God's relation to us as a language relation (but iconic as well) etc.

With regard to Luther: not things in the world or in the cultus are decisive (thus, images as possible but not necessary) but the relations of God and man. Hence, his theology is a new way of relating or configuring these relations. It is about the kind of 'coupling' of God and man – and therefore it is about medial relations.

In hindsight, some aspects stand out, in which the Reformation, Luther exemplarily, *failed to realize its potential* since it did not implement this refor-

¹³ And still the review onto the dark whence (wherefrom) or *contra quem* of mediality is a loose backcoupling not without an imaginary enthusiasm, even from a negativistic perspective.

¹⁴ The concept of a 'reformatting of the form of perception' clarifies a difference of perception of 'Inside and Outside' or of theological and non-theological perception: For those who follow a specific form of perception everything looks a little different than for those who do not follow this specific form. 'From the outside' – for instance, the 'reformatory difference' could become invisible to prosaic historians in all continuities and relativities. Regarding a systematic theologian – from the inside – everything has to be seen a little different by a specific form of perception.

matting consistently according to the theology of the cross: the state rule over the church, the order of the world as the order of creation, the separation of the two kingdoms, the issues about gender, ecology, and the strangers, especially Jews and Muslims. If the aspiration was to perceive and communicate *everything* in the light of the cross, it becomes all the more striking where this reformatting was not asserted. Some of what Tillich later called the ‘protestant principle’ has been deployed only in and after the second world war: Barmen, Barth, religious socialism or political theology, of Moltmann for instance. To provide an example: In the light of the Christian freedom and the consequence of freedom of conscience, we would expect the right of resistance against ecclesiastical and state authority. This was already latently present in Luther, but not even Bonhoeffer knew a *right* to resist.¹⁵ It was until the post-war years that H. J. Iwand and H. W. Wolff argued for this in the sense of Luther.

Reformatting our perception is a ‘reevaluation of all values’, or to put it more simple: a different and changing perception of previous religious media practices resulting in some shifts and new developments. Traditional media/practices become perceived differently and are ‘devaluated’:

- bones, no longer as relics [*Reliquie*] but as relicts [*Relikt*] to be buried,
- saints, no longer as salvific intercessors but, at best, as helpful examples,
- images, no longer as media of grace but as either infernal stuff (Bucer) or media of memory, décor and teaching aids,
- hosts, not as substance of grace but as transient media of communication,
- theological tradition, not as authority but – valueless? (in my student days, the ‘Middle Ages’ between Augustine and Luther played no role)
- Scholasticism as ‘old form’ instead of dialogue partner for reformatory theology,
- mysticism, not as something closely related to Luther but as pious self-enhancement,
- orders and monasticism, asceticism and rites of penance as old and bygone, while failing to recognize the presence of the old in the new.

As *reformatted*, however, many of these media practices recur:

- ascesis and penance as the justified sinner’s form of life (first of the 95 theses, treatise on the Freedom of a Christian),
- mysticism in the dream of God’s immediacy in the union with Christ and the *communicatio idiomatum*,

¹⁵ Cf. Philipp Stoellger, “‘Ich aber sage euch, dass ihr nicht widerstehen sollt dem Übel ...?’ Gründe und Ungründe des Widerstandsrechts im Anschluss an Bonhoeffer,” in *Bonhoeffers Friedensgedanke und Frieden in Ostasien. The 2nd Heidelberg University – Seoul Theological University International Academic Conference*, ed. Jürgen Moltmann et al. (Seoul: Seoul Theological University, 2016), 123–151.

- saints and 'bones' as Luther's death mask and his effigy (Halle),
- the cult of relics as the trade with Luther-relics in the Baroque period,
- the host as the central image of worship (*est*: it is what it shows and it shows what it is),
- Scholasticism as Protestant Orthodoxy,
- images in Cranach's grace giving images (Weimar).

This reformatting of the forms of perception grounds in a *reshuffle of interpretive patterns*: The model of *substance* is replaced by the model of *relation*, more precisely by *relations of use and practice* (as with the *usus* of the elements in Holy Communion). At its heart, this occurs not only through relation instead of substance but in the event of justification through the *relation of passivity*, which is constitutive for faith and is concretized in the *word or language* relation of 'address' (*promissio*).

With regard to media hermeneutics, a definite one-sidedness becomes apparent: *Visual* communication becomes displaced or dominated by verbal communication, showing by saying, and thus the image by the word. The recurrence and presence of displaced *showing*, of image and embodiment – is a dimension that Protestantism, under the banner of *solo verbo* and *sola scriptura*, still gladly misconstrues.

The Wittenberg predella is not just an illustration of the theology of the cross and preaching of Christ – but Luther is shown [gezeigt] *as the one who shows* [Zeiger], as the one who shows, points [zeigt] to Christ. The pious delusion about Luther would be to believe that the image just showed what is to be taught and preached. Instead, it is about an image as image, about showing as showing. Thereby, Luther is (accidentally?) staged as Grünewald's John the Baptist. And the second pious self-delusion is already imminent: Luther would only show, point to Christ, and this would be true, right and humble. However, the one who shows must show himself in order to show something. Look at me, just at me – trust in me, just in me: It is the claim on interpretive power by the pious guidepost to guide all views, like a religious traffic policeman.

5. Leading Media of the Reformation

What is the *leading medium* [Leitmedium] of the Reformation or what does it consist of? Is it writing – more precisely printing technology? Is it language, more precisely '*parole*', the German language, even Saxon? Is it the 'Holy Communion' in contrast to 'money and new media', as we could ask according to Jochen Hörisch's trilogy of media history? Even if the lay chalice (since the Hussites) is a distinctive feature vis-à-vis the Roman Christianity, the Holy Communion is hardly the leading medium.

Is it a general code like ‘transcendence vs. immanence’, invoking Luhmann? ‘Transcendence and immanence’ are far too general, to grasp the peculiarity of the Reformation.

Formulating it systematically, the leading medium of the Reformation consists in a form of perception or, using Luther’s semantics, in a different perception of God: to perceive God as ‘justifying’ and, accordingly, to perceive man as ‘iustificandus’ – on the one hand being soteriologically impotent, on the other hand as both free and dutiful. In other words, to perceive *everything*, oneself, the neighbor, the environment, the state etc., with regard to the difference of Deus iustificans and homo (peccator et) iustificandus.

However, this conceptual concentration is ‘merely’ an abbreviation of a media constellation that were to be unfolded as follows (and in quite problematic brevity):

1. The first leading medium is *Christ (solus Christus)*,
2. thus the second leading medium is *faith* (as coupling of Christ and man),
3. followed by the media to *communicate faith: word and image and embodiment* (saying and showing) and,
4. only somewhat late, *doctrine* or the doctrine of justification.

5.1. *Medium of God’s Presence: Christ*

Christ as leading medium embodies decisively the protestant form of perception of God (objective and subjective genitive): He forms perception in a certain way. What he mediates and introduces, is

1. a way of seeing, addressing and understanding God, and
2. a way of perceiving everything else ‘in the light of God’, namely, to perceive *as God* perceives – for example, the neighbor as well as creation in the same way Christ perceives them (in fact, how the figure of Christ was portrayed retrospectively in narrative testimony: the testified Christ is himself ‘form of media’).

As testified and narrated Christ becomes a *figure on a background*, the background of Judaism in his time, or to put it theologically, on the background of God’s history with his people. Analogously, God the Father becomes a figure on the background of the preaching of Jesus – and the son becomes a figure on the background of God the Father. The relation of figure and background becomes structuring for perception.

Christ does not remain a perceived figure (of the past, in the text), but he becomes a present figure and figuration of perception: as *figura figurans*. To put it in the model of analysis of interpretive power: Christ becomes a pattern of interpretation for all perception up to the form of life. Christ does not mediate

something but himself (the messenger as message ...). This means, *he becomes medium as the form of our perception – or else, he would remain a mere ‘thing’ of the past.*

As God’s embodiment (love, mercy, justice etc.) he becomes *supplementarily* embodied in rituals, decisively in Holy Communion. The meaning and purpose of this is not in itself, to enjoy God, for example, but it is rather a prefiguration of a form of living. The ‘materiality’ of this mediality does not consist only in bread and wine, but the body of their ‘consumers’ is miraculously transformed as well as the social form of their lives: They become the body of Christ.

5.2. *Medium of Christ’s Presence: Faith as Pathic Perception*

Thomas Aquinas represents the classical concept of faith (between opinion and knowledge) in the *horizon of Logos* as an “act of the intellect assenting to the Divine truth at the command of the will moved by the grace of God”.¹⁶ Faith is an act of reason which assists the will to affirm its truth (*assensus*) despite incomplete knowledge.¹⁷ The fundamental and decisive aspect is the person’s epistemological and voluntative power which is supported and redeemed by prevenient grace. With that, we leave the Franciscan tradition of a Bonaventura with affective certainty of belief (at the level of pathos) in favor of the model of intellectual affirmation of articles of faith (which borders on propositional language analysis).

In the *horizon of ethos*, Scotus conceives of faith not as a theoretical but a practical act, which is why theology is seen as a practical discipline (as with Luther). Its goal is not primarily recognition of truth but rather works.¹⁸ As *fides acquisita ex auditu* (“faith acquired through hearing”) the passivity of hearing becomes the central medium for the genesis of faith (cf. Luther’s *fides ex auditu*) – though, the dominance of one’s own practice (of works) remains.

In the German Mysticism of Tauler and Suso (against the background of Meister Eckart), faith is understood in the *horizon of pathos* as *Gotterleiden* [suffering of God] (‘gotliden’) and is affirmatively received by Luther. This basic figure is used to exemplify the affective passive genesis of faith metaphorically and make it narratively explicit. The neoplatonic tradition since Dionysios Areopagita (*De divinis nominibus*) has held that the divine is to be *suffered*.¹⁹ There-

¹⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne 1920–22), I–II, Q. 2, art. 9.

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, Q. 174, art. 2, ad 3.

¹⁸ Cf. Duns Scotus, *Opus Oxoniense*, lib. III, dist. 23, q. un., n. 6.17f, in *Opera omnia*, (Hildesheim: Olms, 1968), vol. 7.1, 462.471; cf. prol., q. IV, *ibid.*, vol. 5.1, 163. Cf. William of Ockham, quodl. VI, q. 1, *Opera philosophica et theologica*, (St. Bonaventure: The Franciscan Institute, 1967–80), vol. 9, 585f; cf. lib. I, dist. 17, q. I, *ibid.*, vol. 3, 440 ff.

¹⁹ Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita, DN 648A/B in *Corpus Dionysiacum*, 2 vols (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1990–2012), 134,1 f.; cf. *ibid.* 684A; 872C/D; MTh 997B; Ep. 9,1105D.

fore, the pathos of passivity (with the emotions and passions) with respect to God becomes a basic figure for understanding the relationship to God and for unfolding a life form of *cognitio Dei experimentalis* (“experiential knowledge of God”). The legendary *Vita* (life) of Henry Suso has become paradigmatic for this.

However, the conceptual problem remains that Mysticism is determined by the model of correlative passivity (of immanent relations), which becomes hyperbolically paradoxical when taken to the extreme. Refraining from any action, right up the aporetic refrain from refraining,²⁰ becomes the self-minimization of the sinful subject (cf. the *humilitas* of the young Luther), ultimately, in order to let God act and to let God be God – which remains in all refraining only sublimated action.²¹ Luther, however, comes to understand the relation to God as passivity that *cuts across all correlations* (whereby immanent correlative passivity with respect to God is distinguished from pure passivity).

It is decisive for the language, the disjunctions and oppositions, in which ontological model faith is determined. Luther follows – as mentioned above – not an ontology of substance or the *materia-forma*-model of Aristotelian origin. How his ontology is constituted, remains, however, an object of controversial research and a task for systematical interpretation. It is obvious that he favors relation vis-à-vis substance.²² The relation of passivity regarding God is constitutive for the genesis and living of faith: *coram Deo iustificante*. The media practices of this relational ontology are personal,²³ communicative and above all a speech- and word-events.²⁴ Thus, rhetoric and performance become relevant for the effective presence of God in faith as well as in word and sacrament (so that we could understand Luther as a representative of a ‘performative turn’ in theology).

With Luther (and J. Fischer) a theoretical and a practical perception are to be distinguished: The theoretical perception of scholastic tradition recognizes the recognized within the horizon of the one who recognizes. Scientific perception usually operates alike: The perceived is ordered within the horizon of the one who recognizes (according to his system of ordering). Practical perception, however, perceives within the horizon of what is perceived: that what is perceived, itself and everything else, in a new and different way. This is familiar

²⁰ Cf. Philipp Stoellger, *Passivität aus Passion. Zur Problemgeschichte einer ‘categoria non grata’* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 163 ff.

²¹ It is at least misleading to say of “faith” that it is “nothing other than to allow Christ to act through his word” (Joachim Ringleben, “Wort und Rechtfertigungsglaube. Zur Horizontaufächerung einer Worttheologie in Luthers Disputation ‘De Fide,’” *ZThK* 92:1 (1995), 33 (trans. P. S.). For “allowing” is “doing,” grammatically, semantically, pragmatically and juristically.

²² Cf. Gerhard Ebeling, *Lutherstudien* (= LuSt) II. *Disputatio de Homine. Die Theologische Definition des Menschen. Kommentar zu den Thesen 20–40*, vol. II,3 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1989), 395ff, 461. Cf. Stoellger, *Passivität aus Passion*, 261 ff.

²³ Cf. Wilfried Joest, *Ontologie der Person bei Luther* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967).

²⁴ Cf. on this the respective works of Gerhard Ebeling, Eberhard Jüngel and Joachim Ringleben.

from mythical and aesthetical perception: when suddenly, within the horizon of what is perceived, everything looks somewhat different, and be it only slightly shifted.

In my assessment, according to Luther, we have to differentiate a third form of perception from the first two: *Pathic* perception differs from theoretical and practical perception. Ever since Aristotle, it is well-known and relevant that there is a moment of passivity in every perception, unlike in hallucinations. Cutting across to this correlative passivity in all perception and regarding the relation to God, we can distinguish a more passive passivity, that stands across. To put it in biblical terms: to recognize how I am recognized by God; to perceive how I am perceived by him.

This perception is diachronically always already prior to us and *forms* as such all our perception of ourselves, world and God. In other words, the topos of being perceived by God serves as formation of our perception – thus as medium (more precisely, meta-medium). If this difference is clear, another immediately follows: To be perceived by a judging or a justifying God makes the difference between Law and Gospel. Hence, pathic perception becomes differentiated – and it encounters the perceiver simultaneously in a diachronic asymmetry, or, put another way, in an eschatological shift from the Old to the New.

5.3. Example: *Im/mediacy* in ‘the Joyful Exchange and Struggle’

The genesis of faith is laid out in the *locus classicus* of Luther’s theology, in *De libertate christiana*. Hence, the core of this doctrine of faith will be hermeneutically and systematically reconstructed here: Luther distinguishes three benefits of faith (*gratiae fidei* – which cannot mean effects of faith in the sense of a human action but effects of *grace* by virtue of God’s acting in faith on the faithful):

1. *The first ‘gift’* of faith is the *unio*²⁵ of the *anima* with the *promissa dei*, the *verba sancta*.²⁶ This union of soul and word of promise is construed to be both

²⁵ Cf. in addition, LW 26, 166–179 (Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works* [= LW], ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Helmut T. Lehmann, and Christopher B. Brown, 75 vols (Philadelphia/St. Louis: Fortress Press/Concordia Publishing House, 1955ff)) or WA 40,1, 281–300 (Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [= WA], 80 vols (Weimar, 1883ff)) regarding *unio* of man with Christ in faith and series of theses *De fide*, above all, WA 31,1, 45f.; cf. Ebeling, *LuSt* 2,3, 174–177. 450f.; cf. *ibid.* 459: “Ist doch die unio Gottes mit der Menschheit in Christus der Grund der Glaubensunio mit Christus”. The work of the Mannermaa school is also noteworthy, which sees the central significance of Luther’s doctrine of justification in the *unio* of man with Christ. Cf. in particular Tuomo Mannermaa, *Christ Present in Faith. Luther’s View of Justification* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005). Risto Saarinen provides an overview of the Mannermaa school in ‘Justification by Faith. The View of the Mannermaa School’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and Lubomir Batka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 254–263; cf. Olli-Pekka Vainio, ed., *Engaging Luther. A (New) Theological Assessment* (Eugene: Cascade, 2010).

²⁶ Cf. LW 31, 349–350 = WA 7, 53,15–33; cf. Reinhold Rieger, *Von der Freiheit eines Chris-*

tactile and gustatory (*absorbeatur, saturetur, inebrietur*), as “*tactus Christi*” (cf. Christ as *medicus*), whereby the soul is healed by virtue of “this absorbing of the Word, which communicates to the soul of all things that belong to the Word” (“*absorptio verbi omnia quae verbi sunt animae communicat*”):²⁷ The properties of the word are transferred to the soul and are communicated to it. This is carried further in the mystical metaphor inspired by Tauler and Suso of the soul as a fiery iron that glows when joined with the fire: “Just as the heated iron glows like fire because of the union of fire with it, so the Word imparts its qualities to the soul” (“*quale est verbum talis ab eo fit anima, ceu ferrum ignitum canet sicut ignis propter unionem sui et ignis*”).²⁸ Therefore faith is “conformity with the word.”²⁹

The *unio* as *communicatio idiomatum* of the word with the soul is not reciprocal (nothing comes from the soul to the word or returns to it) but one-sided grace, healing, effective promise and liberation of the soul – with which the first main thesis of *De libertate* is explicated: that faith (as a work and working of God by virtue of the word) *liberates* (the free Lord of all things). Thus Luther closes with: “This is that Christian liberty, our faith” (“*haec est Christiana illa libertas, fides nostra*”).³⁰ Obviously, this is not a logical but a rhetorical conclusion that does not prove but rather makes plausible and interprets. Moreover, it is clear how an interpretive pattern from Christology is authoritatively and constitutively invoked – in, with and under mystical metaphors: the *unitio* and *unio personalis Christi* (“personal union with Christ”) and the *communicatio idiomatum*.³¹ Soteriology becomes interpreted through Christology, using the unity of the person of Christ as the ‘constitutive theory’ of faith: In the *unio* of word and soul, which forms the person, occurs the word’s (here) *one-sided gift* (not exchange) of properties to the soul. The result is the passive genesis of faith as Christian freedom: negatively as freedom from the law, positively as freedom to love and responsibility.

2. The *second ‘gift’ of faith* (here called ‘virtus’, not in the ancient sense but as *vis* and *virtus Dei* which is effective in faith)³² makes Christian freedom explicit in the activity of faith which unfolds in response to its passive genesis. Faith is “function” (“*officium*”)³³, to give God honor. That is the “very highest worship of

tenmenschen/De Libertate Christiana, Kommentare zu Schriften Luthers 1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 159–168.

²⁷ LW 31, 349 = WA 7, 54,19 f.

²⁸ LW 31, 349 = WA 7, 53,26–28.

²⁹ Ebeling, *LuSt* 2,3, 505.

³⁰ LW 31, 349 = WA 7, 53,31 f.

³¹ Cf. Oswald Bayer and Benjamin Gleede, eds., *Creator est Creatura. Luthers Christologie als Lehre von der Idiomenkommunikation* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007).

³² “*Opus dei et virtus eius est fides: ipsa enim facit iustos et operatur omnes virtutes, castigat et crucifigit et infirmat carnem*” (LW 11, 12 = WA 3, 532,13). Thus the *early Luther*; later he says that *fides* is *not virtus*, cf. LW 31, 343–344 = WA 7, 49; 7–19.

³³ LW 31, 350 = WA 7, 53,35.

God” (“summus cultus dei”): “we ascribe to him truthfulness, righteousness, and whatever else should be ascribed to one who is trusted” (“dedisse ei veritatem, iustitiam ed quicquid tribui debet ei, cui creditur”).³⁴ Under the condition that the pure gift of faith as freedom opens a reciprocally asymmetric communication between faith and God: “Faith works truth and righteousness by giving God what belongs to him. Therefore God in turn glorifies our righteousness” (“Fides enim facit veritatem et iustitiam, reddens deo suum, ideo rursus reddit deus iustitiae nostrae gloriam”).³⁵ Here, we must speak of a two-way *commercium* or gift exchange, yet one-sidedly founded; its conditions of possibility and actuality remain initially and permanently grounded in the pure gift.

3. The *third ‘gift’ of faith* (“Tertia fidei gratia”³⁶) explicates essentially the basis for the first and second benefit (i. e., *virtus [Dei]*), by deepening the *unio* of soul and Christ, metaphorically interpreting the invisible saving event of justification. It is as bold as it is incisive and appropriate for Luther to *interpret* within the medium of living metaphor. That which cannot be given to ‘fulfilled intuition’, would not be accessible otherwise. The alternatives of metaphysical assertions or systematic interpretation (exegetical, for instance – or since Kant, of a transcendental deduction from the structure of subjectivity) would undermine the task of a *theologia practica* to interpret the ‘lived faith’ in undelegable responsibility, just for the sake of linguistic accessibility of the otherwise inaccessible.

A disconcerting mystical metaphor introduces the interpretation of the ‘joyous exchange (and struggle!)’:

- a) “[...] that it *unites* [copulat cum = copulates with] the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom” (“Quod animam *copulat* cum Christo, sicut sponsam cum sponso”);³⁷ hence, not first the wedding³⁸ and communion of goods of Christ and the soul, but the *copulation*.³⁹ This drastic and concise metaphor is the figure with which
- b) the *unio* of soul and Christ is interpreted as “one flesh” (“*una caro*”).⁴⁰ This shows that
- c) “there is between them a *true marriage*” (“*verumque inter eos matrimonium*”),⁴¹ much more perfect than any interhuman marriage because it does not unite two soteriologically ‘old’ humans, but the old with Christ, so that the

³⁴ LW 31, 350 = WA 7, 54,3 f.

³⁵ LW 31, 351 = WA 7, 54,23–25.

³⁶ LW 31, 351 = WA 7, 54,31.

³⁷ LW 31, 351 = WA 7 54,31, italics P. S.

³⁸ Cf. Ebeling, *LuSt* 2,3, 169 f.

³⁹ As is known, the Song of Songs with its history of interpretation of nuptial mysticism forms the backdrop (cf. Bernard of Clairvaux, *On the Song of Songs* [Spencer, MA: Cistercian Publications, 1971–80], sermo 7,2); cf. Rieger, *Freiheit eines Christenmenschen*, 182 ff.

⁴⁰ LW 31, 351 = WA 7, 54,33.

⁴¹ LW 31, 351 = WA 7, 54,33f, italics P. S.

old becomes anew (*mere passive*). According to this metaphorical foundation, Luther rhetorically concludes (from endoxon or reputable belief) with
 d) the community of goods of Christ and the soul, “everything they have they hold in common, the good as well as the evil” (“omnia eorum communia fieri tam bona quam mala”).⁴² The *communio* proceeds from the *unio* so that, by dint of a *communicatio idiomatum*, all properties of the soul transfer to Christ and vice versa. Not only are properties exchanged, one becomes a new person, as will be made explicit in the metaphor *fides facit personam* (see below).⁴³ In this way, faith becomes participation in the life of Christ.

In the context of metaphoric interpretation, Luther draws on the Christological theories of the *unitio* and *unio personalis Christi* to incorporate the *communicatio idiomatum* as the basic figure of the joyful exchange.⁴⁴ Thus, the ‘hard’ Christological rationale for the doctrine of justification – as the theory of the constitution of Christian freedom in the passive genesis of faith – is the doctrine of the unity of the person of Christ that is *applied* to the personal unity of Christ and the soul (as a theoretical metaphor), which makes it possible to explicate the communication of properties within this personal unity. Systematically, a need for precision arises regarding *which* genera of *communicatio idiomatum* Luther utilizes for the genesis of faith. The *genus maiestaticum* appears to apply in the *unio* of Christ and the soul as the properties of Christ (justice, etc.) are taken on by man. The opposite also applies in that the properties of the old man (sin, etc.) are accorded to and taken on by Christ. This means that Luther systematically claims the *genus tapeinoticon* (which was first formulated as such in the 19th century).⁴⁵

This is demonstrated by the basic Christological doctrine at the center of *De libertate*:

“Christ is God and man in one person. He has neither sinned nor died and is not condemned and he cannot sin, die, or be condemned; his righteousness, life and salvation are unconquerable, eternal, omnipotent. By the wedding ring of faith he shares in the sins, death and pains of hell which are his bride’s. As a matter of fact, he makes them his own and acts as if they were his own and as if he himself had sinned; he suffered, died and descended into hell that he might overcome them all. Now since it was such a one who did all this, and death and hell could not swallow him up, these were necessarily swallowed up by him in a mighty duel” (“*Cum enim Christus sit deus et homo eaque persona, quae nec*

⁴² LW 31, 351 = WA 7, 54,35 f.

⁴³ Cf. Ebeling, *LuSt* 2,3, 173.

⁴⁴ Cf. Rieger, *Freiheit eines Christenmenschen*, 186–195.

⁴⁵ Cf. Paul Althaus, *Die christliche Wahrheit*, 8th ed. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1969), 451ff; cf. David F. Strauss, *Die christliche Glaubenslehre in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung und im Kampf mit der modernen Wissenschaft*, vol. 2 (Tübingen: Osiander, 1841), 133–135; cf. Gottfried Thomasius, *Christi Person und Werk. Darstellung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Dogmatik vom Mittelpunkt der Christologie aus*, vol. 2 (Erlangen: Bläsing, 1857), 213–220.

peccavit nec moritur nec damnatur, sed nec peccare, mori, damnari potest, Eiusque iustitia, vita, salus insuperabilis, aeterna, omnipotens est, Cum, inquam, *talis persona peccata, mortem, infernum sponsae et propter annulum fidei sibi communia, immo propria facit et in iis non aliter se habet quam si sua essent ipseque peccasset, laborans, moriens et ad infernum descendens, ut omnia superaret, peccatumque, mors et infernus eum absorbere non possent, necessario in ipso absorpta sunt stupendo duello*).⁴⁶

4. This *joyful* exchange, articulating the gain of this *unio* and *communicatio*, namely the gain of Christian freedom and reconciled personality *coram Deo*, has an often unrecognized other side: *war* and *duel*. The “most pleasing vision” (“dulcissimum spectaculum”)⁴⁷ is “a happy exchange *and struggle*” (“froelich wechßel *und streytt*”).⁴⁸ It is clearer in Latin when Luther speaks – metaphorically in contrast to copulation, union and marriage – of “a blessed struggle” (“salutare bellum”)⁴⁹ and “mighty duel” (“stupendum duellum”).⁵⁰ The uniting event of the genesis of faith is *polemic*, not only peacefully pleasant but also combative. Therefore, to draw solely on the metaphors of bride and mystical marriage would downplay it. Why then *bellum* and *duellum*? Because the genesis of the new means the annihilation (or at least overcoming and transforming) of the *Old*; moreover, the Old (the sinner) will understandably resist the loss of the Old (one’s own). Man is *per se* the enemy of God who does not want to let God be God.

Therefore, the genesis of faith is not only *resurrectio*, but also *mors*. “For this reason, as soon as we begin to believe, we also begin to die to this world and live to God in the life to come; so that faith is truly a death and a resurrection, that is, it is that spiritual baptism into which we are submerged and from which we rise” (“Quare dum incipimus credere, simul incipimus mori huic mundo et vivere deo in futura vita, ut fides vere sit mors et resurrectio, hoc est spiritualis ille baptismus, quo immergimur et emergimus”)⁵¹. All the painful features that were interpreted in Mysticism accompany this *mors*: “so that henceforth (as St. Paul says in Galatians, 2) it is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives, works and speaks in us. This is not accomplished with comfortable, pleasant days. On the contrary, in these circumstances a man must hurt his own nature and let it be hurt. Here the strife between the spirit and the flesh begins” (“das hynfurt (wie [Gal. 2: 20.] Paulus Gal. ij. sagt) nit wir, sonder Christus in uns lebe, wirck und rede. Das geschicht nu nit mit sussen, guten tagen, sondern hie musz man der natur weh thun unnd weh thun lassenn. Hie hebt sich der streyt zwischen dem geist und dem fleisch”)⁵².

⁴⁶ LW 31, 351 f. = WA 7, 55,8–18, italics P. S.

⁴⁷ LW 31, 351 = WA 7, 55,7.

⁴⁸ WA 7, 25,34, italics P. S.

⁴⁹ LW 31, 351 = WA 7, 55,8.

⁵⁰ LW 31, 352 = WA 7, 55,16; regarding the *duellum mirabile Christi* cf. Ebeling, *LuSt* 2,3, 171f (see note 261 about the historic background).

⁵¹ LW 36, 68 = WA 6, 534,15 ff.

⁵² LW 44, 73 = WA 6, 244, 16–20.

Luther discerns this *struggle* on one hand in the relationship of the soul with Christ – on the other hand, carried further in the life of faith, when the second part of the *De libertate* (about Christian servitude) opens with the transfer of monastic and mystical exercises to *every* Christian. For in the tension of *simul iustus et peccator*⁵³ everyone must overcome the Old in the light of the New – even in autoaggressive self-relation: “Here the works begin; here a man cannot enjoy leisure; here he must indeed take care to discipline his body by fastings, watchings, labors and other reasonable discipline and to subject it to the Spirit so that it will obey and conform to the inner man and faith and not revolt against faith and hinder the inner man, as it is the nature of the body to do if it is not held in check” (“Hic iam incipiunt opera: hic non est ociandum: hic certe curandum, ut corpus ieiuniis, vigiliis, laboribus aliisque disciplinis moderatis exerceatur et spiritui subdatur ut homini interiori et fidei obediat et conformis sit, nec ei rebellet aut ipsum impediatur, sicut est ingenium eius, si coercitus non fuerit”).⁵⁴ This includes significantly the “mortifying” and “purifying of the lusts” (“*mortificatio* or *purificatio concupiscentiarum*.”⁵⁵) This interpretation of Luther’s develops autoaggressive features of “castigation” (“*castigatio*”)⁵⁶, such as were passed along from ascetic and mystical traditions so that *bellum* and *duellum* determine the life in faith in one’s self-relation.

The unio of Christ and soul – seems to be a dream of immediacy, of union. But once the sexual union is dared, the difference becomes manifest: as a difference *in* the justified sinner. Once the communion is sketched, the war and duel becomes manifest: from sex to warfare: the new against the old (in an eschatological meaning). This shows: immediacy is a present dream – but dreamed in metaphoricity and lived in a strong difference.

6. Immediacy of God?

6.1 *The Desire for Immediacy of God*

For the time of our lives, God may be accessible only *in and through* media, but for faith it is traditionally all about getting as close as possible to God, ultimately, to be *immediately* present to him: the real presence of God as the *immediate* presence of entire undivided being-*whole*. Media are in this view only a temporary means to an end, instruments as necessary as imperfect in order to get close to God – so close, that in the end, we immediately ‘see’ him, in unclouded

⁵³ Cf. among others Kjell O. Nilsson, *Simul. Das Miteinander von Göttlichem und Menschlichem in Luthers Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966).

⁵⁴ LW 31, 358 f. = WA 7, 60,2–6.

⁵⁵ LW 31, 359 f. = WA 7, 60,19–38.

⁵⁶ LW 31, 359 = WA 7, 60,31.

communion. This is the pious vision to desire God – ultimately, to be one with him: union with the origin in immediate presence and unclouded purity – this seems to determine many a religious desire.

What are we to say about this? For the time being and in accordance with the Christmas hymn *In dulce jubilo*, the objection holds: ‘O that we were there!’ Until then, the dream of God’s immediacy is pretty much *the last thing* we should hope for. In the eschaton of consummation this may be the case – we do not know – but until then, it still applies what already Moses knew: God’s immediacy is lethal; at least according to Exodus 33:20, when the Lord speaks: “you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.” Whoever sees God, dies.

Why, we will ask? Because God is too ‘hot’, too pure, too fiery, all too holy and therefore lethal for everything unholy? For whatever reason – at least in the biblical reading, the ‘naked’ God in his purity and immediacy is unbearable. Why should we hope for that then?

The dream of God’s immediacy creates a religious desire, inventing an endless number of media to come close, closer – closest to God. Such a desire leaves nothing untried to let the wish become reality.⁵⁷ We should not immediately suspect this of priesterbetrug or invention of religion. Faith is about the invention and development of media to communicate with God: to find [*finden*] *communio*, wherefore communication media have to be invented [*erfinden*]: apt metaphors, for instance, stories or rituals and image practices – *immersive* media: not only windows but doors, through which one enters the sanctum, finds access to God. What movies and videogames promise, Christianity also pursues: with impressive churches or *strikingly discreet* rituals. Discreet as bread, word and wine – to point away from sensibility to sense, away from the media to God.

We should thus not think too little of the dream as an idle wish or nightmare, since it is *all too well* testified biblically-theologically. The prayer of the psalms dreamed about seeing God. So it sounds in the Psalter: “Seek my face”, and the psalmist responds “Your face, Lord, do I seek” (Ps. 27:8).⁵⁸ To be granted a personal audience by God marks the peak of religious delights. One may dream this way – who wanted to forbid? – but one finds either death, or one makes detours: via media, the psalms, or the Tora or Wisdom. What the Psalmist hoped for, is promised in the Beatitudes: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Mt. 5:8). Such a pure immediacy of God is regarded as an innovation in religious history in the case of Jesus’ relation to God – since he dared addressing God

⁵⁷ To dream of the impossible makes us search for possibilities to realize the dream. And this does not only apply to the history of religion but also to science and history of technology. The inability to reach the desired or pure immediacy changes nothing regarding the productive effects – the history of media of Christianities.

⁵⁸ Cf. Friedhelm Hartenstein, *Das Angesicht JHWHs. Studien zu seinem höfischen und kultischen Bedeutungshintergrund in den Psalmen und in Exodus 32–34* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 68–78.

immediately as 'Abba', instead of going through the proper channels of religion, via temple and scribes. This direct address was democratized in Christianity.

Such an immediacy of God became *constitutive* for Protestantism. Luther's treatise on the Freedom of a Christian dares to concentrate this in the 'joyful exchange and struggle' of Christ and the soul: 'anima copulat cum Christo' (WA 7,54,31f). Luther was not prudish. Does whoever doubts such intimate immediacy undermine the Christian freedom?

6.2. From the Immediacy of God to the Immediacy of Media

What sense is there in the talk of God's immediacy? What sense is there in the constitutive paradox of talking about the immediate within unavoidable mediality?

Whoever seeks God, will find and invent media.

Whoever seeks God's immediacy, will find the immediacy of media: the sense-certainty of media presence – hoping that sense-certainty would be certainty of sense, and ultimately of God.

Hence, media that promise God have always to address sense-certainty, too: touch, taste, like bread and wine. For whom this is not enough, will increase sensuousness to increase certainty of sense: asceticism and self-chastisement, suffering and pain – desiring to find certainty of God therein. Luther was funnier with his metaphor of copulation.⁵⁹

In this, the productive aspect of the dream about God's immediacy appears: It leads to intense research and development about media.

The middle ages are *the* development laboratory for performative media practices. What may appear *prima facie* as popularization and pluralization of media, is actually soteriologically driven: by seeking salvation up to addiction, by the boundless desire for closeness and immediacy – via ever more media: images

⁵⁹ From a biblical perspective, the 'immediacy' of the relation of the prophet and Jahwe is 1. a literary topos (a fiction of authorization), to 2. an extraordinary and exclusive authorization or legitimization, thus 3. a topos of revelation that is and becomes 4. all along mediated: in the reception of the word, this leads to textualization of the revealed: Jeremiah 36,2 scroll. The precarious aporia of such an immediacy appearance as (apparently) an asserted immediacy: Both Jeremiah and Paul assert their vision or audition as an immediate assignment by god. More precisely: the texts say so. The immediacy of God regarding the messenger is a literary topos, a strategy by which immediacy is staged mediately. This could be formulated less critical of religion: this is not simply asserted or feigned, but testified in the text as text (cf. Johannes Fischer, "Behaupten oder Bezeugen? Zum Modus des Wahrheitsanspruchs christlicher Rede von Gott," *ZThK* 87:2 [1990], 224–244). Hence a shift of the problem: The feigning of an immediacy in the medium of the text is not a supposed deception. But the whereby and the wherefrom of the speaking of the witness is fragilely mediated and testified susceptibly to fallacy. The fragility of the testimony is exposed visibly and vulnerably. *Ecce testis* or *testimonium*! It is a testimony. No more, no less. Whoever seeks for the immediately authorized witness, will only find the fragilely mediated testimony. Nothing else.

and relics, eucharist, penance over penance, mystics and metaphysics – up to indulgence. Symbolic concentrations of this are the naked child in the crib, the savior's wounds, instruments of torture as meditative media of compassion – blood and tears. Seeking immediacy in this labyrinth of media – always deeper into the labyrinth seeking an exit – is enough to drive you into despair, in the long run. The grace, that is desired as close as possible, withdraws again and again ...

Berndt Hamm noted:

Noticeable are the phenomena of intensive representation of that which sanctifies, saves and redeems, phenomena converging under the key concept of 'proximate grace', which appeared as a response to intensified conceptions of the nearness of satanic power and celestial punishments, thus from a 'proximate disgrace'. At the same time, we encounter new forms of mediality, i. e. new modes of a symbol-based mediation and agency in every communicative practice through which divine grace approaches humanity and through which humanity searches for the way to salvation. The representation of proximate grace and the development of new forms of mediality were in close interrelationship and reinforced each other.⁶⁰

In Luther, however, God's immediacy of Christ and the soul is a figure of media critique, most of all a religious-political critique of all too dominant institutions, acting as preserving the order and as border guards – be it the pope, the emperor or their religious police. When institutions assume absolute representation regarding questions about the relation to God, they become *presumptuous*. They get in God's way, when they claim to be the *only* way to him.⁶¹ The exclusive particles like *sola scriptura* and *sola fide* become comprehensible as exclusions critical of media – while having the constructive other side of exclusively distinguishing media of Christ, which are accessible to everyone.

Along with this, Luther draws a distinction we could call God's immediacy 'from below' or 'from above': Whether man recognizes God 'from below' by virtue of his own reason, is disputable regarding critique of reason and religion, especially along the lines of the "Heidelberg Disputation". Getting close to God by one's own efforts and reason, would be futile work of man for Luther, nothing more:⁶² a

⁶⁰ Berndt Hamm, "Types of Grace Mediality in the Late Middle Ages," in *The Materiality of Devotion in Late Medieval Northern Europe. Images, Objects, Practices*, ed. Henning Laugerud, Salvador Ryan and Laura K. Skinnebach (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016), 10. Cf. Berndt Hamm, "Die 'nahe Gnade' – Innovative Züge der spätmittelalterlichen Theologie und Frömmigkeit," in *Herbst des Mittelalters? Fragen zur Bewertung des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Jan A. Aertsen and Martin Pickavé (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2004), 541–577.

⁶¹ The same holds sc. true for institutions of science. As if there were no science past the institutions (or third-party funds).

⁶² It would be clear as well, that the like was no 'immediate recognition' from spirit to spirit, but reason or Nous would be the medium of the relation to god. The meaning of 'immediate' would be that the spirit recognizes itself: the one in the other, because both are of one essence. The side effect, not to differentiate the creator from the creature and to presuppose the divine in the human being, violates the theological difference and is thus a grammatical error in the

futile desire, which, given the withdrawal of what is desired, could ultimately produce only despair (and self-delusion). God's immediacy 'from above', on the contrary, would be as possible as necessary, necessary for salvation: not work of man but of God – faith as 'divine work in us': 'justification by grace alone'.

However – God's work is to be called *immediate* only insofar, as he is not bound to religious institutions but can act where and when it pleases him ('ubi et quando visum est Deo').⁶³ Graciously, God has in fact – according to Luther – bound himself strictly to the 'media salutis', word and sacrament (among others!). This is no license for institutional narrowing but rather to be understood as a bond to reliable media of Christ, accessible to everyone.

God acts *through* all these media since he became accessible for all *as medium* – solo medio (extending *solo verbo et scriptura*). Hence, *solus Christus is a theorem about media*: Since Christ is believed to be the whole undivided presence of God, – as embodiment of God as loving righteousness and righteous love – God is comprehended as essentially medial: through the leading medium of Christ.

The question is then, how this singular media event (Christ) can be medialized diachronically; how Christ becomes present, after he is dead, resurrected and exalted with the Father? In short, through Christ's *spirit* (not through a general but singularly defined spirit). And this sparks hopes in some for a new immediacy of the spirit – which is immediately disappointed and redirected: to the media of Christ's spirit. For the spirit is not *bodiless* but bodily performed, embodied in preaching, sacrament, gestures, images, worship and form of life. God as medium (per Christum) – enters and binds himself to the *supplementary media of Christ*. The mediality of Christ's spirit is a qualified media plurality.

As soon as one talks about God's work, one is amidst media. When Luther understands justification as *sola fide* – he does not celebrate the human power of faith but God's work. However, this is *given* in no other way than as *media work* – 'tamquam per instrumenta'.⁶⁴ This 'instrumental' concept of media is insufficient, though. For 1. Christ himself would hardly be to understood as mere 'instrumentum', therefore (*a majore ad minus*) neither would the same be true for his supplementary media figurations. Thus, for Christological reasons

Judeo-Christian context – for instance, if too much Aristotelism or Neoplatonism slipped into theological speech.

⁶³ "Ut hanc fidem consequamur, institutum est ministerium docendi evangelii et porrigendi sacramenta. Nam per Verbum et sacramenta tamquam per instrumenta donatur Spiritus Sanctus, qui fidem efficit, ubi et quando visum est Deo, in iis, qui audiunt evangelium, scilicet quod Deus non propter nostra merita, sed propter Christum iustificet hos, qui credunt se propter Christum in gratiam recipi. Damnant Anabaptistas et alios, qui sentiunt Spiritum Sanctum contingere sine Verbo externo hominibus per ipsorum praeparationes et opera." (Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000], AC 5).

⁶⁴ "Nam per Verbum et sacramenta tamquam per instrumenta donatur Spiritus Sanctus, qui fidem efficit, ubi et quando visum est Deo, in iis, qui audiunt evangelium" (AC 5).

our concept of media has to be defined in a more sophisticated way. 2. By ‘instrumentum’ we insinuate that the Christ media were *lifeless* means to the end of Christ’s realization. Even with an ever so great recognition of Christ’s mediality, this would be a misrecognition of its own internal dynamics.

6.3. Thesis: *The Work of Media between the Work of God and Man*

Between God’s and man’s work mediates *work of the word*. To put it hermeneutically: God works through the word (per verbum). The word then is a ‘figure of the third’ in between God and man. God’s word is *performed* – decisively by Christ as God’s embodiment, derivatively in all succeeding media and media cascades of Christian religious practice. It is hermeneutically resolved that the work of the word in no way consists of lifeless instruments. Writing, the word, language feature significant dynamics of their own. In this sense, the Institute for Hermeneutics in Bonn once noted: ‘*The letter gives life*’.

The work of the word *alone*, however, would be a concision that comes with a high price. As if ‘the word alone’ was the medium worthy of God. Was the embodiment in God’s living image not necessary, then? No ‘seeing his glory’, as John thought? In terms of opening our horizon, recall the following: *Man shall not live by the word alone*, as God does not work through the word alone. In faith in the word [Glaube an das Wort], there is good portion of belief in the word [Wortglaube].⁶⁵

God does not just *speak*, he *shows* himself, too – never *naked*, luckily, but through media: the burning bush or the pillar of cloud or of fire; tablets of stone or scrolls (against the tendency towards medial monoculture of the word alone).

The media work between God’s work and man’s work.

The dualization of God’s word and man’s word, of God’s work and man’s work, becomes ‘de-dualized’ by the *figure of the third*, the *work of media*. We would have to concede then, however, that media have a legitimate *dynamics of their own* (although risky). Not only the writing material contributes to our thoughts – the wine does as well.

Regarding Christ, such dynamics are quickly accepted. But this applies no less to his supplementary media of word, works, image, body or music. To phrase it somewhat disenchanted: One will have to rely on the internal dynamics of *analogous* media, if indeed proclamation should become the presence of the proclaimed, or communion or good works or form of living.⁶⁶

Media, which are in the strict sense of the word *God’s own media*, would have to be *in* the world but not *from* it. To the minimal medium, God’s *name*, a

⁶⁵ Analogously broadened: Whoever seeks for the vision, will only find a nude god, which would be terrible in the best case.

⁶⁶ Whoever constantly sees here at work the person and its knowledge and willing alone, underestimates wherein and whereby we live, speak, work.

very tight coupling applies, a metonymical identity of name and God (broadly speaking: *pars pro toto*). Such an identity of God and medium is recognized, if and only if the medium comes *of God*, as God of God, true God of true God.

Thus, for Christians applies: *solus Christus*. He is the only medium of God, for whom the reverse is true: Medium as God, *this medium alone*. For Christ is not only a temporary means or God's subcontractor, not only his messenger or representative, but God's whole, undivided presence – however, not in an immediate way: In Christ, God becomes real-present *in the medium as the medium*.

Who seeks God's immediacy – will find the immediacy of media.

Who seeks the immediacy of Christ – will find media of Christ.

But – which ones? Mysticism of suffering? Passion meditation? Getting crucified? Or, rather unspectacularly, listening and celebrating his word? From the start, Christianities rely on media of Christ. Remembrance and narration, metaphor and parable, word and sacrament, worship and form of living. The *more* discreet and unspectacular, the *less* chance of confusing sense-certainty with certainty of sense – or more precisely, with certainty of faith.

'The proclaimer (Jesus) becomes the proclaimed (Christ)' – is a common consensus in theology. He not only becomes the *object* of proclamation, but 'Christ as the proclaimed' *is* God as medium. Such is the wager on the word's performance (not without a good deal of belief in the word). The silent continuation is decisive here: from the proclaimer to the proclaimed to the one who proclaims again, or at least to the co-proclaimer – so that in proclamation, the proclaimed *himself* shall speak as well.⁶⁷ Christ may be the only medium to which applies that it *is* God. However, he has not remained the only one. He could not remain the only one – otherwise the Raised One would simply be absent.

This issue provokes the passage to pneumatology. The maximum hardship for pneumatology is to understand the event of Jesus' death as innovative *rupture* (of sensibility and sense), which is not always already healed and enfolded by the Spirit, but which unfolds a new mediality: The death of Jesus provokes the eschatological mediality of the Spirit: a new way of saying and showing, new interpretation, new sociality (community), to comprehend and communicate *ex post* (in hindsight), what and who showed himself at the cross. We could call this the *medial turn* of theology: to start not from the immediate or the internal, bodiless etc. but phenomenally from media practices (and pathics). To start not from an ontological comparative of the 'pre', 'inner' ... but from the 'medial condition' of the Spirit:

The simple and light immediate is the thinking habit of recognizing spirit through spirit; the dark, unfathomable immediate, however, is death as the rupture of mediality – from which the Spirit (like God and mediality) is to be thought and said in a new and different way if he is to be the spirit of *Christ*. 'For the Spirit

⁶⁷ The question of the audience 'who is speaking?' (anyway) must become questionable – otherwise only an official of a religion would be speaking.

is as strong as death', would be eschatological hope. Then, however, the media practices of the Spirit have to be as strong as death as well: antimortally powerful, interpretively powerful. This pious competition of Spirit and death, including the wager that Christ's Spirit is ultimately stronger than death, is a proposition in hindsight (testimony). Thus, the Spirit must be thought as affected, touched, wounded; a Spirit with 'scars'.

7. Systematic Reduction: From Form of Perception to Doctrine

Whereby does reformatting the form of perception occur? Through two different forms of communication: by communicating *this medium* (faith in Christ) – and by communicating *within this medium* (within faith). How to communicate *within* this medium? In all forms of living (up to the political), though in simpler words: in religious practice and theology.

The *concept of media* is thereby *doubled*: the *leading medium* of a new form of perception is enacted and practiced *in different media*. In this respect, the new form of perception is a *meta-medium*, which regulates and reorients the various media practices.

On the systematic level, this corresponds to the status and function of the doctrine of justification: not to be a new doctrine amongst others as a reformatory special teaching, but to be “teacher and prince, master, leader and judge”⁶⁸ for every kind of doctrine. This is a claim to validity, more precisely: a claim to *power of interpretation*, which may be armed with the ‘status confessionis’ but is therefore by no means ‘enforced’. It should be taken normatively, not descriptively, that all doctrine – including ‘conscience’ and form of living – may be regulated this way (independently from the question if one agrees to this norm). Correspondingly, we should not take the validity and effect and ratification of this reformatting of all forms of perception according to the meta-medium as an assertion of reality but rather as an assertion of efficacy – thus as a claim to interpretive power, not as a description of something that is the case.

Whereby is the form of perception *de facto* or *in vivo* reformatted? To put it basically, by conforming and complying to this claim – for whatever reason.

⁶⁸ “Articulus iustificationis est magister et princeps, dominus, rector et iudex super omnia genera doctrinarum, qui conservat et gubernat omnem doctrinam ecclesiasticam et errigit conscientiam nostram coram Deo” (WA 39.1, 205,2–5) – respectively “magister et princeps super omnia doctrinarum genera, et gubernat omnem conscientiam et ecclesiam, sine quo mundus est insulsus et merae tenebrae, nec ullus est error, qui non irreat et regnet sine illo” (WA 39.1, p. 205,20–23). Cf. Kolb and Wengert, *The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, SA 2, 1. The first and chief article: “And upon this article all things depend which we teach and practice in opposition to the Pope, the devil, and the [whole] world. Therefore, we must be sure concerning this doctrine, and not doubt; for otherwise all is lost, and the Pope and devil and all things gain the victory and suit over us.”

Thus, by others authorizing this difference, by participating, seeing, speaking and operating this way.

This difference becomes interpretatively powerful only by becoming form of perception, form of living and form of organization. To put it more generally: The reformatting of mediality is a claim, not simply reality. This holds true *sc.* to this day and for all future. A Protestantism, which claimed about itself *to be re-formatted* in this sense, to conform descriptively to its leading medium – would have failed to recognize or (willingly) forgotten its critical or eschatological function. This should be called to mind in times of the Luther decade, as well.

A medium, which is gradually recognized and which ‘imposes itself *in vivo*’, is *ex post* exposed then *in vitro*: exposed legendarily as ‘reformatory discovery’ – for which it remains historically contentious, whether or, if so, when and how it occurred. *Systemically*, it is reduced to a systematic operation: a distinction within the respective concepts of God, faith and man.

This systematic reduction skips – for the sake of clarification – all historical relations and relativities, in order to focus the operative rule, so to speak: briefly, the doctrine of justification. This way, not only much phenomenal complexity is lost, but a decisive passage is done (which is usually made invisible): the passage of a *pathical* and *practical* to a *theoretical* determination. This is apparent, for instance, when Protestant Orthodoxy turned the doctrine of justification into one locus among others – instead of reformatting all loci from the perspective of the doctrine of justification. This ‘doctrinalization’ occurs already before when ‘justification as God’s act’ is turned into a doctrine of justification (as a theological theorem), and when this theorem is declared to be doctrinal content and unique feature. What is encountered (the justifying action of God), is witnessed as experience (the scriptural witness) and is recognized as witness (the so-called reformatory discovery) to turn it into a theological difference, at which the confessions part ways (the polemical function), up to that point where this theorem of difference is integrated into the orthodox body of doctrine (the doctrinal and pedagogical function) – and finally it becomes a matter for negotiation in ecumenical religious politics and diplomacy, which can be somehow agreed on. A media transfer, in which the decisive difference (of the work of man and the work of God, active and passive righteousness etc.) changes from revelation to experience to witness to theology to doctrine and diplomacy. This is to be called *media transfer* because it is about respective media changes: not only in the sense that the medium, in which the difference is negotiated, changes. Rather, the ‘leading medium’ of this difference does thereby not remain constant and self-identical. It becomes completely different in each case, as what this difference functions: as witness of experience, as body of doctrine, or as diplomatic matter for negotiation: The modes of perception, speaking and thinking in these media contexts profoundly change ‘*quod res est*’.

From a *hermeneutical* point of view, the systematic reduction to a conceptual operation is a 'late bloomer', it is, similarly to the legendary exposition *ex post*, a systematic concentration in hindsight. It *clarifies* the operative difference in reformatting perception, thinking and speaking – but it has also the potential of misunderstanding itself: What is conceptualized in such a 'de-temporalized' and eternalized manner has got preconditions, indeterminacies and consequences for expression and presentation, in which becomes apparent what is concentrated in a concept only later. In short: the language-, image-, or, understood more broadly, media practices are the context *in vivo* what is conceptually distilled *in vitro* later, which is designated as the leading difference then. In this sense, we *could* understand history as recovering phenomena: as working on the indeterminacies and historical relativities. On the other hand, the same historical work can obscure systematic differences – if it presents itself dogmatically antidogmatic or as history *instead of* theology.

It is a likely misunderstanding regarding the systematic reduction of 'justification', that it was a polemic development of doctrine, about which one could free-floatingly negotiate in 'post-Christian times'. However, after a religious community was formed by virtue of this difference (or a confessional community – with all plurality), one cannot simply negotiate about such a rule concerning the form of living, as if it had a price or could be at disposal. What disposes or formats living, thinking and speaking, cannot be at disposal itself – without leaving this context of a form a living. In other words, the reformatory dispositif is not at disposal, but it is a disposition.

It would be likewise mistakable to regard justification actually as a doctrinal development, a *forteriori* as one among others like in Protestant Orthodoxy. The reduction to one difference (active or passive righteousness, for instance) leads Protestantism to misunderstand itself, as if it was a (re-)discovery of this difference – nothing more, a mere intellectual creation of theology without body or history. As if the reformation were a product of theory, more precisely the work of exegetes. Then, everything would hinge on the exegesis of Paul and Luther as an exegete would have rediscovered and reestablished the 'true Christianity'.

How influential this misunderstanding is, becomes apparent in the function of New Testament exegesis in Protestantism (which is equivalent to the Roman magisterium): May scripture alone (*sola scriptura*) be the *norma normans* (non *normata*?) of all theology? Then the study of scripture, exegesis, becomes the *metanorma normans*, which would normalize all theology because exegesis alone sets right what is written. The exegesis of Paul becomes the 'Holy Office' – and that is why some exegetes are so upset when non-theologians like Taubes, Badiou and Agamben write books about Paul. You would almost think that the reformatory brisance of innovative interpretation of Paul was emigrated into the philosophy of religion, at least in the times of the Luther anniversary.

The Signs of a Hidden God

Dialectics of Veiling and Unveiling God in Islam

Safet Bektovic

1. Sharia Law and Negative Theology

It is a common assertion that God in Islam does not reveal Himself (as He does in Christianity), but He does reveal His will in the form of a religious-moral guidance that provides the basis for legal regulations. In this sense, many Muslims prefer to talk about Sharia (understood as the revealed way) and not of theology (understood as reflections on God's nature). Islamic dogmatics, based on a *tawhid* doctrine (the teaching of the unity of God), used to be presented in concepts of a negative theology, as it corresponds with the Qur'anic idea of a transcendent God, who is – in His essence – inaccessible to human beings.

The first theological school within Islam – Mu'tazila, developed in the 8th to 9th centuries – was also a clear expression of a negative theology. It is right to say that Mu'tazila, as well as the other schools from the early period, were under the influence of Neo-Platonic ideas. In this regard, Plotinus's *Enneads* had a particular significance as it was received as a philosophical-theological source of universal validity. Plotinus's idea of the One as a supreme, transcendent "One", without any division, multiplicity or distinction, was very attractive to Muslims as it confirmed and explained the idea of transcendent God as the source and cause of everything. Likewise, the ideas of the active intellect as creative and divine, and correspondingly, the passive intellect as an expression of human consciousness, served as inspiration in terms of the interpretation of the relationship between God and the world. However, Muslim philosophers and theologians, including those who followed al-Farabi and his (Islamic) theory of emanation, had to struggle to reconcile a God of absolute unity and perfection with a multiple universe full of imperfections.¹ The challenge was no less in the

¹ Oliver Leaman sees a principle problem with the justification that Neo-Platonism, which is not religious or theologically founded in any way (many Neo-Platonists were atheists), can serve as an inspiration for a religion such as Islam, which maintains the creation of the world out of nothing, and dichotomy between the unity of God and the diversity of the world. Contrary to that, Neo-Platonism identified creation with emanation understood as a continual process of generation that has no beginning and that is automatic. However, it is nevertheless understand-

discussions about understanding God's will. Yet, this question was crucial for the development of Islamic orthodoxy. Attempts to formulate a comprehensive law that would express God's will (including God's intentions with the revelations) and serve to regulate the wholeness of human life was a main occupation of Muslim scholars, and legal interpretation of the sacred text was the basis for establishing the first and fundamental Islamic discipline – jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Looking back at the historical context after the death of Prophet Muhammad, which was characterized by the lack of a coherent socio-political system, it is quite understandable that this task was a priority for Muslim society. However, by neglecting, or most often refusing, to discuss God as such (theological issues), and solely focusing on legal issues, the establishment of orthodoxy ran a risk of ending in a self-contradictory position, maintaining that nothing can be said about God, but everything can be said about His will. A partial agreement that it is still possible to talk about God in an indirect way, by speaking of His attributes (reflected by His names), does not solve the problem because the attributes of God were also linked to the same undifferentiated unity and transcendence. Moreover, interpretation of God's attributes should in no way contest the concept of God's unity. Conversely, there was a broad theological consensus that God is active and manifesting. In that sense, the main problem was to understand the relationship between God and the world through the interpretation of God's manifestations (*tajalli*).

2. Understanding God's Presence

Some of the initiating questions were the following: How to reconcile a transcendent and inaccessible God with a manifest and personal God? How to understand God's revelation; that is, the word of God in the Qur'an? In what way it is possible to talk about the meeting between God and man?

For many Muslim mystics (Sufis), the main challenge was not to explain God as such, but to experience His presence. Since the experience of God remains an indescribable mystery, they claimed that one does not feel the need to talk about God after one has experienced Him. Nevertheless, the majority of Muslim theologians perceived revelation as an invitation to reflect on God. In this regard, Islam – as a religion of revelation – is in the same position as the other religions of revelations, for example Christianity. However, in the case of Christianity, it is hard to have an excuse not to talk about God after he entered into the history and shared his existence with people. In the case of Islam, it is a little more com-

able that Neo-Platonism was of use to Muslims because it provided a "suitable set of principles" related to a single (and absolute) source, which served as the basis for the establishment of a "rational structure behind the universe" (Oliver Leaman, *Key Concepts in Eastern Philosophy* [London: Routledge, 1999], 4).

plicated due to the idea that God remains in the afterlife, even though He had to be involved in this world. This essay is an attempt to give voice to Ibn Arabi, the great Muslim thinker from the 12th to 13th century, who dedicated himself to the understanding of revelation and the relationship between the transcendent (non-manifest) and the manifest God, and who had a significant influence on his posterity, especially in the field of Sufi philosophy.²

Like many other Muslim thinkers from the classical period, Ibn Arabi was preoccupied by the concepts of *tanzih* and *tashbih*, which relate to the incompatibility and compatibility of God to the created world, and which had a crucial role in Muslim discussions on transcendentalism and anthropomorphism in the Qur'an. *Tanzih* is linked to the doctrine of *tawhid* and denotes otherness and incompatibility of God with the created world, affirming God's distance from humanity. Contrary to this, *tashbih* denotes similarity, nearness and the accessibility of God.

According to Ibn Arabi, these two aspects must be observed in all descriptions of God, because God is at the same time transcendent and immanent; Allah is hidden and inaccessible, but also manifest and recognizable. This tension is reflected in the Qur'an (42:11): "Nothing is like Him" and then immediately declaring that "He is the hearer, the seer".

However, Ibn Arabi clearly distinguishes between the external and internal meaning of the Qur'anic text. In one of his main works, *Fusus al-Hikam*, he emphasizes the metaphoric meaning of the anthropomorphic descriptions of God, but stresses that God Himself does not look like man with hands and feet, but that He is essentially hands and feet of all that have hands and feet.³ Similarly, God is essentially present in all creatures, and it is only He who exists in an absolute way.

² It was initially Ibn Arabi's disciples Sadrudin al-Qunawi (who was actually his stepson) and Ibn Sawdakin who spread his teachings in Syria, already known as an area where several well-known Sufis worked (e.g. Suhrawardi, Attar). He quickly became known, and studied in different Islamic centers in the eastern part of the Muslim world: Anatolia, Central, and South Asia, which later developed a complete tradition of interpreting Ibn Arabi (Aqbarian Sufism), but also in North Africa where his Sufi teachings significantly affected the area's Sufi orders. Ibn Arabi has served as a main reference in Sufi philosophy for many centuries, and researchers have placed him in relation to Christian and European thinking (e.g. Master Eckhart and Dante, who might be influenced by him). In the early 20th century, some of his most important works were translated into European languages, creating a renewed and increased interest in him, among both Muslims and non-Muslims. Cf. Isobel Jeffery-Street, *Ibn Arabi and the Contemporary West Beshara and the 'Ibn Arabi Society* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2012), 5–14.

³ Ibn Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, transl. R. W. J. Austin (London: SPCK, 1980), 55–56. According to Ibn Arabi, God is absolute and beyond all limitations. On the same basis, Ibn Arabi rejects the Christian doctrine of incarnation, accepting however the statement that Christ is God as true, but rejecting the statement that God is Christ the son of Mary, because the latter will be a limitation as it indicates that God is only Christ and nothing else. Cf. Ibn Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 177; Abu 'l-Ala Affifi, *The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din-Ibnul 'Arabi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939), 20.

Many will argue that Ibn Arabi's idea on God's presence in everything does not harmonize with Islamic orthodoxy, and more resembles a pantheistic philosophy, but his aim is not just to explain that God is everywhere, but rather to understand the relationship between transcendence and immanence as two simultaneous principles of God's presence in the world.

3. The Motive of Hidden Treasure

Ibn Arabi's starting point in the interpretation of God's manifestations is a famous hadith *qudsi* (word of God, which is not part of the Qur'an, but part of hadith, nevertheless holding the status of sacred tradition), as follows: "I was a hidden treasure⁴ and wanted to be known, so I created the world", or in a more correct translation, as follows: "I was a Treasure unknown then I desired to be known so I created a creation to which I made myself known to myself; then they knew me."⁵ What can we read from this hadith? Firstly, that the creation is related to, and rooted in God's consciousness of Himself and is a result of God's wish to be manifest and known. Thus, there is no doubt that God is interested in being known.

Secondly, the hadith gives us a picture of a lonely and even "compassionate" God who felt the need to overcome His loneliness, and for that reason He created man. This is the idea of a God who needs man, which is well known both in Sufism and Christian mysticism (e. g. in Master Eckhart), and which, with variations, has been developed into a theory of mutuality between God and man. God created man, and if man did not exist, God would remain unknown.⁶

God's desire to become known is a central point in Ibn Arabi's cosmology and anthropology. According to him, acknowledgment of God has to be understood as a kind of self-acknowledgement, in a way that God mirrors Himself in

⁴ Parable of the hidden treasure also occurs in the New Testament (Matthew 13:44) and Apocrypha (Thomas 109), associated with the (Father's) Kingdom of Heaven.

⁵ Text from: Ibn Arabi, *Les Illuminations de La Mecque. The Meccan Illuminations. Selected Texts*, ed. by W. Chittick, C. Chodkiewicz, D. Gril and J. Morris (Paris: Sindbad, 1988); cf. also Henry Corbin, *Alone with the Alone. Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 114. The hadith is not included in standard hadith collections, but it is widely quoted by many Sufis and especially Ibn Arabi in his work *The Meccan Illuminations*.

⁶ Ibn Arabi argues for this by referring to the aforementioned hadith that designates God's dependence on being known, and by referring to the Qur'an: "I created jinn and man only to worship Me" (51:56) which also indicates a relationship of independence. He emphasizes the inter-mutuality of the Islamic concept of worship, exemplifying it by the ritual prayer, which is prescribed with the meaning that God and man could meet each other. God, in his transcendent unity, as the absolute reality, is thus independent, as stated in the Qur'an (3:97), but this does not apply to the manifest God, who has made himself dependent on the created world. Cf. Ibn Arabi, *The Meccan Illuminations*, 304; 316 f.

the created. On the other hand, the created is not necessarily a passive mediator in which God recognizes Himself.⁷ This applies at least to man – the creation that has an exceptional position among others creations by having the ability to know God. In addition, man is also interested in establishing a relationship with his creator – God. However, man is not able to acknowledge God directly, but only indirectly through self-acknowledgment and by understanding his role as a mirror.⁸

By discussing the interrelationship between God and man, Ibn Arabi often refers to two hadiths. In the first of them God says, “The human being is the secret of Me, and I am the secret of it”. In the second hadith, the prophet Muhammad is reported to have said, “Who knows his (true) self, knows his Lord (as manifested in himself)”.⁹ Those who achieve a full self-understanding also know the deeper reality and denote, in the view of Ibn Arabi, the perfect manifestation of God in the form of “the perfect human being” (*al-insan al-kamil*).¹⁰

Since God created man according to His own image (as it is said in a hadith), this means that man potentially reflects all of God’s attributes, unlike the other creatures that only reflect the more particular attributes. However, “the perfect human being” is not a given reality, but a human potential and a spiritual ideal. The realization of this potential is linked to a gnostic experience of God, and according to Ibn Arabi, it is reserved for prophets and holy men (*awliyya*).¹¹

4. The Metaphysics of Unity and Diversity

Ibn Arabi distinguishes between God as such (*Haqq*), i. e. God in His absolute reality, and the manifest God (*Khalq*). God in His eternity (as *Haqq*) remains untouched and hidden; on the contrary, the revealed God (as *Khalq*) is available and recognizable.

Since everything in the world appears as a manifestation of God (*tajalli*), we only experience particular aspects of God, but not God in His essence and His unity. “If you look on God through Him”, Ibn Arabi says (i. e. if you regard Essence from the point of view of the Essence), then He regards “Himself by

⁷ All creatures have a definite level of active relationship with God because they are constituted by the combination of the principles of passive (*mahmul*) and active (*hamil*) relationships to God. As manifestations of God, all of them have a form (*sura*), body (*jism*) and spirit (*ruh*). They are able to praise the Creator consistently in a manner that is not necessarily understandable to humans. However, man has a special role and level of activeness: He was created in the form of God and was assigned the role of God’s deputy, and he has assumed a trust to testify to God before the rest of the world (Ibn Arabi, *The Meccan Illuminations*, 102–104).

⁸ Ibn Arabi, *The Meccan Illuminations*, 233.

⁹ Ibn Arabi, *The Meccan Illuminations*, 92–93.

¹⁰ Ibn Arabi, *The Meccan Illuminations*, 54–56.

¹¹ Cf. Ibn Arabi, *The Meccan Illuminations*.

Himself”, which is the state of unity; but “if you look on Him through you” (i. e. from your point of view as a form), than the unity “vanishes”.¹²

As pointed out by Afffi, this statement sounds like an echo of Plotinus’s idea of the One as present everywhere and nowhere. However, Ibn Arabi’s *Haqq* is everywhere as a universal Essence (not as an Absolute Cause as in Plotinus), while He as an Absolute Reality is nowhere, which means above all “where” and “how”.¹³

As the absolute reality, God is one, but as the manifest reality, He is empirical diversity. In the words of Ibn Arabi: “Unity has no other meaning than two (or more) things being actually identical but conceptually distinguishable the one from the other; so in the sense the one is the other; in another, it is not”.¹⁴

Ontologically, there is only one reality, but epistemologically there are two aspects: a reality that transcends the phenomenal world and a multiplicity, which find its explanation and foundation in the essential unity of the real.¹⁵

According to Ibn Arabi, multiplicity is due to diversity of different points of view, not to an actual division of the reality. In that sense, one could compare *Khalq* (the phenomenological world) to a piece of glass. Provided that it is transparent, light passes through it (God), and the light always assumes the colour of the glass. Light itself cannot be seen, but everything else is discernable because of the light. Hence, man cannot reach God in His Absolute Unity (*ahadiyah*), only observe and experience His manifestations in the world, which convey a plurality of “coloured lights”.

Ibn Arabi often emphasizes that people only can see “images of God”, while God remains forever absent behind the forms that are manifest in existence.

5. Interpretation of God’s Signs

As already mentioned, God as such is not the subject of knowledge, but it is His manifestations. For Muslims, these manifestations are present both in the

¹² Ibn Arabi, *The Meccan Illuminations*, 107.

¹³ Cf. Afffi, *The Mystical Philosophy*, 11 (relates to *Fusus al Hikam*, Quash. Comm. Cairo, 1309, 117).

¹⁴ Cf. Afffi, *The Mystical Philosophy*, 11 (quotes taken from *Fusus al Hikam*, Quash. Comm. Cairo, 1309, 117).

¹⁵ Cf. Ibn Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 85; 87. In many presentations of Ibn Arabi, Muslims as well as non-Muslims presented him as a kind of pantheist. This is because he is considered to be the originator of the doctrine *wahdat al-wujud* (interpreted as “oneness of Being” or “unity of existence”), which was considered a philosophy of pantheism. As pointed out by Chittick, one might argue that Ibn Arabi, in many of his texts, supports *wahdat al-wujud* or speaks directly about the ontological unity of existence, but it is important to remember that he emphasizes just as strongly the diversity of being/existence, thus *wujud* in its entirety is both One and many at the same time (*al-wahid al-kathir*). In addition, the very term *wahdat al-wujud* is not found in his works. See C. William Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 15 and Michel Chodkiewicz, “The Diffusion of Ibn ‘Arabi’s Doctrine,” *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi Society*, 1991, 35–57.

form of natural signs in the cosmos¹⁶ and in the form of linguistic signs in the Holy Scripture. The Qur'an is thus nothing else but a collection of signs of God. The standard Arabic word for these signs is *ayat*. There are more than 6000 *ayat* in the Quran and they used to be translated as verses (probably because of the poetic style of the Qur'anic text).¹⁷

Within the mainstream Sunni Muslim tradition, the exegetes interpret *ayat* as divine statements formulated in the Arabic language, and they confirm that the majority of these statements are expressed in a clear fashion, whereas the minority are stated in terms of ambivalence. Certain Shiite and Sufi traditions emphasize the symbolic meaning of *ayat*, and the exegetes confirm that every *aya* has an outer and an inner meaning, whereby these two meanings can be very different and even contradictory.

Recognizing the manifest God and interpreting the revealed *ayat* (signs, miracles) is, according to Ibn Arabi, not an easy task since all God's manifestations and the revealed signs have a double meaning: As mirrors they serve to unveil God's presence and, at the same time – by being ontologically different from God – they veil His essence. Everything, including the names of God and the human desire to look behind the veil, is a veil,¹⁸ but because everything discloses God's existence it appears as a sign of God. This is like a paradox: What conceals God's essence reveals His existence, in a form that is not Him.¹⁹

In other words, God's creatures function as both signs (*ayat*) and veils (*hijab*). They disclose and veil God at the same time. This corresponds to the simulta-

¹⁶ According to Ibn Arabi, the cosmos represents loci of manifestations of God (*mazahir*) and unlike the human being (microcosm), who expresses the unity of God's names, the cosmos (macrocosm) expresses the multiplicity of His names. There is a parallel between the perfect human and the cosmos, because both reflect the entirety of God's names/attributes in different ways. While *microcosm* reflects all of God's attributes in a concentrated and "relatively undifferentiated mode" (*ijmal*), *macrocosm* does it in a dispersive and "differentiated mode" (*tafsil*). The main difference is that *macrocosm* is an object that passively reflects God's self-manifestations, while *microcosmic* is at once an object and subject, being a conscious actor who has knowledge of himself as well as of the cosmos. Cf. Safet Bektovic, "Det fuldkomne menneske og troens dialektik hos Ibn 'Arabi" *Tidsskrift om islam & kristendom* (2015), 25–32 (27); Chittick, "The Diffusion of Ibn 'Arabi's Doctrine," 33–34.

¹⁷ Etymologically *aya* (pl. *ayat*) corresponds to Syriac *âtha* and Hebrew *ôth*, and means a "visible sign of a transcendental reality". One of the original meanings of *aya* is *miracle*. Within the ancient Arab worldview, as it is expressed in poetry for example, natural phenomena were considered miracles, but later, the Qur'anic revelations (e. g. 41:53; 57:1) told people that these miracles are *ayat* from the creator/God, and they should be interpreted in order to understand the cosmos.

¹⁸ "The names are veils over the Named, just as they are signifiers of Him [...]. There is no veil and no curtain. Nothing hides Him save His manifestation [...]. Were souls to halt with what has become manifest, they would know the situation as it is in self. However, they seek something that is absent from them, so their seeking is identical with their veil." Cf. Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God* (New York: SUNY Press, 1998), 104.

¹⁹ This is very much in line with Master Eckhart's view of the relationship between God and the world as expressed in the following: "God overflows into all creatures, and yet he remains untouched by all" (See Almond, 2003, 32).

neous identity of God with the world and the difference. Thus God is hidden behind exactly what reveals Him; or as Ibn Arabi says, “God becomes manifest by being veiled”.

William Chittick, a leading contemporary scholar of Sufism and Ibn Arabi, also emphasizes the centrality of the paradox of the veil in Ibn Arabi: “The veil, the thing, the creature, is not God, no way to see God, except in the veil, which will always conceal Him.”²⁰

6. A Sufi Deconstructive Approach

There is no doubt that Ibn Arabi has a unique position in Islamic intellectual history: He is critical of the main Islamic theological directions like Mu'tazila and Ashari; he differs from most Muslim philosophers (the rational as well as the mystical); and he does not belong to any particular school of thought.

He stands somewhere between the apophatic theology, represented by those who favour the so-called *tatil* approach, which denies God's attributes as real manifestations, and the cataphatic theology, represented by those who regard God's attributes in positive terms and highlight the compatibility of God with His creatures.²¹ It is impossible to position him because, on the one hand, he is inclined to recognize different views and schools as legitimate approaches to God, but on the other hand, he opposes all of them as inadequate and reductive. Some would say he is neither the one nor the other; others would claim that he is both.

When he criticizes Ashari and the Muslim anthropomorphists, who maintain the interpretation of God's attributes in positive terms, he emphasizes – as a negative theologian – the otherness of God compared to everything that is not God, and warns against the reduction of God to His manifestations. But when he criticizes Mu'tazila for their insistence on the unknowability of God, he appears as an anthropomorphist (or pantheist), emphasizing that God only can be known through His manifestations, which must be anthropomorphic because man can only recognize the things that correspond to his own ideas.

What is the point with Ibn Arabi's approach, since he criticizes everything and remains open to everything? According to Chittick, Ibn Arabi “[...] has no specific point to which he wants to get. He is simply flowing along with the infinity diverse self-disclosures of God, and he is suggesting to us that we leave aside our artificialities and recognize that we are flowing along with him. There is no ‘point’, because there is no end”.²²

²⁰ Chittick, *Sufism: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), 17.

²¹ Ian Almond, “The Shackles of Reason: Sufi/Deconstructive Opposition to Rational Thought”, *Philosophy East and West*, 53:1 (2003), 22–38.

²² Chittick, *Self-Disclosure*, xi.

Nevertheless, on the methodological level, Ibn Arabi maintains the principle of the simultaneousness of transcendence and immanence, and reminds us of the futility of any attempt to define God as He is in His eternity beyond the world, or as He is in the world in His manifestations:

If you insist on His transcendence, you restrict Him,
And if you insist on His immanence you limit Him.
If you maintain both aspects you are right.²³

Ibn Arabi's insistence on the simultaneousness of opposite principles and different interpretations can, according to Ian Almond, be put in relation to Derrida's deconstructive approach:

Probably the first feature that unites deconstructive/Sufi approaches to interpretation is a simple disbelief in any exclusive, conclusive secret to the text – a belief in the text not as a single communication to be reiterated endlessly but, rather, as a vehicle that constantly delivers new meanings according to the situation and moment of the reader.²⁴

By emphasizing the impossibility of any rational or reflective approach to embrace the reality, and the danger of trying to isolate God (as the subject of reflection) in order to define Him, Ibn Arabi seems to anticipate Derrida's position regarding the critique of binary thought. One cannot define anything without saying what it is not. That is to say, that what is present always depends on implying what is absent, and vice versa.²⁵

Binary thinking must therefore be rejected as an illusion regarding the achievement of God's truth. However, the achievement of the truth and the understanding of a deeper meaning to reality is not a goal for Derrida at all. Unlike Ibn Arabi, he does not care for the "fixed meaning", the creator's/author's intentions. Nor do they exist. But, this is a challenge for Ibn Arabi. Believing that God has created the world with a meaning, and has sent down a scripture to the people that informs them about it, he cannot stop reflecting on this "original" meaning, albeit being aware of the impossibility of achieving this (as it was with God), since it is mediated, and communicated as polyvalent.

One could point out other similarities between Derrida and Ibn Arabi regarding limitations on human reflection, including their positive view of confusion when it comes to understanding the world, but this should not be done at the expense of the fundamental difference concerning their starting hermeneutic positions. This refers to the foundation of the human production of meanings.

²³ Ibn Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 75.

²⁴ Ian Almond, "The meaning of Infinity in Sufi and Deconstructive Hermeneutics: When Is an Empty Text an Infinite One?" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 72:1 (2004), 97–117 (102).

²⁵ Cf. Almond, "The Shackles of Reason," 34; Ibn Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 86.

For Derrida, who argues for “nothingness” as the source of meanings, God’s disclosure of this secret (the unveiling of the ultimate meaning) would be the end of all meanings.

For Ibn Arabi, God’s disclosure, as it occurs as an unfinished process, mirrors both a nothingness (nothing is like God) and fullness/substance (everything is God), an absence (of the hidden God) and a presence (of the manifested God), and due to its hermeneutic openness, it is possible to have infinite interpretations/meanings.

In the first case, it is the ‘emptiness’ of the text and the infinity of contemporary contexts that enables the production of meanings; in the other case, it is also due to the ‘infinite Mind of God’ and the infinity of His re-veiled *ayat* (signs).²⁶

7. The Infinity of Ways Leading to God

In spite of the assumption that human truth is plural and relative, it is a fact that seekers (of God) always try to formulate a universal truth about God. Many mystics and exponents of perennial philosophy, among others, have argued that there exists something common in the different forms of faith (on the personal and religious-theological level).

Ibn Arabi was also preoccupied with the common metaphysics that he considered to be at the heart of all religions/ways to God. He took religious theologies into account, but was convinced that the ultimate truth goes beyond dogma and traditions. He wrote, “All that is left of tradition are words”, and it is up to humans to uncover what lies behind the words. The path that leads one to God’s truth is not guaranteed by a fixed theology (even though it is part of the path), but requires a deeper understanding of the human’s own position in relation to God.

The accomplishment of God’s truth is not possible by employing the intellect, but rather by using the imagination (*al-khayal*) to be able to establish connection between the spiritual and the material world, in the form of visions. This imagination should not be confused with fantasy and the ability to imagine non-existent objects since it refers to a power that enables man to communicate with the imaginal world (*alam al-khayal*) that is not available to sensual perception. According to Ibn Arabi, experience of the imaginal world is like a dream vision (he compares it to revelations in the form of a dream), and corresponds to the unveiling (*kashf*) of the symbols and images from the world of the Unseen.²⁷

²⁶ Interpretation of the Qur’an implies an engagement with infinite interpretative possibilities and the ambiguity of different forms, thus any interpretation leads to a new interpretation, so that the process is never completed. Cf. Almond, “The meaning of Infinity”; Ibn Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 153.

²⁷ Cf. Ibn Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 99; 121; 196. According to Henry Corbin, *al-khayal* (imagination) is not just an ability to understand spiritual phenomena, but a creative power that

Imagination is the manifestation of meanings (*ma'ani*) in sensory frames (*qawalib his-siyya*), such as knowledge of milk, firmness in religion in the form of a fetter, Islam in the form of a pillar, faith in the form of a handle, and Gabriel in the form of a Bedouin [...].²⁸

With Chittick's reading of Ibn Arabi, the general ability to understand God depends on a harmonious usage of reason and imagination as this is the way to understand the relationship between *tanzih* (by using reason) and *tasbih* (by using the imagination).²⁹ However, the unveiling of God's truth, which occurs in a gnostic experience, can be understood as a dialectical process. On one hand, it is God who removes veils between Him and humans; but on the other hand, it is said that man is able (by the ability of creative imagination) to experience the reality of God.³⁰

In any case, the process of unveiling is unique as it takes place between God and the individual, and as such does not imply any universal understanding. Ibn Arabi states that God never un-veils Himself to two people in the same way, and He never appears twice in the same mode to the same person. His self-disclosure is infinite and non-repetitive.³¹ Every moment of His existence represents a new self-disclosure and gives a new opportunity for man to know God. Consequently, the human paths to God are also infinite.³²

To return to the original desire of the hidden treasure to be known: Assuming that this is like a process of God's self-acknowledgment, one can imagine that God has fulfilled His desire. He became known to Himself through His manifestations.

Whether God also became known by man, as He wanted, is another question, since man is still busy understanding himself (and thus understanding the secret of God).

enables the manifestation of spiritual phenomena in the material world, or for man's sake, an ability to experience these phenomena in the physical sense, as Muhammad experienced Angel Gabriel in the form of a human being. At the same time, it refers to one's own participation in the imaginary world through the spiritualization of that material. In this regard, man's "creative imagination", which involves transforming his own position in relation to God and world, has a parallel to God's creativity as He transformed Himself from the hidden treasure to the manifest God in order to realize His desire for self-recognition. See Henry Corbin, *Alone with the Alone. Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabi* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

²⁸ Ibn Arabi, *The Meccan Illuminations*, 290. Ibn Arabi refers here to a series of episodes from Muhammad's life, such as a dream vision where he received a glass of milk, which he later interpreted as receiving knowledge, or the famous episode where he led a conversation with the Angel Gabriel, who came to him and his successor in the form of a Bedouin: Ibn Arabi, *The Meccan Illuminations*, 562–563.

²⁹ Cf. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds*, 123.

³⁰ Cf. Ibn Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 126; 234.

³¹ Cf. Ibn Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 152.

³² Cf. Ibn Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 94.

On the Path of Destruction

Luther, Kant and Heidegger on Divine Hiddenness and Transcendence

Marius Timmann Mjaaland

1. The Notion of Destruction in Heidegger and Luther

In a lecture given in Marburg in 1922 on the question of theology and phenomenology, Martin Heidegger discussed the history of philosophical hermeneutics and its contemporary challenges. He argued that the discipline of hermeneutics is one in which philosophy and theology remain intimately connected, and is the basis of thought for the major philosophers of the eighteenth and nineteenth century who were considering Luther's insights and their *immanent* possibilities:

Hermeneutics carries out its task only on the path of destruction, and [...] destruction is the path upon which the present needs to encounter itself in its own movements [...]. [T]he Graeco-Christian interpretation of life [...] determined the philosophical anthropology of Kant and that of German Idealism. Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel came out of theology and received from it the basic impulses of their speculative thought. This theology is rooted in the theology of the Reformation, which succeeded, only in very small measure, in providing a genuine explication of Luther's new fundamental religious insight and its immanent possibilities.¹

The problem of destruction thus raised by Heidegger is significant for his understanding of philosophy and its hermeneutical tasks. When he argues that the present encounters itself "in its own movements," he describes a circular process of understanding: we would be unable to understand ourselves and the present time if we simply abandoned the sources of philosophical and theological inquiry of the past. However, there is always a danger that tradition is petrified or calcified when defined as metaphysical truth. Consequently, in §6 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger argues that the key notions of metaphysics, such as being, time and subjectivity – but also extended to the notion of God, death, matter, spirit, truth, etc. – ought to be destructed.² The word '*Destruktion*' thereby acquires a

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Supplements*, trans. and ed. John van Buren (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002), 124f.

² See Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 17th ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1993), 19–27.

double sense vis-à-vis the history of ontology. On the one hand, and negatively, it implies a critique of dominant readings of the tradition (doxography, history of ideas, problem history) in order to draw a specific problem back to the *experience* it relates to, i. e. to raise the *question* implied in positive propositions.³ On the other hand, and positively, this critical approach implies an effort at re-structuring the problem by identifying its *limits* and its field of inquiry for raising new questions.

Martin Heidegger is, first of all, a great reader of classical philosophical texts, from Parmenides to Nietzsche, yet politically infamous for his reactionary sympathies with the Nazi regime. However, he is also a radical thinker in the double sense of the term: (i) he goes back to the roots (*radix*) of the western philosophical tradition in order to confront his contemporaries with (ii) radically existential questions, questioning the basis of their Being as *being-there* [*Dasein*]. So, if the answers to such philosophical questions concerning time and being, God and humans, are taken for granted, the study of the past simply covers up the present in intellectual laziness and forgetfulness of being. Destruction is needed in order to crush or destroy the cover, and thus let the question hidden *behind* the common sense of *doxa* come to the fore. He thus moves between a rigorous reading of traditional texts and a radically challenging re-reading that opens up the present in new ways, thereby uncovering the deeper problems connected to the notion under scrutiny: the notion of being, of time, or of God. The positive intention is thus to confront the present with the profound uncertainty of that which is taken for granted, hence a disturbing and thought-provoking involvement with the past.

It is in this way that Heidegger discovers Luther when he, together with theologian Rudolf Bultmann in Marburg, reads the early texts of the Reformer. He finds it challenging to read Luther because he is a genuinely *philosophical* author, even when he is deeply concerned with theological issues. According to Heidegger, the subsequent theological tradition (e. g. during the Lutheran orthodoxy) has not quite understood the philosophical issues at stake, since they were looking for answers rather than questions, dogma rather than uncertainty and the unsettling *question* of being. In Heidegger's opinion, this means covering up the question with the calcified answers of tradition rather than uncovering the present. He thus sees a need for *destruction* in order to rediscover the questions and insights addressed by Luther. According to Heidegger, however, these fundamental insights were picked up by the philosophers – first of all by Immanuel Kant, and then by the thinkers of German Idealism: Fichte, Hegel and Schelling.

An interesting point in Heidegger's discovery of Luther as philosopher is that the very word *destruction* is found in Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518) and Heidegger applies the term in a way which is similar to that of Luther. The latter

³ Cf. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 22–23.

criticises tradition as abstract and speculative when it defines ‘God’ as glorious, strong and wise – that is, when God is understood in the sense of the scholastic metaphysics.⁴ Such thinking *inflates* the thinker, Luther argues, and makes him proud of his own works rather than humble before God. Accordingly, Luther argues that the works ought to be literally *annihilated* in order to provide understanding of the fragility and suffering of human beings. This is the existential condition for trying to grasp God, and thus, for Luther, is the true meaning of the term ‘God.’ Luther points at the troubled experience of the human being as the decisive precondition for reflecting upon the Christian notion of God – namely, God whose glory is *hidden* on the cross.⁵

Luther refers to Paul’s paradox in Corinthians 1, that wisdom in Christ (as opposed to Greek philosophy) is achieved in folly. Being foolish is not an ideal, as such, but is a way of getting access to the mystery of the cross, which is “higher” than human wisdom. The obvious and common-sense understanding of God refers to wisdom, unity, superiority, sovereignty and (eternal) life. Thus, Luther argues that the cross, suffering and incarnation represent the *hidden* or “rear side” of God. Jesus of Nazareth is, of course, *visible* to humans on the cross, yet that he is the human incarnation of God is the insight given by faith (or the humiliation that leads to faith). God is thereby recognised in suffering and not in glory or majesty. More precisely, even God’s majesty ought to be recognised in the ignominy and humility of the cross. For Heidegger, then, Luther’s new fundamental insight is connected to facticity, to a rigorous destruction of Aristotelian and Platonic thought that was later overlooked by Protestant theology. When Luther refers to the cross as the *place* where God is present, albeit hidden, he emphasises the factual and human, and yet questionable, place of revelation. At the cross, God is present as the hidden one, and his features are hidden “under their opposite” (*sub contrario*): power hidden in weakness, sovereignty hidden in suffering, life hidden in death.

Luther’s destruction of metaphysics is exemplary for Heidegger’s philosophical concern. Rather than simply focusing on a universal notion of *Being*, it draws attention to historical and concrete ‘existence’. It is an *existential* and *temporal* question of Being, raised in anxiety and with human concerns about life and death. Still, when Luther returns to the fundamental issue of divine hiddenness in later texts, first of all in *The Bondage of the Will* (1525), he is concerned with metaphysical questions, too: being, causality, necessity, possibility, human and divine will, etc. He blames Erasmus for not having read the school philosophers, such as Ockham and Biel. The distinction he draws between the hidden and the revealed God is therefore not exactly theological in the plain or scriptural sense;

⁴ See Martin Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation*, in *Luther’s Works* [LW], ed. by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, Vol. 31, p. 52 [LW 31, 52]. Cf. the Latin text in the Weimar Edition [WA]: WA 1, 361.

⁵ Luther, *Heidelberg Disputation*, LW 31, 53/WA 1,362.

it is also metaphysical. It identifies a *place* of thought, a *topos* where the theological discourse based on scripture is suspended and encounters metaphysical and epistemological issues – prior to reason itself.⁶ This is the *topos* of the hidden One.

2. Three Forms of Divine Hiddenness

There are at least three ways of approaching the *Deus absconditus* in Luther's thought and they are not mutually exclusive, as I have argued elsewhere.⁷ In 1513, he writes on Ps 18 ("Darkness is his Hidingplace") that God is "*hidden and incomprehensible*." This passage is concerned with the *place* of the divine: God is hiding in *darkness*, Luther writes, but this hiding-place may be better understood as an inaccessible *light* (1 Tim 6:16). This understanding follows the path of negative theology, elaborated by Dionysius the Areopagite, who identifies the logic of ascendance by way of negations. Thus, God is not bound to either darkness or light, since the place of God is beyond this distinction. It is even beyond being or non-being, since God 'is' prior to both.⁸ Still, this *topos* confirms the tendency in scholastic philosophy of defining the being and unity of God metaphysically in a transcendent sphere, *beyond* this world.

As already mentioned, the second way of approaching the hidden God is presented in the *Heidelberg Disputation*, where Luther points at the cross as the *destruction* of a theology of glory. His theology of the cross runs counter to the logic of Dionysius, who identified God in the most glorious presence *beyond* being. From the ultimate "beyond" he turns to the proximity of God in suffering and upon the cross, a paradox for thought that runs counter to the logic of Neo-Platonism. For Luther, the cross becomes a place of experiencing God's glory, not in its perfection but under the opposite (*sub contrario*): divine power is reflected in suffering, God's strength is perceived in weakness, and (new) life is given through death. The paradox runs counter to abstract mysticism, and yet it conforms to a mystery of the cross.⁹

The destruction, then, differs from a simple rejection of divine being, sovereignty and power. Indeed, these divine properties are confirmed, but because of the Christian emphasis on the cross as *revealing* God's will, the meaning of such properties is questioned. Luther delves deeper into the *problem* and *complexity* of divine being rather than offering a traditional solution. The destruction is relevant for human anthropology, and when Luther destabilises the

⁶ See Marius Timmann Mjaaland, *The Hidden God: Luther, Philosophy, and Political Theology* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016), 107.

⁷ Cf. Mjaaland, *The Hidden God*, 90; 106–7.

⁸ Cf. Mjaaland, *The Hidden God*, 91.

⁹ Cf. Mjaaland, *The Hidden God*, 45.

opposites of strength/weakness, power/suffering, life/death and divine/human, he addresses a set of ultimate *differences* (Derrida) or *differends* (Schürmann) that will keep on defining the question of human anthropology throughout modernity.¹⁰

Luther's third approach to the hidden God comes up in *The Bondage of the Will* (1525). In his controversy with Erasmus, he is confronted with the question of whether or not God is restricted to what we know from Scripture. He argues that unless God was much more powerful than the God we know from Scripture, he would be a ridiculous God.¹¹ Yet this absolute will of God is unavailable to us. Contra Erasmus, Luther points out that we have to accept that God remains unavailable to reason. There must be such a surplus in God, he argues, unless we start believing that we can control God by the means of interpretation.¹² This is not only a disturbing thought, but even a terrifying one – and confronted with this aspect of God, humans can only venerate what they cannot understand. However, Luther's point is not that humans should get paralysed by fear and trembling; on the contrary, they ought to be able to distinguish between the hidden and the revealed God. The revealed God is the one whom we can trust, in light of the word of the cross and the gift of grace. Only then will salvation be given, love revealed as the true will of God and hope as conquering anxiety and death. There is thus one God, Luther claims, in hiddenness and revelation. But we cannot have the one without the other. Not the Other without the One. The hidden One.

Heidegger's understanding of the philosophical questions at stake in Luther obviously differs from Luther's perception of the distinction between philosophy and theology. Luther was a harsh critic of philosophy, because he believed that theology was badly served by simply accepting philosophical premises. Indeed, he questioned and jeopardised tradition in such a radical way that such *critique* later became a hallmark of *critical* philosophy. Secondly, he also questioned the premises of metaphysics, and raised doubt concerning epistemology and the true nature of "things." And thirdly, metaphysical and epistemological questions were discussed under the perspective of *anthropology*. As Heidegger points out, these three criteria for critical inquiry are hardly characteristic of theology in the tradition after Luther (e. g. in Lutheran orthodoxy), but they are picked up by Immanuel Kant and the philosophers of Enlightenment and German Idealism. As a result, Luther's *destruction* of metaphysics becomes a model for philosophical reflection more than two centuries after the death of the Reformer.

¹⁰ See Mjaaland, *The Hidden God*, 125–26; Reiner Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, trans. by Reginald Lily (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003), 406.

¹¹ Luther, *De servo arbitrio*, WA 18, 719.

¹² Cf. Mjaaland, *The Hidden God*, 104–5.

3. Luther and Early Modern Philosophy

There is a long history of thought running from Luther to Kant, and there are important political and societal changes during the sixteenth and seventeenth century that enhance the differences between their notions of understanding. Modern theory of knowledge generally takes the Cartesian doubt and his *Cogito ergo sum* as its point of departure.¹³ Descartes's *Discourse on Method* (1637) and *Meditations* (1641) were ground-breaking because he raised the most basic questions of epistemology as critical criteria for true knowledge. Even the metaphysical question of God's existence was raised according to these rational principles. His contemporary, Blaise Pascal, further radicalised the question for God in existential terms with his *Pensées* (published posthumously in 1670). Both were famous mathematicians and applied their mathematical genius to their reconsiderations of the world according to mechanistic principles.

For Descartes, such a reconsideration is possible only if he presupposes the existence of a higher being who can guarantee that there is a clear distinction between reason and delusion, between light and darkness, and thus that there is *certainty* in a world of doubt. Pascal acknowledges that the world which is reconstructed according to mathematical principles must be an infinitely empty space, but he sees therein an implicit contradiction to a world created by God. He perceives the world paradoxically as both infinitely empty and yet full of meaning due to the hidden presence of God. Lucien Goldmann describes the tragic vision of Pascal as a split worldview, in continuous ambivalence between 'yes' and 'no'. He argues that Pascal "[...] never says 'Yes' or 'No' but always 'Yes' and 'No'. For Pascal, the hidden God is both present and absent, and not sometimes present and sometimes absent. He is always present and always absent."¹⁴ Like a double framework (or *Gestell* in Heidegger's terminology), Pascal insists on an inherent and paradoxical division between two readings of the same phenomena. The philosophy of Descartes and Pascal is based on the cogito as the basis for human subjectivity, and so the problem of consciousness enters the heart of modern philosophy.

Political philosopher Reiner Schürmann has written extensively on the history of philosophy and argues that there are three hegemonies in the history of Western thought. He describes them as *broken* hegemonies, emphasising that each period is occupied with a deep division or "diremption" that it is unable to solve. The Greek hegemony is divided between unity and alterity, and runs from Parmenides to the Neo-Platonists. The Latin hegemony is occupied with the question of *nature* as an external being and interiority as the place for the human

¹³ See David Kangas, "Luther and Modernity: Reiner Schürmann's Topology of the Modern in Broken Hegemonies," *Epoché* 14, no. 2 (2010): 431–32.

¹⁴ Lucien Goldmann, *The Hidden God: A Study of Tragic Vision in the Pensées of Pascal and the Tragedies of Racine*, trans. Philip Thody (London: Routledge, 1976), 36.

being. In contrast, according to Schürmann, the modern hegemony is occupied with *consciousness* and, more specifically, the question of the self-consciousness.

In his *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften* (1936), Edmund Husserl argues that the theoretical principle of infinite mathematics was established already with Galileo Galilei. However, this significant precondition for the scientific revolution still lacked a *site* in consciousness. With Descartes's cogito, this site was established, but only at the price of a problematic dualism that prefigures the deep division between the natural and the human sciences from the nineteenth century onwards – the crisis to which Husserl refers. For Schürmann, this dualism is the basis for modern philosophy in the centuries to come, and he perceives it as an ultimate *differend*. He disagrees with the genealogy outlined by Husserl, however, where modern philosophy begins with Descartes. Kant is a key thinker for both Husserl and Schürmann, but the latter argues that the reference to self-consciousness is introduced a century before Descartes, in the thought of Martin Luther. Schürmann sees Luther as the thinker who establishes self-consciousness as the hegemonic principle and thus the ultimate condition for thought, action and representation:

[Luther] is reorienting an entire mode of thinking; he does so by directing the axis of inquiry elsewhere, thus rendering the old problems problematic in a different way; and he is no less explicit about the old orientation, hereafter senseless, than he is about the new, henceforth the only sensible one: to think no longer according to “things,” but according to “consciousness.”¹⁵

Truth is thus no longer defined by an order of things but in an “originary act of consciousness.”¹⁶ The extensive argument thus proposed by Schürmann is not delimited to a phenomenological analysis of Luther; his work on *Broken Hegemonies* is primarily a *topological* inquiry tracing the origin of modern philosophy back to Luther.¹⁷

4. Kant on Destruction and Transcendence

Kant follows Pascal in drawing a strict separation between the phenomenal world, in which we have to live, and the concept of God, whose existence may only be presupposed by faith. However, Kant differs from Pascal in politically redefining the concept of God, perhaps also neutralising it. Both thinkers introduce a sharp division, separating the phenomena and God from one another completely. God may thus be presupposed for all practical purposes, and should

¹⁵ Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, 373.

¹⁶ Schürmann, *Broken Hegemonies*, 354.

¹⁷ For a more detailed analysis of Luther and modernity, see Mjaaland, “Does Modernity Begin with Luther?,” *Studia Theologica* 62, no. 1 (2009), 42–66.

be treated as a regulative *idea*, but according to Kant's *theoretical* philosophy, God's existence remains utterly uncertain and unprovable, even more so than in Pascal's wager.¹⁸ Kant's theoretical approach is based on the Copernican Turn, namely to give attention to experience and the perceiving subject rather than the thing "in itself," which he argues is inaccessible to us.¹⁹ Thus, he draws a decisive *limit* for human perception, which is always based on the forms of perception and the subjective conditions for organising this knowledge. Beyond this limit, we may presuppose the *unconditional* but never experience it as such. Kant's critique of "pure" reason is thus the critical investigation of the structures organising human perception and experience. These conditions are referred to as *transcendental* because, strictly speaking, they *transcend* the limits of our empirical knowledge (*a posteriori*) but nevertheless represent the structural and rational conditions of possibility (*a priori*) for perception to take place.

This discussion of the limits of human perception is later applied as criteria even for the knowledge available to us about God: we can only critically discuss what is experienced in our consciousness – and God is not accessible to us as phenomenon. The existence of God can thus be assumed, postulated or presupposed, but it can never be proved philosophically. Moreover, whilst God is postulated as *transcendent* and yet relevant for practical philosophy (i. e. for ethics and the ideas of freedom, immortality and happiness), this postulation does not have any decisive influence on the theoretical philosophy and the constitution of phenomena. The transcendence/immanence distinction thus clearly differs from the question of transcendental conditions for knowledge and perception.

The difference between the thing as such (*Ding an sich*) and the phenomena is crucial for Kant's Copernican revolution. In the introduction to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he discusses what this 'thing' is, and whether it exists at all, given its unknowability. He concludes rather pragmatically:

[...] consequently, we can have no knowledge [*Erkenntnis*] of things in themselves, but only insofar as they are objects of sensible perception, i. e. as phenomenon [...]. Although we cannot *know* [*erkennen*] these objects as things in themselves, we must at least be able to *think* [*denken*] them as things in themselves. Otherwise we should end up with the absurd conclusion that there can be appearance without anything that appears.²⁰

The noted difference between the appearing and the appearance is basically the reason for assuming that there are such 'things' in themselves. If there were no such difference, the notion of a thing prior to the perception would simply vanish

¹⁸ "Both [Pascal and Kant] see the world as completely neutral in all matters of faith, and recognize that it offers us neither reasons to believe nor reasons to disbelieve in God." Goldmann, *The Hidden God*, 230.

¹⁹ See Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B XVI–XXII. An early version of the following analysis of *The Critique of Pure Reason* was first presented in Norwegian in Mjaaland, "Ateismens topologi," *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift* 80, no. 1 (2017), 39–40.

²⁰ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B XXVI–XXVII. My translation.

into nothing. Therefore, the difference is presupposed from a theoretical perspective, although it cannot be proved empirically nor theoretically. Drawing this limit between knowledge and ‘thing’ becomes the theoretical operation which conditions all phenomena and their organisation within a system of thought. Kant’s first critique is basically occupied with a systematic analysis of this procedure, and unfolds through his elaboration of the distinction a priori/a posteriori, synthetic/analytic, the forms of perception, the original apperception and the transcendental deduction of the categories.

The distinction between phenomena and *noumena* is treated in a separate discussion, where Kant argues that the *noumenon* is merely a *limit-concept* – that is, a concept delimiting the possibility of knowledge.²¹ It cannot be given any positive content, and yet it remains indispensable as a concept drawing the limit [*Schranke*] of sensible knowledge. In this respect, the thing in itself may be called a ‘noumenon’: although void of (positive) content, it makes sense to underscore this border from a theoretical point of view. This analysis is followed by a discussion of the amphiboly or ambiguity of all concepts of reflection; the empirical and transcendental analyses are mutually dependent, and yet the difference of perspective is decisive – a distinction which, according to Kant, was overlooked by Locke and the empiricists on the one hand and Leibniz/Wolff on the other. Kant argues that the difference is a topical one, and he thereby refers to Aristotle’s logical *Topics* as predecessor of his own *transcendental Topics*.²² Accordingly, the transcendental analysis ought to be *topologically* distinguished from the empirical analysis of knowledge, and the reason for this distinction is that the *apperception* precedes all operations of reason and perception; indeed, it organises every experience of the world.²³ The apperception is also the *place* (*topos*) for the “highest distinction” within a transcendental analytic, namely the distinction between the possible and the impossible.²⁴

The third main section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is dedicated to the question of an ultimate ideal of pure reason, and thus also a first cause. Kant discusses various forms of proofs for God’s existence in terms of speculative reason: the physico-theological proof, the cosmological proof and the ontological proof. All three are rejected. In fact, the proof of existence in general is rejected, and apparently with good reasons, given Kant’s approach. Existence is either presupposed, as is the case with the *Ding an sich*, or experienced, he argues. Neither option is applicable in the case of a first transcendent cause outside the world, prior to time and space. The existence of such an essence may be postulated, then, but never proved. The “pure” reason remains ignorant and thus doubtful, a-gnostic

²¹ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 254–255.

²² Cf. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 268 ff.

²³ Cf. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 289.

²⁴ Cf. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 290.

concerning the existence of such a Being or essence.²⁵ Yet, this is exactly the ignorance which requires *faith*, and so the division between philosophy and theology conforms to the distinction between knowledge and faith. Interestingly, Kant draws an analogy between the knowledge of the *Ding an sich* and the knowledge of this *Being of beings* (*ens entium*): it remains inaccessible for reason, and since there is no clear empirical impression which corresponds to this notion, it is merely a *concept* for transcendental theology, although an ideal for the highest reality – simple, eternal and complete.

The distinctions thus drawn are coherent and consequent, and yet a number of objections can be raised, at least from a topological point of view. The first concerns the transformation of the notion of God into *a* being or thing among others, although a superior one, through the analogy drawn between the *Ding an sich* and the *ens entium*. The result is basically a *reification* of this *topos* within a particular system of thought. However, the theory of knowledge does not allow any such place within the system of thought, and thus the notion of a first cause or *ens entium* is excluded from the totality of the phenomenal world. This is the precise meaning of the word ‘transcendence’ in Kant’s philosophy. Although the existence of something called ‘God’ is postulated in practical philosophy, it is excluded from the phenomenal world and continues its more or less *spectral* existence in the sphere of practical deliberations – such an ideal is still required as normative instance for ethics and justice. The notion of God thus postulated remains noumenal, that is, a static transcendence *beyond* the life-world, and thus also beyond and detached from the social and political world of human beings. When Goldmann sees this philosophical construction as a reflection of the tragic condition, it is not difficult to understand why he thinks that God is thereby transformed into a *spectator* who “never intervenes, either by word or deed, in what the actors are doing.”²⁶

Kant’s argument for God’s phenomenal hiddenness is a theoretical *destruction* of any rational apology for God’s existence. At the same time, Kant takes this destruction (in the negative sense) as an occasion for reconsidering and redefining the ultimate ends of human existence – and thus also the notion of God in the moral and political realm. The “eternal sameness” of the tragic spectacle is thus countered and suspended by the vision of human struggle against evil and the hope of conquering the evil enemy, or, in other words, the vision of eschatological Enlightenment. This is indeed a critical project, which ventures on the tremendous task to redefine the conditions for true religion. This is a social, philosophical and moral task, which ought to be, according to the German philosopher, critically informed and guided by reason rather than reli-

²⁵ Cf. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 578–579.

²⁶ György Lukács in *Soul and Form* (1908), here quoted from Lucien Goldmann, *The Hidden God*, 7.

gious speculation and superstition. Given this belief, Kant is not exactly gracious towards those who take recourse to revelations (for example, an enthusiast like Swedenborg) or works (for pleasing God) in order to justify their faith:

[W]hoever does this transforms the service of God into fetishism; he engages in a counterfeit service, which sets back all the work leading to true religion. So much depends, when we wish to join two good things, on the order in which we combine them! – But it is in this distinction that true *enlightenment* consists; through it does the service of God for the first time become a free and hence moral cult. If, however, the human being departs from it, the yoke of (statutory) law will be imposed on him instead of the freedom of the children of God [...].²⁷

The transformation of faith thus accomplished is a repetition of Luther's gesture, confronting the false morality with *true* morality, bondage with freedom, the service of idols with true religion. Still, the *ends* of this transformation – namely the moral transparency and the moral perfection of a human being – are clearly differing from the goals of faith within more traditional Protestantism. Expressions of faith that would be significant for Luther and the early Protestants, such as miracles, mysteries and means of grace (sacraments), are rejected as *delusory* faith. What is the outcome of this reconsideration of religion *within* religion and *within* society, indeed transforming the vision of an ideal society as well as the ideal of humanity?

When Kant insists on critical and moral religion, it is not as a rejection of traditional (Christian) expressions of faith, but rather an insistence on the validity of Augustine's distinction between the visible and the invisible church. The same kind of distinction is held up as a reminder to the political society, which is challenged by revolution when it fails to fulfil its historical role as framework for the good life. Even eschatology displays the same dynamic insofar as the utopian vision of eternal peace and reconciliation of enemies is introduced as a contrast to, but also the future ideal of, the present society, where injustice and evil prevails. The political imagination of historical progress is the driving force of Kant's idea of Enlightenment, and it is basically religious, not only as some kind of "politico-theological fantasy" (Lilla) but also for the sake of its realism. Just as the theoretical philosophy insists on God's hiddenness as a critical gesture, the religious and political philosophy insists on the realism of presupposing God's existence as the necessary ideal of truth. The phenomenal world is the only one which actually influences historical existence and political decisions, and thus the re-presentation of a divine ideal is hardly a "fantasy" but rather Kant's suggestion for political realism.

The ambiguity of Kant's theoretical deliberations on the notion of God is palpable. Metaphysically, this is the concept of possibility proper, and yet it is impos-

²⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, trans. Allen Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 173.

sible to prove its existence. The amphiboly Kant observes in his transcendental topology between empirical and transcendental knowledge is not yet overcome in the case of transcendence. On the contrary, it seems like the amphiboly is amplified between a “thing” of which we cannot even know whether or not it exists and the tremendous significance applied to exactly this idea (“thing”) in the practical-phenomenal world. This scission between theoretical and practical philosophy runs throughout Kant’s entire philosophy, through the antinomy between causal necessity on the one hand and the freedom which requires ethical responsibility on the other. The latter is, after all, the most decisive for Kant, and therefore the metaphysical ignorance concerning God’s *existence* is acceptable. It does not really matter whether God exists according to our metaphysical conception of God, as long as we rely on God in practical matters.

The ethical emphasis of Kant’s practical philosophy resembles the ethical approach to theology by Luther’s fierce opponent, Erasmus of Rotterdam: free will is what makes us responsible for our actions and it does not matter *what* we believe, as long as we respect our moral duties and act accordingly.²⁸ There is a more radical side of this argument, though, particularly when we look at Kant’s rejection of all proofs and arguments for the existence of God. His reflections concerning the unknown and radically hidden God proceed according to a logic of negations, including the negation of existence as well as non-existence when it comes to this place of thought. It is beyond being as well as non-being. It is beyond time and space, and that is exactly the reason why it cannot be captured in phenomenal categories, since they always presuppose these forms of perception. Furthermore, the structure of negations follows a critical agenda which rejects all speculations and mystical, mythical or metaphysical constructions of God. Before the notion of God is reinforced in practical respects, it seems like such a *gesture of destruction* has become necessary for Kant – and it is exactly this destruction which allows him to introduce the ambiguity between autonomy (spontaneity) and heteronomy (absolute submission to the duty) insofar as the individual is subjected to the categorical imperative of the moral law, without exception.

Kant’s notion of transcendence, which ends up delimiting the divine being *beyond* the phenomenal world (the world of causation and experience), has become dominant in continental philosophy after Kant, and, for other reasons, in pragmatism, positivism and empiricism. Nevertheless, the sharp distinction between immanence and transcendence is contested and jeopardised during the Kantian aftermath. Fichte accepts the distinction and insists on a philosophy of *transcendental* immanence, whereas Hegel more or less suspends and overrules it

²⁸ Cf. the opening sentence of Kant’s *Groundwork*: “It is impossible to think of anything at all in the world, or indeed even beyond it, that could be considered good without limitation except a *good will*.” Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. by Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998), 7.

with the argument that no limit is absolute because it can always be transcended and thus *aufgehoben* from a higher point of view. The absolute limit which is therefore drawn between immanence and transcendence nevertheless becomes a conceptual cornerstone for the subsequent secularization of the human and social sciences, already anticipated within the natural sciences.

5. Destruction of the Metaphysical Notion of Transcendence

The destruction of speculative thinking is a continuous process of questioning the most basic categories of understanding. Given this, it would be strange if the notion of transcendence emphasised by Kant should remain unquestioned by contemporary philosophy. After all, we are speaking of a metaphysical notion with significant consequences for human existence and perception of the world. Philosopher Bernhard Waldenfels has argued that the legacy thus left for philosophical discourse often ends up with an *immanentism* of sceptical, naturalistic or positivistic provenience, although the point of departure was a theory concerning the limits of human consciousness. The result is an endless controversy between apologetics and critics of religion, whereas the original meaning of the word *transcending* is overlooked:

The movement of *transcending*, which remains open to experiments of experience and includes the exploration of mystical conditions, thus solidifies in a substantial speech of *transcendence*. What is left is a Beyond that is either extracted from or sacrificed for the sake of the immanent world.²⁹

This is a more or less absurd deviation from the original usage of the terms, but was nevertheless very common in the West, particularly throughout the twentieth century. The outline of such a static diremption between immanence and transcendence is drawn already in the *Critique of Pure Reason* but is modified and redefined in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. What philosophically begins as an effort to establish clear limits for the conditions of human perception ends up with the exclusion – and subsequent domestication – of the most decisive, but also the most ambiguous, place of thought.

Compared to the static term *transcendence*, which is often used to indicate that the world is a container with some deity sitting outside the spectacle (somewhere in “outer” space) and observing the world without intervening, the verbal notion of *transcending* takes the opposite direction. The limits of consciousness are seen as a point of departure, but the examination of these limits remains

²⁹ “Die Bewegung des *Transzendierens*, die von sich aus für Erfahrungsexperimente offen ist und die Erprobung mystischer Zustände einschließt, verfestigt sich substantivisch in der Rede von der *Transzendenz*. Zurück bleibt ein Jenseits, das dem Diesseits entweder abgerungen oder geopfert wird.” Bernhard Waldenfels, *Hyperphänomene* (Berlin: Suhrkamp 2012), 35.

perceptive to the experiences *surpassing* the limits of reason alone. The notion of transcendence (qua *transcending*) thus emerging de-structures the Kantian diremption from within, rather than proposing an alternative framework for understanding. The basic objection to Kant's metaphysical schematism is that it remains indifferent to the otherness of the other, insofar as this "other" is unknowable in itself and remains dependent on the phenomenal re-construction of the other within self-consciousness. If the other remains different from my notion of this X, or, say, if God radically differs from my conceptual notion of God, then the effort at confining its noumenal existence by excluding it from the phenomenal world (i. e. the "real" world) implodes within these limits, before it may actually *transcend* them. The procedure for such a reconsideration of the transcending movements is not entirely different from Kant's phenomenology, but we have to direct the *axis* of inquiry elsewhere, not towards the external limits of being but towards the conditions of experience and reflection.

Husserl describes the *transcending* movement exceeding the theoretical limits of self-consciousness as "immanent transcendence," an expression that is even applied to God, albeit in a somewhat different manner. Whilst the Kantian solution excludes every question for (the existence of) the hidden God as irrelevant, this relocation of the limits of reason opens up the question for renewed investigation of its historical roots and current topicality. The space of the hidden God thus opens up within consciousness, as the question of its origin, its temporality, its exteriority and the passivity of its constitution.

II. Philosophy in the Wake of the Reformation

Hegel's Philosophy of Religion and Luther

Burkhard Nonnenmacher

Referring to Paul, Luther reminds us in *De servo arbitrio* in 1525: God works all in all.¹ As Paul puts it in 1 Corinthians 12:6 in Greek it is “theos ho energōn ta panta en pasin.” According to Luther, the reason why God has to be thought as the one who works all in all is simple. It is because God would not be God unless everything was dependent on God. Otherwise God would not be omnipotent. And – as Luther puts it in *De servo arbitrio* – a non-omnipotent God is a “ridiculous God” (*deus ridiculus*).² Therefore, for Luther, Erasmus' defence of free will is wrong – as long as “free will” means the ability to initiate something absolute on one's own initiative.

Hegel says in his reflexions on Wilhelm Traugott Krug in 1802: “God is the one and only principium essendi and principium cognoscendi.”³ The reason why God has to be thought as the only *principium essendi* and *principium cognoscendi* according to Hegel is simple as well: God would not be God unless everything is dependent on God, for otherwise God would not be the Absolute. Therefore, every finite being has to be understood as founded in God. And the same applies to all reflections of finite beings about God. Therefore, for Hegel, all philosophy and theology is wrong which is based on the premise that there are finite beings with reflections about God which are not mediated through God himself.

But does this then mean that we can or even must call Hegel a Lutheran? In this paper I would like to approach this question in three steps. In its first part I will outline Hegel's philosophy of the Absolute as the foundation of his philosophy of religion. In its second part I will point out some conclusions Hegel draws from his philosophy of the Absolute in his philosophy of religion. In its third part I will come back to the question regarding the degree to which Hegel can or even must be called a Lutheran.

¹ Martin Luther, *De servo arbitrio*, in: *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Böhlau et al., 1883 ff. [= WA]), 18, 614.

² Martin Luther, *De servo arbitrio*, WA 18, 719.

³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, edited by the Nordrhein-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1968 ff. [= GW]), 4, 179.

1. Hegel's Philosophy of the Absolute

Philosophy – according to Hegel – has only one object: God or – as Hegel puts it – the Absolute. The task of philosophy is to explain what the Absolute is. In contrast to former metaphysics Hegel does not start this undertaking with the question regarding the existence of the Absolute. Nor does he start with the question regarding the ability of human understanding of the Absolute. Hegel rather starts with the question regarding the degree to which the philosophy of the Absolute has to situate its reflections about the Absolute in the Absolute itself if the Absolute is to be the Absolute. With this approach, Hegel does not want to neglect Kant's critique of metaphysics. On the contrary, Hegel simply wants to show that the recognition of the Absolute in finite beings cannot be something which is without the Absolute. Indeed, if the recognition of the Absolute in finite Beings was something which was not founded in the Absolute then there would be something which is not mediated through the Absolute. And if there was something which is not mediated through the Absolute then the Absolute would have a limit or boundary [*Grenze*]. However this would be in contradiction to the concept "the Absolute." Because a limited Absolute is not an Absolute. Hence Hegel concludes that there cannot be any reflexion about the Absolute which has not to be taken as "self-exegesis" of the Absolute, as Hegel puts it in the second part of his *Science of Logic*, the "Doctrine of Essence."⁴ In Hegel's philosophy of religion this leads to crucial consequences as we will see in the second part of this paper.

But before let me make some further remarks on Hegel's philosophy of the Absolute. The central reason for the approach sketched above is given in Hegel's *Science of Logic* in the "Doctrine of Being." In the Quality-Chapter, Hegel seeks to demonstrate that the Absolute as the Infinite cannot be abstractly opposed to the finite, but has to contain the finite if it is not to be just a finite itself.⁵ The argument Hegel applies in this context seems to be quite simple, too: Something which is determined by not being something else is dependent on what it is not. The Absolute therefore cannot be abstractly opposed to the finite. For if we say, for example, "the Absolute is not the finite" then the Absolute is dependent on what it is not as well.⁶ Concerning the proofs of the existence of God, Hegel therefore claims that the form of the cosmological and physico-theological argument is inappropriate. In both arguments the existence of God is dependent on the existence of finite beings, Hegel says. Because only the necessity to explain

⁴ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, GW 11, 370: "Es soll aber dargestellt werden, was das Absolute ist; aber diß Darstellen kann nicht [...] äussere Reflexion seyn, [...] sondern es ist die *Auslegung* und zwar die *eigene* Auslegung des Absoluten."

⁵ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, GW 21, 126–130.

⁶ Burkhard Nonnenmacher, *Hegels Philosophie des Absoluten. Eine Untersuchung zu Hegels „Wissenschaft der Logik“ und reifem System* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 45–47.

the existence of these finite beings makes it necessary to claim that there is a God. Only the ontological argument goes the other way around. It *starts* with the Absolute and is does not make the Absolute dependent on the finite.

There are a few significant conclusions to be drawn from this regarding Hegel's philosophy of the Absolute. If God is only concrete if he is opposed to the finite than God firstly is only determined by not being something else. But this otherness to God would secondly change God into a finite as well, if this otherness to God was not founded in God himself. Therefore, thirdly, the big question for Hegel's philosophy of the Absolute is: How can we think of God as the otherness of his otherness. Or to put it in other words: How is the Absolute to be thought in order to be the founder of its own otherness, in the negation of which it *is* and *reveals* what it is.

This question and his attempt to answer this question are the centre of Hegel's philosophy of the Absolute. In contrast to Spinoza, Hegel therefore does not simply want to dissolve everything which is finite into the Absolute. Because then – as Hegel puts it in the preface to his *Phenomenology of Spirit* – the Absolute would just be the “night in which all cows are black.”⁷ Quite to the contrary, Hegel's philosophy of the Absolute tries to develop the finite from the Absolute which means developing a model in which the Absolute is neither abstractly opposed to the finite nor identified with it in a trivial manner. The second part of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, the “Doctrine of Essence”, is trying to deal with this programme by introducing the idea of an Absolute which cannot be separated from its appearing in finite determinations. But this attempt will not be fulfilled until the third part of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, the “Doctrine of the Notion.” Only in the process of understanding it becomes clear for the first time *how* this creation of the otherness of the Absolute has to be thought: as the foundation of determinations of the Absolute in the negation of which it develops what it is, what it wants to be and what it thinks of itself.

Let me give an example in order to make this very crucial point in Hegel's philosophy of the Absolute clearer. The concept of the Absolute pointed out above was mediated through a negation. As we learned: “The Absolute as the Infinite cannot be abstractly opposed to the finite, but has to contain the finite if it is not to be just a finite itself.” According to Hegel, there is simply no sense in the word “Absolute” if we do not reflect the necessity to negate the abstract opposition of the Absolute and the non-Absolute. In a second step we can then consider the question of how the Absolute could contain the finite. But before that, the most important thing is: we have to *start* with the abstract opposition of the Absolute and the non-Absolute in order to be able to say what the Absolute definitely is not. We do not have the right concept of the Absolute immediately. We only get this concept via negations. Hegel calls this very process “mediation” [*Vermittlung*].

⁷ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, GW 9, 17.

Here I have almost reached the end of the first part of this paper. There is only one thing left to be said: According to Hegel it is not only *us* who have to start with the abstract opposition of the Absolute and the non-Absolute in order to be able to say what the Absolute definitely is not. Quite to the contrary the same applies to the Absolute itself. Because according to Hegel, the Absolute is Spirit. Like us, who are thinking about the Absolute, the Absolute is thinking of itself, too. And the Absolute is not separable of its self-thinking. Rather, Hegel claims: The self-consciousness of the Absolute and the Absolute are the same. It is *noēsis noēseōs* as Aristotle's *Metaphysics* puts it in book *lambda*.⁸ That is why Hegel calls the Absolute "Spirit" [*Geist*]. Because according to Hegel "Spirit" is the word for this identity of being, self-consciousness and self-revelation.

2. Hegel's Philosophy of Religion

The first part developed Hegel's reason why any exegesis of the Absolute has to be thought as self-exegesis of the Absolute. In Hegel's view this means: If we are thinking of God, God is thinking about himself mediated through the consciousness of finite beings who are thinking of God. Hegel's philosophy of religion therefore is meant to be God's self-consciousness in which all thoughts of man about God are included and developed.

Of course, a lot of questions emerge if we ask about the consequences for the classic contents of Christian dogmatic theology. Does Hegel's philosophy of the Absolute want to say the creation of the world through God is part of his self-mediation? Does Hegel want to say God *must* create the world? What does this mean for the question regarding divine freedom? And what about the difference between Creator and creation? Can we still make a difference between God and his creation if everything is a part of the self-mediation of the Absolute? And if not, which further systematic problems in Hegel's approach occur? – All of these questions are, of course, very important. Because Hegel's approach definitely generates a lot of problems. I do not want to forget them in this context. Nevertheless I cannot address them in more detail here.

So let me sketch a few further conclusions Hegel is trying to draw in his philosophy of religion from his philosophy of the Absolute. Hegel himself claims to be a Christian thinker. For Hegel, the centre of Christian thinking is the idea that the finite is inseparable from the Absolute. According to Hegel, the impossibility of an abstract opposition of the Absolute and the finite is demonstrated in the Cross. This is Hegel's "speculative Good Friday" [*Spekulativer Karfreitag*].⁹

⁸ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1074 b 34.

⁹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, GW 4, 414.

For the most part, the same theory applies to the divine Trinity. Hegel says that God is self-conscious and self-revealing because he is Spirit. But as the Absolute cannot be thought as the Absolute without negations, God can only be thought as the triad of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The same applies to the triad of creation, reconciliation and perfection in whose history the Christian God lives. And the same also applies to what Hegel calls the history of religion. The Christian God is mediated through the history of religion. The history of religion develops into the Christian truth via religions who do not already have the revealed religion and the true philosophy of the Absolute.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that Hegel does not want to say that only the Christian religion possesses the truth (which would be an exclusivistic position). On the contrary Hegel has an inclusivistic position, which means there is only one religion that has the truth in its highest form. Yet this is only asserted with the associated claim that its highest truth is mediated through all other forms.¹⁰

Hegel develops his philosophy of religion based on these theses in his *Encyclopaedia of the philosophical sciences in basic* as the second section of the "Absolute Spirit" and more detailed in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* from 1821, 1824, 1827 and 1831.¹¹ In the latter work, Hegel divides the possibilities of how the Absolute can be thought and tries to assign them to the religions of the world. The first of these three parts is called "The Notion of Religion." Here, Hegel reflects in general in which different forms religious consciousness can occur and in which ways these different forms of religious consciousness can be transformed into what Hegel calls "the Speculative Notion of Religion."

In the so called "Definite Religion" – the second and biggest part of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* – these different forms become concrete in Hegel's assignment of them to certain religions of the world. The third part finally is dedicated to the Christian religion, which Hegel calls the "Absolute" and "Revealed Religion." But let me come back to the second part and the "Definite Religion" once again. It is divided into two parts itself: "The Religion of Nature" and "The Religion of Spiritual Individuality." The Religion of Nature starts by addressing different types of wizardry mainly in Africa. In a second step, Hegel concentrates on India and China, addressing Hinduism and Buddhism foremost. In a third step, Hegel reflects on Persia and Egypt. In the second part of the *Definite Religion*, "The Religion of Spiritual Individuality," Hegel then addresses Jewish, Greek and Roman religion. The matrix for their differentiation seems to have been inspired by Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. Hegel calls the Jewish religion the religion of sublimity. The Greek religion is the religion of the beautiful.

¹⁰ Friedrich Hermanni, „Kritischer Inklusivismus. Hegels Begriff der Religion und seine Theorie der Religionen,“ in *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie*, 55 (2013), 136–160.

¹¹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, edited by Walter Jaeschke (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1983–1985).

The Roman religion is the religion of expediency. According to Hegel, in each of them, as in all of the named religions above, a certain type of philosophy of the Absolute is reflected.

Of course, these reflections were dependent on his knowledge of these religions. In this paper, however, I cannot discuss the question regarding the reliability of Hegel's views of these religions. What I would like to stress in this context is only the following: Like Lessing before him in his *Education of mankind* Hegel claims that the history of religion and the history of Christianity cannot be a history of senseless errors.¹² Of course, this claim has a lot to do with theodicy and the attempt to answer the question of why a good God permits the manifestation of evil. In Hegel's view, all errors are evil. This also applies to the errors in the history of religion, and maybe foremost. Therefore, an all-powerful, all-good and all-knowing God would surely not accept them if they were not connected necessarily with the existence of certain goods which are more important than the evils with which they are connected. But if this is right, according to Hegel, all errors which occurred in the history of religion have to make sense. And, he concludes, exactly this is the reason why an exclusivistic or pluralistic perspective on the different conceptions of truth in different religions does not make sense. Only the inclusivistic view can make sense of this. For neither the exclusivistic nor the pluralistic perspective are able to explain *why* there are different conceptions of God.

Hegel wants to explain this and tries to explain it by claiming that the history of religion has to be understood as the mediation of what he calls "the Absolute Religion" in which the truth is revealed as much as possible. According to Hegel this takes place in the Christian religion. Here, he claims, the impossibility of an abstract opposition of the Absolute and the finite is revealed in Jesus Christ.

For Hegel this impossibility is the centre of his philosophy of the Absolute, as addressed above, and it is, therefore, the centre for his philosophy of religion as well. He claims that only in the Christian religion this centre becomes manifest and revealed, which is why he calls the Christian religion the "Revealed-" and "Absolute Religion." But he does not do this without taking all other religions into account. For he states that this very centre cannot be *immediately* understood in the Christian religion, because the Christian truth is the truth of its predecessors. This is why the Christian truth cannot be reflected without attempting to answer the question of in how far the Christian religion explains the impossibility of an abstract opposition of the Absolute and the finite, respectively of God and man, *better* than any other religion.

¹² To this topic, see Friedrich Hermanni, "Arbeit am Göttlichen. Hegel über die Evolution des religiösen Bewusstseins," in *Religion und Religionen im Deutschen Idealismus. Schleiermacher – Hegel – Schelling*, edited by Friedrich Hermanni, Burkhard Nonnenmacher and Friedrike Schick (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 155–183.

Let me just add a few further remarks before I come to the final part of this paper. Of course there are a lot of questions I did not mention above. One of the most important might be the question regarding how Hegel wants to make sure that only *his* philosophy of the Absolute reflects the impossibility of an abstract opposition of the Absolute and the finite in a definitive way. Of course, Hegel says only philosophy is able to reflect notionally what occurs in religion in imagination only. But to which extent is Hegel's philosophy of the Absolute trying to combine this claim with questions of Christian eschatology? To what extent, for example, is Hegel reflecting Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 13:12 that "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face"? Does Hegel's philosophy of the Absolute address these thoughts as well? Does Hegel have an eschatology? Does he have a systematic-theological concept of the coming God and "future" at all? And how does Hegel think about the *topos* of the hidden God? Is there no *Deus absconditus* for Hegel? And if not, to what amount is he able to suspend all reflections on the hiddenness of God with the argument that a hidden God would be a jealous God as Hegel puts it in his *Encyclopaedia*?¹³ All these questions seem to be severe questions as well. The late works of Schelling and their critique of Hegel have a lot to do with these questions. However I can only mention this here.

What I wanted to show in the second part of my paper was only one thing: Hegel's philosophy of religion is strictly based on his philosophy of the Absolute. If God is the Absolute, God works all in all. This means, says Hegel, that every thought of God has to be founded in God and mediated through God. So no thought is senseless. And with this conclusion a big connexion between revelation and history is named. Hegel's philosophy of religion attempts to give an answer to the question regarding how far this connexion between revelation and history can be explained. For Hegel this answer has nothing to do with imperialism. On the contrary, for him it is just a consequence of the fact that God works all in all. That is why I started my paper with Luther's reference to this fact in *De servo arbitrio*. At least at first this seems to fit perfectly to Hegel's famous letter to Tholuck of 3 July 1826 in which he writes: "I am a Lutheran and through philosophy at once completely confirmed in Lutheranism."¹⁴

Against this background, in the last part of this paper I would now like to come back to the question regarding how far we can or even have to call Hegel a Lutheran.

¹³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, GW 20, 549.

¹⁴ *Briefe von und an Hegel*, edited by Johannes Hoffmeister, (Hamburg: Felix Meiner 1952–1961), letter 514a: „Ich bin ein Lutheraner und durch die Philosophie ebenso ganz im Luthertum befestigt [...]“ My translation follows: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Letters*, translated by Clark Buttler and Christiane Seiler (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984), 520 f.

3. To What Extent Can or Must We Call Hegel a Lutheran?

I have not spoken about differences between Hegel and Luther yet. While Luther concentrates on the question regarding whether man can act by himself if there is an omnipotent God, Hegel concentrates on the question regarding whether all reflections of finite beings *about* God have to be understood as founded *in* God. While Hegel therefore goes on to consider the question of in how far we are able to *develop* all thoughts about God *as* founded in God, Luther considers the question of to what extent divine omnipotence can be brought together with human responsibility. Therefore, Luther tries to show that there is a difference between two necessities: “necessitas coactionis” and “necessitas immutabilitatis,” in English: “necessity of compulsion or coercion” and “necessity of immutability or inevitability.”¹⁵ Luther wants to show with this difference that God’s omnipotence implies that he works all in all. But according to Luther this does not mean that we are *forced* in everything what we are doing. It just means everything we are doing is inevitably caused by God.

Of course, in this paper I cannot develop Luther’s position in detail. But I would like to sketch out the main point: If we are willing to do P, this is – according to Luther – founded in our character which is in turn founded in God, and we cannot change this. Nevertheless, *we* are the agents who are willing to do P. This means we can distinguish between two types of necessity: If we have to do P while we are not willing to do P, we are forced to do P. This is what Luther calls “necessity of compulsion.” But if we are willing to do P and have to do P only because God works all in all this is what Luther calls “necessity of immutability.” Under this necessity we are not forced to do P. We are just inevitably willing to do P. But we are still the agents who are willing to do P. Or to put it in other words: It is our self that says “Yes” to do P.

Based on this difference, Luther claims there is no necessity for sacrificing the omnipotence of God in order to keep the responsibility of man alive. In fact, this is true as long as the Pelagian sacrifice of God’s omnipotence is only based on the thesis that God’s omnipotence necessarily implies that we are *forced* in everything what we are doing. Nevertheless, a lot of problems remain. Leibniz approached them again in 1673 in his *Confessio philosophi*. A brilliant text which has to be taken into account as well, if one is interested in the question regarding how far Luther’s position can be made more explicit as Friedrich Hermanni has recently shown.¹⁶ However, in this paper I cannot address this topic further. With the last sentences I only wanted to point out in which way Luther’s *De servo arbitrio* addresses the fact that God has to be thought as the Absolute. But

¹⁵ Martin Luther, *De servo arbitrio*, WA 18, 634.

¹⁶ Friedrich Hermanni, *Metaphysik. Versuche über letzte Fragen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2011), 93–114.

I have to add one more point: According to Luther the fact that God works all in all not only means that we can only be justified *sola gratia* and *sola fide*. It means that we have to reflect on the givenness of faith by the Holy Spirit as well. In this context, Luther reminds us of the possibility of a vanity of reason, too. But far from condemning reason completely, Luther says only: "Nam sicut omnia dona et naturalia instrumenta in impiis sunt impia, ita in piis sunt salutaria."¹⁷ In my translation: "While all given and natural instruments are impious in the impious, they are salutary in the pious." Hence according to Luther we have to differentiate between the essence of reason [*substantia rationis*] and the vanity of reason [*vanitas rationis*]. According to Luther the capacity that does this differentiation is our faith in God and the fact that God works all in all, or as Hegel puts it, that God is the only *principium essendi et cognoscendi*.

So do we now *have* to call Hegel a Lutheran? The crucial question of course is, in which way God has to be concretised as the only *principium essendi et cognoscendi*. If we are talking about the relationship between Luther and Hegel, this is definitely one of the most important points, if not the most important point of all. As shown above, Hegel's first question is not if human responsibility and divine omnipotence can be brought together. Hegel rather focuses on the fact that the Christian God is Spirit and has to be understood as Spirit. Hence he stresses the question regarding in how far God can be thought as the only *principium cognoscendi*. His philosophy of religion is trying to give an answer to this question. It is the construction of the development of God's self-consciousness in which all religions and all thoughts of man about God are included and generated.

Taking this into account, there seems to be one big question left: Do we have to say Hegel's position is just an inglorious example of what Luther calls "vanity of reason"? Or do we rather have to say that Hegel's position is just a concrete answer to the question regarding in how far our faith in God actually is the capacity to divide between the essence of reason and vanity of reason? Hegel himself, of course, chooses the second option. Because for Hegel the vanity of reason starts precisely with the claim that we are here (on earth) and God is the beyond (in heaven). But according to Hegel, God cannot be the beyond. Because as the beyond, God was opposed to the finite. But God is the Absolute and the Infinite. And the Infinite cannot be abstractly opposed to the finite, but has to contain the finite if it is not to be just a finite itself. This is the argument Hegel's *Science of Logic* develops in the Quality-Chapter of the "Doctrine of Being."

Hegel himself sees this argument quite close to Luther. I would like to give just one example. In the Introduction to his *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel says Kant's transcendental philosophy presupposes that the Absolute is on the one side and the recognition of the Absolute in finite beings is on the other side. So

¹⁷ Martin Luther, WA 10/III, 105 f. (Table Talk 2938b).

the recognition of the Absolute in finite beings is something which is without the Absolute, not the Absolute itself, something else to the Absolute. But this means, Hegel says, to claim that there is something “truly” [*wahrhaft*] without being part of the truth. And this would mean the Absolute would no longer be “*allein wahr*” which means no longer “true alone” or “the only truth.”¹⁸

So what does this show? Does it already prove that Hegel is a Lutheran? Surely not. Because in order to answer this question we do not only have to consider what Hegel might think to be Lutheran but also in how far Luther and Hegel maybe choose *different* ways to deal with the same principles. Of course in this paper I cannot go deeper into this question. Let me just add one final remark at the end of my paper.

The question of in how far God can be thought as the only *principium essendi et cognoscendi* still is a central question of systematic theology. Of course, there are different approaches to this question. A lot of them are more recent than Hegel’s position. Just think, for example, of Barth or Tillich. The crucial question, however, is in which version God is developed as the only *principium essendi et cognoscendi* most consequently. Luther definitely had a great impact by focusing on these questions and giving them a central role in Christian theology. But still the question of *in how far the sola gratia has to be explained under epistemological aspects* is not a question which has been answered sufficiently yet. On the contrary, this question still is a central question of systematic theology which has to be discussed within and between the different traditions of addressing it. Barth’s “*analogia fidei*” and Tillich’s concept of “symbolic language” have to be taken into account within these discussions as well, of course. But the same applies to Hegel’s argumentation against all those positions in philosophy and theology who presuppose God as the beyond. For Hegel, the truth of their modesty is their pride. Therefore just as Luther cannot deal with Erasmus’ position, Hegel cannot deal with the claim that we are here and God is in heaven. To him this claim denies the fact that God as the Absolute and Infinite cannot be abstractly opposed to the finite, but has to contain the finite if it is not to be just a finite itself. Christian theology according to Hegel addresses this thought in its centre: the Cross.

Of course a lot of questions remain. Because as mentioned above there are lots of systematic problems in Hegel’s position concerning Christian dogmatics. All those problems need to be discussed one by one, which of course was impossible in this paper. Here I just wanted to point out one thing: There is a direct line from Luther to Hegel. At least in Hegel’s perspective.

¹⁸ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, GW 9, 54.

A Note on Revelation and the Critique of Reason in Schelling's Late Philosophy

Stian Grøgaard

Schelling has returned from a set position in German Idealism as a transitory stage from Kant to Hegel, a position neither based on philosophical argument, nor simply on the history of philosophy. Rather, it is based on a meta-narrative of philosophy, which is reluctant to change, regulating as it does the economy of how the history of philosophy should be taught and told. Nonetheless, Schelling has returned, not with a vengeance but with more of a promise, although this return is the second time around. The first time was in the 1950s, due to the republishing of his *Sämmtliche Werke* by Manfred Schröter, following the edition of two early and unknown versions of *Die Weltalter* in 1946. In the years to follow, a host of German philosophers achieved their habilitation on Schelling, among the more prominent being Jürgen Habermas 1954, Walter Schulz 1955 and Wolfgang Wieland 1956. Lately, Schelling has surfaced once again, this time on an international, that is, Anglo-American, scene. Maybe this second return also is to be explained by the publication of unknown manuscripts, the most noteworthy being Schelling's *Introduction to Philosophy* (1989), a stenographic copy of his 1827 lecture series *System der Weltalter* (1990), and the *Urfassung of Philosophy of Revelation* (1992).¹

Bernard Freydberg gives a much more interesting explanation. Referring to the influence of deconstruction on American university campuses, he writes that a habit developed to treat "the texts of the traditional Western philosophical canon as corpses of dissection [...] (T)his frequent disrespect [...] calls for a response. Schelling's thought stands at the crossroads. [...] As an undeconstructable rejuvenator, his untimely work has become timely."² So no doubt, there are a few good things to come out of deconstruction. According to Freydberg it has rejuvenated Schelling, showing him to be both "timely" and "undeconstruct-

¹ F. W. J. Schelling, *Einleitung in die Philosophie*, (lectures 1830), ed. by Walter Erhardt, *Schellingiana*, Vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1989); *ibid.*, *System der Weltalter. Münchener Vorlesung 1827–28 in einer Nachschrift von Ernst von Lasaulx*, ed. by Siegbert Peetz (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1990); *ibid.*, *Urfassung der Philosophie der Offenbarung* (UPhO), ed. by Walter E. Ehrhardt (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 2004).

² Bernhard Freydberg, *Schelling's Dialogical Freedom Essay* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008), 116.

table.” Here, one may add that Schelling in fact coined the term “deconstruieren”; he enjoyed latinizing his terminology, then translated it with a more elegant German term, *entstalten*, though I doubt this copyright to the term explains why he is undeconstructable. The return of Schelling will never be the same as when Kant and Hegel return, as they always do, alternately, and the one at the expense of the other. This means deconstruction became so influential it managed to change the metaphilosophical narrative, considering that Schelling has remained a stranger among the German idealists and with a vision for philosophy that never quite got under our skin.

Schelling passed away 1854, and is, together with Kierkegaard who died one year later, the last great philosopher to keep Protestantism as an investigative agent and the explicit measure of things. They were both apologists of a modern religion further modernized and on the brink of becoming invisible. In addition, they were post-Enlightenment thinkers, expressing second thoughts on Modernity. Compare Schelling to, for instance, Max Weber, active 50 years later, a neo-Kantian both in his method and his convictions. For Weber, Modernity by then had become the overarching fate, and its foundation or ground in Protestantism was less a standard measure than the preferable object of study. No doubt, only a Protestant culture would account for a scientist of Weber’s scope and stature. The difference of ambition in Schelling’s *Philosophy of Revelation* and Weber’s *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904–5) is telling. In the meantime, Protestantism had shrunk from an appeal to the obvious to a professional calling, abandoning philosophy for the department of theology. Outside this profession, Protestantism continued as a heroic work ethic, the mind set or haunted unconscious of the knowledgeable and scientifically impressive Weber, and what he himself would refer to as an ultimate set of values. These values expressed the ground on which culture would rest, while Modernity went on to obscure its ground, its *hypokeimenon*, proceeding to rely on instrumental reason alone. This autonomy or self-sufficiency of reason was the dream of the Enlightenment come true. From Weber’s perspective, Schelling’s insistence on the ground, the conditionality and heterogeneity of reason, would need to be made much more historically specific. Any further reason for something to be or, rather, to exist, was uncalled for. In his Freedom Essay of 1809, Schelling held that every existence sprang from a strange indifferent ground, since, as he later stated, everything, including an organism equipped with reason, grows only when residing in the dark. This darkness is prior to the values Weber located in the investigative agent. Ground is no subjective condition, an interior being. It is the darkness reason need in order to appear or exist as pure reason.

One would never have reason admit to belonging to a dark ground, since none is needed nor can be demonstrated, and there is no reason external to reason. So, how is Schelling able to qualify the needless beyond reason? The simple answer may be, by re-enacting a classic philosophical difference, and by returning

modern epistemology to traditional ontology. Schelling is an ontologizer: his main philosophical penchant was to favour a restitution of ontology. Fichte had ontologized cognition: nothing existed but through the cognitive act, where the I finds itself and what it is not, the Not-I, in a single constitutive move; while Schelling split constitution from cognition and in his *Philosophy of Nature* (1797–1806) made the split into a sequence where cognition appeared at the end only to finalize natural history. This reverse order of Fichte's transcendentalism moved cognition beyond epistemology by addressing old Being, Sein, in the one aspect which left reason out, and this would be actual being or existence.

Possible or potential being, on the other hand, is still undifferentiated from reason, making up the Parmenidian point where thought and being are one and the same. For possible being Schelling used the Scholastic term *quid* or whatness [*Washeit*], referring to the ideal, the conceptual content or essence [*Wesen*] of all things. Actual existence is by contrast an immediate, unpreconceived fact, termed *quod* or thatness [*Dassheit*]. Covered by this difference between possible and actual, *quid* and *quod*, whatness and thatness, essence and existence, Schelling would place the main agents of his late philosophy out of reason's reach, and at the same time offer them an alternative legitimacy or ground, what he by then had come to call "unvordenkliches Sein", unpreconceivable being. They were agents acting upon reason from beyond reason under different names, like freedom, love, personality or God, and the ground on which they trod turned into an abyss or unground [*Ungrund*] by the time of his *Freedom Essay* – synonyms for desire [*Sucht*] or will [*Wollen*] by the sheer fact of their external relation or intransparency to reason. The ungrounded *Wollen* is no potential, nor the conceptual content or significance of what it wills. It is a metaphysical fact and already at work.³ Neither agent is logically demonstrable or the outcome of an ontological proof. Indeed, they are less thoughts than agents commanding thought, that is, they operate as conditions for reason to appear as factual in the first place.

Existence external to reason does not mean reason is no matter of fact. In his *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, Kant had appointed the categorical imperative to be a "fact of reason." This imperative is the sole, unsolicited achievement of pure reason and is a fact as much as anything else. Schelling's point is simply that reason will never explain a singular fact, not even the fact that reason exists. This puts the fact of reason out of reach, showing reason to be, despite its achievements, "existentially impotent," in Wolfram Högerebe's expression.⁴ This expression of impotence turns ontological proofs over to a

³ In his *Philosophie der Mythologie* (1842–43) he states, "das Wollen selbst ist Actus." F. W. J. Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke* (SW), ed. by K. F. A. Schelling, Vol. II/2 (Stuttgart and Augsburg, 1856–1861), 36. This is a problematic point, however, as he distinguishes between "Wollen" and "Wille" and leaves potentiality to the latter.

⁴ Wolfram Högerebe, *Deutsche Philosophie im XIX. Jahrhundert. Kritik der idealistischen Vernunft* (Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München, 1987), 72.

logic of compensation. They become proof of what will never be. Accepting the impotence of reason became the starting point for Kant's critique. When Adorno in the concluding chapter of his *Negative Dialectics* held that Kant's Critique nevertheless circled around the ontological proof of God's existence, and then, *en passant*, extended the same to be valid for any philosophy, he seems to accept that philosophy inevitably pursues existence as the logical outcome of essence.⁵

In Schelling's late terminology this outcome characterizes negative philosophy, a form of thought relying on logical necessity alone, commencing with being in general, the most general of terms, and tying up its ends with the proof of God's existence. Schelling accepted the proof and still denied it proved anything but a possible God. His own alternative, positive philosophy, put God forth as an unconditional fact at the outset. Solely from this fact may philosophy become "historical" and proceed to revelation, an historical fact long prepared by the both logical and natural unfolding of mythological consciousness. Mythology was the preparation, an internal achievement of the mind and the conclusive state of a natural history. Still, no preparation, none of the fully developed mythologies of India, Egypt or Greece, would make the transition from internal mythology to external revelation or avoid the awakening to historical fact.

Kant did not mobilize the difference between potential and actual being in order to restrict reason as fact. His ambition to investigate the conditions of possible knowledge restricted reason through another cognitive faculty named intuition [*Anschauung*]. A division of labour between cognitive faculties displaces the original opposition between actual and potential being. Intuition testifies to a singular occurrence versus the one-size-fits-all of universal reason or general intelligence [*Verstand*], tacitly implying all modes of existence are singular.

The adversary to his *Critique of Pure Reason* was philosophical dogmatism, and Kant located dogma in the confounding of concept and idea, which on the level of our cognitive faculties means confounding intelligence and reason. In the First Critique this confounding was termed "transcendental illusion" and there are several terms describing mistakes of a similar nature, like *hypostasis* or *Subreption*, which mean reifying the transcendental conditions of cognition, or making cognition and the cognitive object out of the same cloth.⁶ In Kant's jargon, this illusion makes ideas regulating the use of reason get confused with concepts schematizing objects of the intuition. This is how dogmatism, his case in point being the onto-theology of the 17th Century, came to believe the existence of essence could be reached by logical demonstration, and excelled in refined proofs of God's existence. For Kant, God did not fill the function of a cognitive concept, rather of an idea regulating moral action, indemonstrable and

⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1973), 378.

⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (KrV) (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974); the chapter on the paralogisms of reason, KrV A402.

beyond proof. In his second Critique, the three ideas of freedom, an existing God and an everlasting soul were postulates of practical reason; but of all three, only freedom was deemed necessary for the constitution of moral law, since no moral law would make sense unless one was free to comply with it or not.⁷ The other two postulates were projected in order to elevate legality to unprecedented legitimacy, presenting the categorical imperative with a surplus of moral creativity. God was neither a necessary part of the act, nor is he what is acted upon; the idea of God is simply favourable for moral action.

Schelling accepted the ontological proof as the culmination point of negative philosophy, demonstrating essence or quid, never God's existence or quod.⁸ No transcendental critique of our cognitive faculties was called upon to make this distinction. His objection to Kant's critical method was that it never passed the preparatory steps to philosophy, and in fact started at the far end, because the practice of philosophy is instigated by ontological questions. It moves so to speak at the behest of being, just as positive philosophy is moved by unconditional fact, long before it will be able to critically measure any cognitive access to being. Kant's conditions of possibility for knowledge may be the final remnant of negative philosophy.⁹ Schelling readily accepted that reason is subject to illusions, though they are less illusions of our cognitive faculties, the overstraining of reason called transcendental illusions, than they are illusions of immanence. The latter are something reason finds it humbling to address. It prefers to extend its logical powers, since extension means reason is neither found wanting nor depends on anything external, for instance an historical fact. This image of reason is epitomized in modern philosophy but repeats what may be called the origin of mythology. On several occasions in his late philosophy Schelling recalled, in this image of reason, the event of original sin, modernized in the encapsulated cogito, the *Ich bin ich*, where the *Ich* forgets that it is "*bin*" or the band of being, the copula, which carries the equation. Illusion of immanence is a fall from grace to the unfolding necessity of essence.

This critique of cogito in particular does not fit a narrative, made into travesty by Georg Lukács, of an irrationalist tradition originating with Schelling passing through Nietzsche and Freud to National Socialism.¹⁰ Schelling admittedly gave

⁷ Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974), A220–241.

⁸ Omitting this difference remains a distinguishing mark of Hegel's method. Dieter Henrich respects Kant's critical dismissal of the ontological proof, given the premises of his Critiques, but prefers "Hegel's Erneuerung der Ontotheologie" to Schelling's attempt to turn the proof around and start from a presupposed divine fact. Cfr. Henrich's by now classical *Der ontologische Gottesbeweis. Sein Problem und seine Geschichte in der Neuzeit* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1960/1967), 219 ff.

⁹ Schelling later came to consider his own systemic outlines to a philosophy of identity in the years 1801–06 as part and parcel of negative philosophy.

¹⁰ Georg Lukács, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft, Vol. 1, Irrationalismus zwischen den Revolutionen* (Darmstadt & Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1973).

reason away to external agents, the foremost among them being freedom. He was aware of the significance this specific concept would have for his philosophical signature. Freedom sounds good, but remains a problematic concept for any systematic ambition in philosophy. An additional problem is that freedom, when first offered, will expand. When Schelling insisted on locating God outside of reason, “Gott ausser der Vernunft zu haben,”¹¹ this was done in order to secure God’s freedom, since only an agent who is free may measure up to perfection and perfection is a divine attribute. God cannot be confined to necessity as long as man among all creation is free to be subjected to moral law. In *Die Weltalter* (1811–1814) the keyword was the contraction of God, *Die Contraction Gottes*. This appears to be an old theogonic tale, and Schelling praises Plato’s *Timaeus* when placing narrative above dialectics as a more noble form of philosophy, but what sets *Weltalter* apart is the concern for a free deity. God contracts the All to become person on a ground then set free for a future history of man. The contraction to divine person means creation did not happen ex nihilo – Schelling always rejected this notion – but from dividing the chaotic All, and from contraction follows the birth of logos or reason. This makes freedom older than reason, and reason in the form of logos or Word as old as the world.

A ground set free is without God (*praeter deum*), but not external to God (*extra deum*). With this distinction, Schelling takes care to confirm pantheism, both as the true philosophic system and as a dormant condition for creation. From the ungrounded, groundless will [*Wollen*] in The Freedom Essay to the God-All contracted into personhood, the project of the first and only known volume of *Die Weltalter* was to originate will itself, later given a new twist in the Erlangen lectures of 1821. Here, the unpreconceivable, not-yet-contracted All turns out to be a will that willed nothing.¹² Original will was “*gelassen*”, cool, indifferent, and contraction meant equipping divine will with a specific aim. From then on, God’s will will be done. The question remains how the will prior to reason is able to create an existence including reason, but the point of the tale is to present reason with an outside and a past that remains beyond reach. Due to its past, reason will always be non-transparent to itself, missing the mark of self-presence.

Kant would have termed such theogonic tales heuristic and conjectural [*mutmaßlich*], excused by the need for an impure application of reason. For him, pure reason was sublime moral law, appearing through vertiginous imagination but never to be domesticized into a household God. In Schelling’s late philosophy, the sublime is gone and reason has become a servant of fact. A scientist like Weber would not mind modesty on reason’s behalf, since philosophy was no longer to be a discipline prior to, and a primer of, scientific research. To the

¹¹ Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie oder Darstellung der reinrationalen Philosophie*, SW II/2, 569.

¹² Schelling, SW I/9, 220f.

contrary, Schelling finds both the empiricist and the pure-rationalist positions to be too modest to account for agents like freedom, love, personhood and God, since they alone lend a purpose to reason and explain what it is for. Nothing else would make a fact out of reason.

A simple way of stating this point is that quod or thatness may never be derived from quid or whatness. The logic of essence, which never produced a single fact, is the abyss surrounding reason, and complicates the concept of everything, including God, which is pure actuality, *actus purus*, having quod for its quid or essence. God is the essence without essence, without potentiality, "*das unvordenkliche Dass*," that which "*das alles begreifende Was ist*."¹³ Schelling dubs this all-comprehending What, where quod substitutes for quid and existence is made essence, "the inverse idea."¹⁴ If it is God's nature to exist, reason has already stepped outside itself. Reason may prove the possibility of God, but is in itself no proof of God. With this insufficiency, with reason's ability to say what it cannot show, contingency is born, and with contingency the only acceptable concept of history, the proper site of revelation. Schelling surprisingly left revelation to close the contingency of reason and to compensate for a reason that is pure.

There is a question said to originate with Leibniz, reappearing under the label "the great metaphysical question," which succinctly asks: why is there something rather than nothing? The question returns at the beginning of Schelling's *Philosophy of Revelation*.¹⁵ An immediate reply will be that the answer is already given, since the possibility of nothing is out of the question, but then again, this will not explain why the question arose in the first place. It points toward an aspect of being which seems superfluous and should not have had to be, nor to be thought, and this aspect is called existence. Schelling wanted to underscore that while existence is not without ground, it is for no reason, implying reason itself is in need of explanation.¹⁶ Prompting this explanation is a second question some pages later: why does reason exist and not just nonreason?¹⁷ Again, one may seek comfort in the fact that what is in question, reason this time, is presupposed in the question. Its purpose was to put reason beside itself, and possibly extend its use under another name. To oversee the extension, Schelling needs a speculative agent different from reason, this time offering a gaze on reason from nowhere.

The difference between reason and fact of reason could be made slimmer by stating the difference between being and existence, and since both share being,

¹³ Schelling, SW, II/2, 586.

¹⁴ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung* (PhO), SW II/3, 162.

¹⁵ "(W)arum ist überhaupt etwas? warum ist nicht nichts?," Schelling, PhO, SW II/3, 7. Heidegger would take this question to be a revelation of Being, but what in fact is revealed is the quod. While Hegel ignored quod, knowing he would still be able to keep being, Heidegger made quod into quid or the essence of *Sein*.

¹⁶ Schelling, UPhO, 21.

¹⁷ "Warum ist denn Vernunft und nicht Unvernunft?" Schelling, UPhO, 69.

non-existent being is a price to pay for indulging in speculation. The one thing that Kant did not dare, confining knowledge to appearance, was to represent a gaze from the non-existent thing itself, the “*an sich*.” Any critique will have to deny the possibility of such a view of things, and denounce it as transcendental illusion. So where do we situate the need for illusion? Kant’s shattering answer was reason itself, with the expression “*Hang der Vernunft*”, penchant of reason, in the first *Critique*. The penchant for transcending the limits of knowledge can be traced to reason itself. Somehow Kant did not include reason on the side of critique, and was taken to be modest on reason’s behalf. What if his critical enterprise on the contrary is immodest? What if limiting cognition to appearance inadvertently puts on a noumenal gaze, conducting speculation from the thing itself? Kant dodged these questions by admitting to subjective needs, to projection (metaphor) for the practical purpose of cognition. In his First Critique he resorted to the idea of a “transcendental affinity,” of an objective ground for the unity of appearances, affirming there must be some sort of affinity between knower and known if the world be at all knowable and allow for an ideal sum total of knowledge.¹⁸ In order to avoid a cognitive subject becoming a Kantian stranger in a world of appearances, Schelling tried to substantiate affinity from the far side of cognition.¹⁹ While staying close to Kant’s basic epistemic model, this was a step too far, even when compared to Hegel’s subsumption of affinity under unlimited reason. According to Manfred Frank, what carried the weight for Hegel was always the inner “*Geschehen*’ of reflection.”²⁰ This reduces his method to *Wesensdialektik*, a switch back and forth between essence and appearance, able to retrieve or express anything, rising to a new level with every turn of the switch. Schelling distrusted the formalism of the dialectical method and preferred a logic more analytical and straight, but it felt heavy-handed when he insisted on transposing the pattern from natural history to historical man.²¹

In History, Schelling found reason had to become second to truth, and made revelation the interface between them, finalized in the modern era with positivism’s gospel of fact. In the opening monologue to his 1832 lectures, Schelling says a philosophy of revelation equals “historical philosophy.”²² He knew this

¹⁸ Kant, KrV, 122 f.

¹⁹ In the second edition of KrV Kant insert a passage on the “Scandal of Philosophy” and of human reason in general. The scandal is that existing things supplying cognition with all its material, including material for the internal work of the mind, is based on belief and can never be proven, KrV, BXXXIX.

²⁰ “*Geschehen der Reflexion*,” from Manfred Frank “*Vorbemerkung*” to Schelling’s *Ausgewählte Schriften* in 6 volumes (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1985), 2.

²¹ For a critique of Schelling transferring the logic of the potences from nature to history, cfr. Axel Hutter: *Gechichtliche Vernunft. Die Weiterführung der Kantischen Vernunftskritik in der Spätphilosophie Schellings* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1996).

²² Cfr. the opening pages where Schelling connects positive to historical philosophy and then to revelation, concluding: “Das Christentum is eine eminent geschichtliche Religion; wo

would burden both history and revelation, making history a *Heilsgeschichte*, and reading the totality of historical narrative from a singular divine event. Rather than dismissing this as absurd, the philosophically commendable thing to do would be to follow such a speculative invention of history with joy, and then take stock of all its implications. The philosophy of revelation never became a preferred part of Schelling's work and the reasons why may be worth discovering. No doubt, it is offensive to reason to have to face historical fact in order to be relieved of mythology. Revelation is an event in time, anticipated by mythology but historically always a surprise, finite, but never "timely." If the revelation of Christ was final, this means it revealed the conditions for any revelation. Christ is existence as ground for existence. More than a prophetic enemy of mythology, he finalized natural history on its way through the stages of myth, to reveal what mythology at the outset was for. This break with the immanence of nature finally relieving nature of its melancholy [*Schwermut*], was addressed as logos in the opening passage of the Gospel of John, the pivotal reference all through Schelling's *Philosophy of Revelation*.

For the logic of revelation, there is still time in all of its three modes, not the least a future open to eschatology. Here, Schelling remains the traditionalist compared to Hegel, where revelation and the death of God halt time to launch an ever-extended presence.²³ With a future to revelation, Schelling will have to explain the historical need for Rationalism's ontotheology and the move from the reason of myth to the myth of reason in the Enlightenment of his immediate past. In addition to potentiation he must allow for differentiation to sever what logos once held together, and for the return to mythological consciousness tying reason to cogito. The uncertain relation to the world in the self-certain cogito is the modern expression of a stupidity peculiar to reason. As Kant pointed out in Critique of Pure Reason, stupidity [*Dummheit*] is commonly considered a lack of judgment, and the faculty of judgment makes the world leak in, to correct reason from without.²⁴ This is a warning not to hand over judgement to reason alone. With Schelling, since mythology is the companion of reason, revelation seems to take the role of judgment. Revelation without reason would definitely go unobserved, and was a form of stupidity disappearing with original sin.

The inverse order of things commencing with fact, if not the revealed fact of God, is, or ought to be, the order of empiricism. Positive philosophy promoted a form of empiricism Schelling termed philosophical, then at other times either progressive or a priori empiricism. A priori meant logical, and with a priori empiricism he

das Christentum nicht ist, da ist keine Geschichte. Wer also das Christentum nicht begrift, begrift auch die Geschichte nicht." Schelling, UPhO, 5.

²³ For a fine exposition of this difference see Peter Trawny: *Die Zeit der Dreieinigkeit. Untersuchungen zur Trinität bei Hegel und Schelling* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002).

²⁴ "Der Mangel an Urteilskraft ist eigentlich das was man Dummheit nennt." Kant, KrV, B174 (note).

wanted the logic of experience to permeate pure thought. Progressive empiricism assigned thought to the forward direction of experience, but without having to measure compliance with experience through a regression from idea back to the original sensation in the manner of British Empiricism. All empiricism is based on the heterogeneity of quid and quod, conceptual content and fact, reason and truth revealed. An a priori empiricism shows Schelling was more interested in the logic than content of experience. His sublimated form of empiricism is no singular occurrence in modern philosophy; neither is the connection between empiricism and historical philosophy. The singularity appears when both are seen from the vantage point of revelation. If theology can be set aside for a moment, Schelling must be taken to mean revelation presented something philosophically unseen, a change of heart and the invention of a specific form of thought, an exit from Aristotelian general fact to historical fact, a singular universal, turning reason conditional, reactive, a latecomer and a rationalizer.

Habermas was graceful and unmistakably Kantian when dismissing Schelling's method as anthropomorphism. In critical thought, anthropomorphism of course is accepted symbolically as a figure of speech, never taken literally neither as fact nor as dogma, and certainly not to be a recommendable method.²⁵ Any concern for method would dismiss revelation as mystification of reason and mystification may indeed play a part in Schelling's turn to ontology. Besides detailing this turn through the lens of revelation, his best defence is to take Kant to task for pretending to know the limits of reason before it is tested by revelation. Mystification may be the outcome of a reason beside itself, of "extasis," in which a speculative gaze on existence is cast from the will or from the *Ding an sich*, a gaze which Kant with the figure of anthropomorphism set out to quench.²⁶ Revelation will settle for nothing less than this gaze. Such an application of reason is different from the regulative ideas, the practical postulates of freedom, God and the eternal soul, the latter two symbolically projected to make practical reason inventive. There was no need for revelation in any form, Kant would settle for ideas to inspire the legalist. In a typical manner, Schelling reversed this order of things and would argue that it was for the sake of freedom beyond the freedom to be moral. It is freedom of the mystery exposed. The step back to mystification is taken in order to catch sight of the image of reason in Kant's *Vernunftskritik*, the image extending to the neo-Kantian Weber of an agency running on values for which there is no ground. It is the image of normal science, beyond which everything is mystification. Schelling's wild counter-proposal is the following: what if reason took revelation to ground history as fact, since only the fact of reason will let itself be corrected by historical events.

²⁵ For Kant's theory of metaphor, cfr. "Von der Schönheit als Symbol der Sittlichkeit" in Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1974), 294–299.

²⁶ In his *Erlangen-Vorlesungen* 1821, Schelling substitutes "extasis" for the contested concept of an intellectual intuition; cf. Schelling, SW I/9, 229.

Idealism Turned against Itself

From Hegel to Rosenzweig

Jayne Svenungsson

In March 2016, the largest Swedish daily *Dagens Nyheter* caught its readers' attention with the headline "Luther's Hatred of the Jews Nothing to Celebrate." The article was written by the former Lutheran priest and theologian Eskil Franck, apropos the upcoming Reformation Jubilee. Point by point, Franck rehearsed Luther's abhorrent exhortations, in *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543), about what do with the Jews: burn down their synagogues and schools, destroy their houses, forbid their rabbis to preach, suspend their right to move freely and so on. Franck then enjoined representatives of the Lutheran tradition to have a good thought about their own heritage, and to clarify – to themselves and to others – how they look at "[...] the principled and concrete *similarities* and *differences* between Martin Luther's [...] advices and the religious practice today represented by the Islamic State."¹

To be fair, Franck's article should not be referred to out of context: Eskil Franck was for many years Director of The Living History Forum, a public Swedish authority commissioned to work with issues related to tolerance, democracy and human rights, and he is an important and vital voice in debates on antisemitism and other forms of violent extremism. Nonetheless, his article is in many ways symptomatic for the times we are living in and feeds off a media dramaturgy that requires goodies and baddies, and that readily sacrifices complexity in favour of a sensational story. No mention is made, in the article, of the significant array of Protestant theologians – including Krister Stendahl, Dorothee Sölle and Jürgen Moltmann – who in the post-war era dedicated large parts of their careers to come to terms with the supersessionist strand of Christian theology. Neither is it mentioned that the Lutheran World Federation already back in the 1980s issued a consultation that clearly denounced and dissociated itself from Luther's writings on the Jews, an initiative that has been followed up by statements and documents of the individual Lutheran churches, including the Church of Sweden. Last but not least, no consideration is made of the fact that Luther and his theology hardly

¹ Eskil Franck, "Luthers judehat inget att fira", *Dagens Nyheter*, 22 March, 2016. Translations to English are by the author unless otherwise indicated.

can be reduced to his appalling anti-Jewish statements, although these must never be overlooked or down-played.

To refer to the theme of this volume, whether we like to admit it or not, the Reformation has inspired rich and complex philosophical, political and religious traditions – from Idealism to hermeneutics, from Romantic nationalism to present anti-nationalist commitment among many Protestant churches. In these complex developments, strands of critique, protest and reform intersect and intermingle and are sometimes turned against themselves – as in the many cases of low-church movements breaking off from Protestant churches in the name, once more, of critique, protest and reform.

My aim in this essay is to consider a philosophical example of this complexity. More specifically, I will describe how the anti-Jewish strand of Protestant theology became part and parcel of German Idealism, but also how this particular strand evolved in a way that later would inspire significant Jewish thinkers to turn against Idealism itself. I shall proceed in three steps. First, I will briefly discuss the particular relationship between Protestantism and subsequent German philosophy. Second, I will give an overview of how Jews and Judaism are displayed as motifs in Idealist philosophy, exemplified through some passages in the philosophies of Hegel and Schelling. Third, I will show how Schelling, in particular, inspired Franz Rosenzweig in his seminal endeavour to break free from an Idealist and determinist notion of history.

1. Protestantism and German Philosophy

German Idealism is inherently linked to Protestant theology. To understand this intimate link, we need to keep in mind the particular nature of the German Enlightenment. In contrast to British and French Enlightenment thinkers, who generally opposed religion in the name of reason, the major proponents of the German *Aufklärung* rather sought to reconcile religion with reason. Indeed, several of the fiercest defenders of the *Aufklärung* were themselves Protestant theologians or clergymen. As a consequence, the Enlightenment, when it reached German soil, to a high degree took the shape of a two-way communication: on the one hand, Protestant theology became profoundly influenced by the Enlightenment ideals, a process that crystallized into liberal theology and subsequent cultural and ecclesial movements. On the other hand, German Enlightenment philosophy – to which I count both Idealism and early Romantic philosophy – was deeply shaped by theological figures of thought, notably of a Protestant nature, since most of the leading Idealist and Romantic thinkers hailed from a Protestant background.

Among the theological figures of thought that these thinkers implemented in their philosophies were not only Trinitarian and Christological motifs. They

also inherited an array of theological stereotypes of Jews and Judaism. To be sure, these stereotypes were not invented by Protestant theology. On the contrary, they can be traced back to the earliest centuries of Christianity, when factions of the emerging new tradition for various reasons began to distance the church from its Jewish origins. By this time, a new polemical genre, variously termed *contra* or *adversus Iudaeos*, “against the Jews,” appeared. This genre, which set the tone for much of the later anti-Jewish rhetoric in the Western tradition, can sometimes be found in entire pamphlets, sometimes interwoven in larger theological works.²

As an illustrative example, we may consider Eusebius’s *Ecclesiastical History*, in which the Christian church is depicted as a “New Israel,” which has assumed the role of God’s chosen people and thereby inaugurated a new era of history. The Jewish tradition is thereby represented as an earlier and now bypassed stage of history. A second and equally pervasive motif in the *adversus Iudaeos* polemics is the claim that Judaism is exclusive and separatist, in contrast to Christianity, whose message is alleged to be of universal salvation. In the writings of Eusebius and other theologians, this exclusivity is linked to the Jews’ supposedly obstinate attachment to their ritual practices and regulations. Thereby a third rhetorical device emerges, namely of presenting the Christian faith in terms of spiritual high-mindedness while describing Judaism and Jews as hopelessly bound to the literal, the material, or the fleshly (as in their observance of the Law, their practicing of purification rituals or in the practice of circumcision).³

While these anti-Jewish tropes were established as early as in the Patristic period, anti-Jewish rhetoric has been a pervasive feature of the entire history of Christian theology. This pattern did not change with the Reformation. On the contrary, Protestant and in particular Lutheran theology in several regards reinforced the contrast between Judaism and Christianity, associating the former with legalistic zeal and the latter with a generous offer of grace, the *sola gratia* doctrine. This brings me back to the Enlightenment and to German Idealism. Steeped in a Protestant tradition, German Enlightenment philosophy to a high degree adopted the anti-Jewish features of Protestant theology. However, as Michael Mack and others have argued, when these features were transferred from theology to philosophy, they simultaneously underwent a process of secularization and politicization. In this way, the theological stereotype of the Jew as bound to the Law found an echo in the philosophical stereotype of the Jew as the embodiment of heteronomy (as opposed to the Enlightenment ideal

² See e. g. Paula Fredriksen, “The Birth of Christianity and the Origins of Christian Anti-Judaism,” in idem and Adele Reinhartz (eds), *Jesus, Judaism and Christian Anti-Judaism: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 8–30; and idem, *Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* (New York and London: Doubleday, 2008), 71–78.

³ See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History (Books I–V)*, trans. R. J. Deferrari (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1953), books 1.1–4 and 3.5–8.

of autonomy). And in the same way as Christian theological imagery, with few exceptions, had excluded the Jews from divine redemption, so, too, did modern philosophical imagery in several cases exclude Jews *qua* Jews from the Enlightenment's emancipatory ideals.⁴

A case in point is Kant's late work *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798), in which the mature philosopher once more returns to a topic close to his heart: humanity's autonomy from the realm of natural necessity. Yet when he comes to the question of the Jewish people's capacity to attain autonomy, his tone is ambivalent. Kant is in no doubt that Jews, by virtue of being individual human beings, are included in the emancipation that will follow upon the establishment of a universal order of reason. Yet this specifically presupposes that they distance themselves from their "Jewishness," i. e. the particular rituals and traditions that make up their Jewish identity. Instead, Kant proposes, Jews ought to embrace "the religion of Jesus" and adopt the Enlightenment's critical perspective on the Bible. Only in this way will Jews be able to fully assimilate into European culture and free themselves from their archaic religion, a process that Kant infamously summarizes with the phrase *Euthanasie des Judentums*, the "euthanasia of Judaism".⁵

2. Hegel and Schelling on Jews and Judaism

A similar pattern recurs in the emerging Idealist philosophy. At about the same time as Kant published *The Conflict of the Faculties*, the young Hegel finished his work *The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate* (1797), a philosophical reflection on the Christian religion. In a way that anticipates his later dialectical works, Hegel here foregrounds the emancipatory potential of Christianity by first offering a contrasting image of Judaism as a cult-fixated religion, doomed to extinction as part of humanity's ongoing development. The essence of Judaism, Hegel contends, finds its paradigmatic form in the patriarch Abraham, whom he describes as "a stranger on earth, a stranger to the soil and to man alike."⁶ These words are not only reminiscent of the legend of the wandering Jew, deeply engrained

⁴ See Michael Mack, *German Idealism and the Jew: The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003). See also Micha Brumlik, *Deutscher Geist und Judenhaß: Das Verhältnis des philosophischen Idealismus zum Judentum* (Munich: Luchterhand, 2000), 9–25. I give a brief overview of these debates in Jayne Svenungsson, "Enlightened Prejudices: Anti-Jewish Tropes in Modern Philosophy", in Andrus Ers and Hans Ruin (eds), *Conceptualizing History: Essays on Time, Memory and Representation* (Huddinge: Södertörn University, 2011), 279–290.

⁵ Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 95.

⁶ G. F. W. Hegel, "The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate," in *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 186.

in European imagery since the Middle Ages. Abraham appears here also as the prototype of what Hegel would later call “alienation,” a necessary part of the estrangement process that characterizes all movements towards real freedom. But the Jewish people would never abandon their state of heteronomy, and the Jewish religion would remain a cul-de-sac, at most a stage on the road towards freedom and enlightenment. Even the Exodus, one of the most powerful epics of emancipation in human history, is turned into its opposite in Hegel’s account. Having depicted the flight from Egypt as an act of cowards profiting from other peoples’ agony, Hegel concludes:

It is no wonder that this nation, which in its emancipation bore the most slave-like demeanor, regretted leaving Egypt, wished to return there again whenever difficulty or danger came upon it in the sequel, and thus showed how in its liberation it had been without the soul and the spontaneous need of freedom.⁷

Like Kant, Hegel saw in the Jewish people the embodiment of heteronomy. As an echo of the Christian *adversus Iudaeos* polemics, he also saw the Jewish religion as inescapably tied to the past, to a bygone era of history. Last but not least, we find in *The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate* the typical linking of the Jews with materialism. In one of the more distressing passages of the text, Hegel discusses the receiving of the Torah by the ancient Israelites, to his mind yet another expression for the Jewish people’s deeply servile character. Alluding to a beautiful image in Deuteronomy (32:11), in which God is likened to an eagle who protects her young and trains them to fly, Hegel maliciously remarks:

Only the Israelites did not complete this fine image; these young never became eagles. In relation to their God they rather afford the image of an eagle which by mistake warmed stones, showed them how to fly and took them on its wings into the clouds, but never raised their weight into flight or fanned their borrowed warmth into the flame of life.⁸

When the World Spirit soars to the loftier realms of history, Hegel seems to suggest, the Jewish people falls to the ground like a stone, helplessly bound to the past, to the archaic, to the material.

Before concluding these all too brief remarks on Hegel, we need to remind ourselves again that these instances of derogatory characterization of Jews and Judaism are all taken from one particular work of Hegel’s early philosophy. As Yirmiyahu Yovel has shown in his penetrating study *Dark Riddle*, Hegel’s view of Judaism evolved over time and became less dismissive in his mature works.⁹ As he developed his dialectical notion of history, he attributed the Jewish religion a major role in the evolution of the Spirit. Still, Judaism was not assigned a flattering role; its essential contribution was at the end of the day to prepare the

⁷ Hegel, “The Spirit of Christianity,” 190.

⁸ Hegel, “The Spirit of Christianity,” 199.

⁹ Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Dark Riddle: Hegel, Nietzsche and the Jews* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998).

stage for Christianity, while its own historical project was aborted. Like Kant, Hegel was thus unable to find a place for Jews as *Jews* in the ongoing march of history.

Against this background, it is fascinating to turn to Schelling, the adolescent friend of Hegel, who later in his life arose as one of Hegel's fiercest critics. I wish to bring attention to a particular episode in Schelling's late thinking, more specifically to the lecture series Schelling gave in Berlin from 1841 and onwards, after he had been offered the chair held by Hegel until his death in 1831. Much has been written about the circumstances surrounding Schelling's Berlin lectures, but I shall have to leave that behind for the time being, focusing instead on the depiction of Jews and Judaism in these lectures.¹⁰

Schelling's "Philosophy of Revelation" (in tandem with his "Philosophy of Mythology") can be described as an attempt to formulate a philosophy of the history of human consciousness, of the coming-to-itself of human consciousness throughout history. Like Hegel, he developed his philosophy of the consciousness of humanity through a speculative theory that involved both mythology and biblical revelation. Still, whereas Hegel, to simplify somewhat, gave the last word to the absolute knowledge of philosophy, Schelling, for his part, claimed that a deeper understanding of human historical existence could be gained only through a philosophical engagement with the history of mythology and biblical revelation.

There is also another difference between the two thinkers with regard precisely to religion. Whereas Hegel's speculative Christian philosophy, as we have seen, to a high degree was grounded in an antagonistic relationship with Judaism, this was not the case with Schelling's philosophy. Judaism played a marginal, albeit interesting, role in his "Philosophy of Revelation", in which the aim was to show how the coming-to-itself of human consciousness reached a decisive point with the incursion of the Christian revelation. This is not to say that Schelling's account of Judaism was free from stereotyping. On the contrary, when thematising explicitly "the Jewish revelation" in his twenty-seventh lecture, Schelling described it as wrapped in a mythological "casing" (*Hülle*) that only the advent of Christianity was able to dispel. He went on to explain his view that "[t]he Old Testament has a common ground and shares its direct presupposition with paganism. This explains the unmistakably pagan character of so many of its regulations and practices, e. g. circumcision."¹¹ The term "pagan" – to clarify the subtext of this quotation – is used by Schelling in a strongly pejorative sense, repeatedly linked to superstition and dependence on irrational forces.¹²

¹⁰ For an overview of these circumstances, see e. g. Manfred Frank's introductory note in F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung* (1841/42), ed. Manfred Frank (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 9–84.

¹¹ Schelling, *Offenbarung*, 281.

¹² Despite these pejorative associations, paganism – like Judaism – has its due share in

We can thus see how Schelling repeats several of the stock motifs of Christian supersessionism; first, in linking the Jewish religion to an earlier stage of history which only the Christian revelation would fulfil, and second, by linking Jews to the material and the ritual. We also find the third motif – the association of Jews with exclusivity – in Schelling’s lecture, as he comments that “Israel descends from a race (*Geschlechter*) that sets itself apart from the nations”.¹³ And yet at precisely this point an interesting turn occurs in Schelling’s reflections. As we remember, in the case of Kant and Hegel, it was precisely this alleged tendency of the Jews to set themselves apart that roused their contempt and prompted their profound doubts as to whether Jews could or should be assimilated. However, where Kant and Hegel saw a failing, it eventually turns out that Schelling saw a *strength*. It is only by the end of the lecture that this unexpected turn comes into full light. Schelling here poses the question how it comes that Israel, among all nations, deserved to be treated as God’s chosen people. His perplexing answer runs: “because this people was the least skilled to found states in the name of the World Spirit. They were carriers of the divine history. For this people turned out to be so spineless [*schlaff*], that they could not even conquer their own land save under divine command.”¹⁴

Despite the condescending tone, one cannot fail to sense Schelling’s underlying fascination for this inability of the Jews to conform to state authorities down the ages. To get the full picture of what is going on here, we need to remind ourselves of the polemical underpinning of Schelling’s Berlin lectures – of the extent to which he still ten years after the death of his erstwhile friend continued to battle with his shadow. In other words, as Micha Brumlik has argued, it is possible to discern here a direct polemic against Hegel’s statist philosophy: “In an anti-statist argumentation, Schelling opens a rift between the world of the states and the life of God, a gesture that can hardly be seen as anything but a direct confrontation with Hegel’s philosophy of actualized rationality, of the state as realized freedom and a manifestation of the ethical idea.”¹⁵

Nonetheless, this complex paragraph should not be reduced to an instance of Schelling’s anti-Hegelianism. As Brumlik also emphasizes, we find here a different and much lighter tone with regards to the Jews as compared to Idealist philosophy in general. This tone reaches its climax in the very last paragraph, where Schelling describes the Jewish people as “vouchsafed (*vorbehalten*) to the

Schelling’s philosophical reconstruction of the genealogy of human consciousness. For an analysis and discussion of Schelling’s understanding of both Judaism and paganism as pre-figurations of the Christian revelation, see Jean-François Courtine, “La place du judaïsme dans la ‘Philosophie de la révélation,’” in idem (ed.), *Les Cahiers d’Histoire de la Philosophie: Schelling* (Paris: Cerf, 2010), 431–455.

¹³ Schelling, *Offenbarung*, 280.

¹⁴ Schelling, *Offenbarung*, 284.

¹⁵ Brumlik, *Deutscher Geist*, 270.

kingdom of God,” and remarks that “meanwhile” – i. e. until the kingdom of God becomes a reality – Jews should be granted “the necessary human rights.”¹⁶

To conclude, whereas Jews had for centuries been associated with the past and the archaic, with stubborn legalism and lifeless literalism, we find in Schelling a thinker who instead sees in the Jewish people a link to the coming “kingdom of God,” a concept that in Schelling’s late philosophy symbolizes the vision of a future community of freedom, universality and compassion.¹⁷ The key to this vision, as I have indicated, Schelling seemed to find in the Jews’ unwillingness to become part of the history of states and empires – an idea that seven decades later would turn out to be decisive for a young Jewish scholar named Franz Rosenzweig.

3. Rosenzweig and the Legacy of Idealism

In a letter dated 5 February 1917 and addressed to his cousin Gertrude Oppenheim, Franz Rosenzweig relates a version of a famous rabbinic legend. In this version, a rabbi finds the prophet Elijah sitting by the entrance of a cave. Aware that Elijah according to the tradition is the precursor of the Messiah, the rabbi immediately exclaims: “Where is the Messiah?” Elijah then replies that the Messiah is inside the cave, whereby the rabbi rushes into the cave and indeed finds the Messiah sitting there. “When will you come, my Lord?” asks the rabbi. “Today,” retorts the Messiah. The exhilarated rabbi then leaves the cave and waits until dawn. When night has fallen and still no sign of the Messiah has been seen, the rabbi turns, disappointed, to Elijah: “The Messiah lied to me. He said he would come today.” Elijah then corrects him: “Today, if you hear my voice.”¹⁸

In the remaining part of the letter, Rosenzweig elaborates the rabbinic anecdote through a reflection on two different forms of Zionism; one that strives to make the Jewish people a nation among others, a people with a state and a national culture, and another built on the idea of a people that is “more than a people” (*mehr als ein Volk*), a people that corresponds to the “today” of the anecdote. Rosenzweig then explains that “sparks” of this messianic “today”

¹⁶ Schelling, *Offenbarung*, 285. The remark may have been a direct reply to a royal decree in 1841, announcing the cancellation of a policy allowing the Jews to integrate into the Prussian society, and the return to a policy based on separation and discrimination; see Brumlik, *Deutscher Geist*, 266–267.

¹⁷ I discuss this vision extensively in Jayne Svenungsson, *Diving History: Prophetism, Messianism and the Development of the Spirit*, trans. Stephen Donovan (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2016), ch. 3.

¹⁸ Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk. Gesammelte Schriften I. Briefe und Tagebücher, I, 1900–1918*, ed. Rachel Rosenzweig and Edith Rosenzweig-Scheinmann (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979), 345.

(“Funken” des messianischen “Heute”) certainly can be found in the first version of Zionism. But ultimately, he contends, this is about two fundamentally different understandings of the word “today” – on the one hand, today as merely the bridge to tomorrow ([ein] Heute, das nur die Brücke zum Morgen sein will), on the other, today as a springboard to eternity ([ein] Heute, das das Sprungbrett zur Ewigkeit ist).¹⁹

The letter is a fascinating document, since it captures in concentrated form the essential elements of the philosophy of history that Rosenzweig was elaborating by this time and that he would accomplish a couple of years later in his seminal work *The Star of Redemption*. Of particular interest, in this context, is the idea of the Jewish people as “more than a people,” not in the sense of being superior to other people, but in the sense of being called to bear witness of the messianic “today” of the anecdote, i. e. of the possibility of redemption at any moment. This idea recurs in *The Star of Redemption*, in the notion of the Jews as “the eternal people” (*das ewige Volk*), a people that stands apart from the violent history of the worldly empires and leads its life in accordance with a different temporality, defined by the prayers and holy festivals of the Jewish year.²⁰ In this emphasis of the Jews as a people apart, there is a strong ethical implication: the Jewish people’s belonging to a different, sacred temporality is not about turning the back on the world. Instead, it indicates that a special demand is placed on the Jews to anticipate in an exemplary way the kingdom of God foretold by the prophets.

From where did Rosenzweig get the inspiration to this idea of the Jews as a people with a special calling? Part of the answer, to be sure, lies in the inherited idea of the Jews as an elected people, an idea which can be traced all the way back to the Hebrew Bible, and which already in this original context had a strong ethical impulse.²¹ Another part of the answer, I wish to argue, lies in Rosenzweig’s heavy reliance on Schelling’s late philosophy by the time he wrote *The Star of Redemption*. Indeed, already in the introduction, where he places his philosophical venture in sharp contrast to Hegel’s absolute Idealism, Rosenzweig explicitly points out Schelling’s late philosophy as the orbit within which he is moving.²² However, it is above all in the first book of the third part, where he elaborates on the idea of the Jews as “the eternal people” that the echo of Schelling is resonating. As Micha Brumlik has remarked, it is possible to discern here

¹⁹ Rosenzweig, *Der Mensch und sein Werk*, 345.

²⁰ See Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. Barbara E. Galli (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 317–355. For a fuller account of Rosenzweig’s idea of “the eternal people,” see George Pattison, *Eternal God/Saving Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), ch. 9.

²¹ I elaborate this aspect in Svenungsson, *Divining History*, ch. 1, and in “Justice in the Prophetic Tradition,” *Eco-ethica*, vol. 6: *Ethics and Justice* (2017), 135–149.

²² Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 25.

an almost verbatim repetition of Schelling's idea of the Jews as a people that stands apart from the history of the states.²³ To exemplify, let me quote from the concluding paragraph of this section:

And this is why the true eternity of the eternal people must remain always foreign and annoying to the State and to world history. Against the hours of eternity, which the State in the times of world history carves with a sharp sword into the bark of the growing tree of time, the eternal people every year places untroubled and intact ring upon ring round the trunk of its eternal life.²⁴

When reading these lines, it is important to remember the historical circumstances in which Rosenzweig developed his reflections. It is not by accident that he discovered the subversive force of Schelling's critique of Hegel by the time of the First World War. In the years preceding the war, he had followed the courses of Friedrich Meinecke, one of the leading Idealist historians of the time and a prominent proponent of historicism. He had also begun working on a dissertation on Hegel and become captured by the sophisticated interweaving of history, rationality and the divine offered by German Idealism. However, when the war broke out in 1914, Rosenzweig – like so many others – experienced the collapse of an entire world, including, not least, the image of Europe as the beacon of civilization, progress and reason.²⁵

When Rosenzweig in 1920 eventually published his dissertation, and a year later, *The Star of Redemption*, his views had undergone a fundamental change. The warmongering nationalism of the 1910s had revealed to him the dangers inherent in historicism as well as in Hegel's philosophy of history. If history was regarded as a stage on which universal reason realized itself through the rise and fall of mighty nations, then anything could in principle be justified in the name of this higher logic of development. It is against this background that Rosenzweig turned to Schelling, but also to the core of his own Jewish legacy. Just as Schelling completed his "Philosophy of Revelation" by a vision of a kingdom of God always to come, so, too, Rosenzweig found in the messianic idea of the kingdom of God (*das Reich Gottes*) a radically other temporality which he set up

²³ Brumlik, *Deutscher Geist*, 271–272. On the influence of Schelling on Rosenzweig, see also Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik, "Philosophy of Revelation: Remarks on Schelling, Jaspers, and Rosenzweig," in Helmut Wautischer et al. (eds), *Philosophical Faith and the Future of Humanity* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2012), 147–157, and John R. Betz, "Schelling in Rosenzweigs Stern der Erlösung," *Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie*, 45:2 (2003), 208–226, and, with particular regard to the anti-statist motif, Petar Bojanic, "wäre er nicht mehr Staat". Schelling and Rosenzweig on the State and Beyond the State," in Gérard Bensussan et al. (eds), *L'héritage de Schelling: Interprétations aux XIXème et XXème siècles/Das Erbe Schellings: Interpretationen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 2015), 173–184.

²⁴ Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 354.

²⁵ For a thoughtful biographical account of these years, see Stéphane Mosès, *L'Ange de l'histoire: Rosenzweig, Benjamin, Scholem* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), ch. 2.

as a contrast against the violent course of world history. Rarely has this vision been more beautifully captured than in the following lines:

[The kingdom of God] is always futural – but futural it is always. It is always just as much present as it is futural. Once and for all, it is not yet there. It is coming eternally. Eternity is not a very long time, but a tomorrow that just as well could be today. Eternity is a future, which, without ceasing to be future, is nevertheless present. Eternity is a today that is conscious of being more than today.²⁶

The vicinity of Schelling and Rosenzweig's ideas of the kingdom of God would be another topic to explore. For the time being, and in conclusion of this essay, let me only once more draw attention to the complexity revealed by this odyssey from Protestant theology, via German Idealism, and on to early twentieth-century Jewish philosophy. In Rosenzweig, we find a Jewish scholar, who for a while considered seriously to convert to Protestant Christianity, but who instead, partly through his engagement with the Protestant philosopher Schelling, found his way back to a deepened understanding of the Jewish spiritual tradition. Moreover, through his engagement with Schelling, Rosenzweig managed to pick up an inherited anti-Jewish stereotype that had been used down the ages to denigrate Jews and deny them their rights – and eventually turn it into its opposite. The idea of the Jews as a people apart was turned by Rosenzweig into a forceful tool for a philosophical critique of determinist and totalitarian notions of history.

What this example shows, if anything, is how intertwined the many strands of critique, protest and reform are in the modern European intellectual heritage. The picture could be made even more complex, were we to take into account the Jewish-mystical undercurrents that in the first place influenced Schelling's reflections on the divine, and that may shed further light on the young Rosenzweig's sense of recognition when first confronted with the Romantic philosopher.²⁷ Hence, although popular history writing all too often falls prey to a dramaturgy that pits Christianity against Judaism, Protestantism against Catholicism, religion against secularity and so on, the historical reality beneath these projections turns out, at a closer examination, to be far more intricate. This is not to say – to refer back to Eskil Franck's appeal to Lutherans to become more critically aware of their own legacy – that we are over and done with the critical scrutiny of lingering supersessionism within both Protestantism and Christianity in general. But even here we need to remind ourselves of the com-

²⁶ Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 241 (trans. modified by the author).

²⁷ On the influence of Kabbalistic teachings on Schelling, see e. g. Christoph Schulte, "Zimzum bei Schelling," in Eveline Goodman-Thau, Gerd Mattenklott and Christoph Schulte (eds), *Kabbala und Romantik: Die Jüdische Mystik in Der Romantischen Geistesgeschichte* (Tübingen: de Gruyter, 1994), 97–118, and Wilhelm August Schulze, "Schelling und die Kabbala," *Judaica* XIII (1957), 65–99; 143–170; 210–232.

plexity, not least of how the most successful critique of anti-Jewish stereotypes within Christianity has often been prompted and inspired by ideals inherent to Christian theology itself – ideals that can ultimately be traced back to the prophetic strand of the Hebrew bible.²⁸

²⁸ Apart from the Protestant theologians mentioned at the outset of the essay (Krister Stendahl, Dorothee Sölle and Jürgen Moltmann), other names that deserve mentioning in this context are the Catholic theologians Johann Baptist Metz and Rosemary Radford Ruether; see especially Radford Ruether's *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974).

Immediate Certainty and the Morally Good

Luther, Kierkegaard and Cognitive Psychology

Jörg Disse

In this article, I consider the relationship between the notion of certainty and the notion of a form of life. I am not going to deal with the epistemological question of the nature of certainty, but with the problem of its function for an individual's orientation in life. More precisely, there are circumstances in which a feeling of certainty may become the basis for adopting a certain form of life. The forms of life I have in mind are those with a formal orientation towards the realisation of the (morally) good for its own sake.

The article proceeds in three steps. First, I consider Luther's certainty of salvation as a kind of inaugural (theological) reflection on what will be called immediate certainty as the basis for a form of life aiming at the realisation of the morally good for its own sake. Second, with reference to Kierkegaard's *Either-Or*, I then try to show that such an immediate certainty can also be considered as the basis of an ethical form of life without religious implications. With the help of contemporary cognitive psychology, I will finally propose an explanation of such a certainty as one that we experience because of our universal cognitive and conative constitution.

The three steps amount to a universalisation and naturalisation of Luther's certainty of salvation. My procedure is not meant to bereave it of its supernatural character; my intention is to show that there are foundations for such a certainty on a very general anthropological level. In a way, my article is meant as a justification of Luther's certainty of salvation by providing an anthropological foundation for it.¹

¹ I hope it will not be a source of irritation that such a justification is presented by a philosopher who is also a Roman Catholic theologian. Otto-Hermann Pesch, *Frei sein aus Gnade: Theologische Anthropologie* (Freiburg: Herder, 1983) has long since shown that in important respects the controversy between Protestants and Catholics on certainty of salvation is obsolete. My own approach is somewhat in line with the "Catholic" *gratia perfecit naturam*.

1. Luther's Certainty of Salvation

Certainty of salvation was, for Luther, one of the cornerstones of his opposition to the official teaching of the catholic church of his time. It is part of his affirmation of the self-sufficiency of faith for salvation, which means that the individual act of believing in one's being saved by God is the only thing necessary to be assured of one's salvation – there is no need for the church and its sacraments. Luther often refers to Mk 16:16: "He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."² The Gospel is the message of God's promise that whoever believes in Jesus Christ, and in the forgiveness of sins through him, will be forgiven. Whoever believes is driven by the Spirit of God, and as Paul writes in Rom 8:16, "it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God."

This belief, Luther says, is accompanied by certainty, and excludes doubt. For Luther, the reason for the exclusion of doubt is that such a belief does not have its basis in the believing subject itself but has it *extra nos*, i. e. in the Word of God of the Gospel.³ This certainty is not the result of a cognitive process but of a feeling of being personally touched by God's promise as something coming from outside, from a perfect, wholly reliable God and therefore as a certainty beyond doubt.⁴

Philosophically speaking, I would like to call Luther's certainty of salvation an immediate certainty. Even if for him its source is not the believing subject itself but its experience of being related to God, I conceive it as an inner certainty that is immediate because it is not the result of a process of reflection, the result of a conclusion based on arguments, or the result of a choice between A, B and C, where the reasons 1, 2 and 3 make me certain that A, for example, is the right choice. Here, we may introduce Plato's distinction between noetic and dianoetic thought. One could say that an immediate certainty is not the result of a dianoetic thought process, which proceeds by combining concepts in the form of propositions, but of an immediate noetic insight.⁵

² Cf. among others Martin Luther, *On Baptism*, in *Luther's Works*, American Edition, ed. John W. Doberstein and Helmut T. Lehman, vol. 51 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 183.

³ Cf. Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians 1535*, trans. Theodore Graebner (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1949), commentary of Gal 4:6: "No wonder that our doctrine is certified, because it does not rest in our own strength, our own conscience, our own feelings, our own person, our own works. It is built on a better foundation. It is built on the promises and truth of God." See also Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, in *Luther's Works*, American Edition, ed. Philip S. Watson and Helmut T. Lehman, vol. 33 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 289: "But now, since God has taken my salvation out of my hands into his, making it depend on his choice and not mine, and has promised to save me, not by my own work or exertion but by his grace and mercy, I am assured and certain both that he is faithful and will not lie to me."

⁴ Cf. Reinhard Schwarz, *Martin Luther: Lehrer der christlichen Religion*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 355: "Der Glaube schöpft seine volle Gewißheit aus dem Evangelium, dem höchstverläßlichen Wort Gottes."

⁵ Pol. 510 ff., 533.

In my view, Descartes's *cogito, sum* is also exemplary of such an immediate certainty. It is epistemic, it provides some knowledge: I know that I exist. But it is not a knowledge that is reached through reflection, through conclusions out of arguments. It is an intuitive knowledge. According to Descartes's definition of intuition in Rule 3.5 of the *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*,⁶ the certainty of the *cogito* is to be called an understanding of the attentive spirit that cannot be doubted. And Descartes calls it evident in a way that Anglo-Saxon analytic philosophy would not talk about evidence. By "evident," he refers to an understanding that has its source in the light of reason alone (*sola rationis luce nascitur*).⁷ It is an immediate understanding of reason on its own.

Luther's certainty is also epistemic: I know that I am saved, and this knowing is immediate. But contrary to Descartes, Luther's certainty of salvation – or certainty of faith, as one could also call it⁸ – is more than just a claim of knowledge; it inaugurates a whole way of life. It is a certainty that underlies a call to live in a particular way. Luther describes it very well in the second part of *The Freedom of a Christian*, when he is talking about the "outer man". The "inner man" (described in the first part) is "abundantly and sufficiently justified by faith inwardly, in his spirit, and so has all that he needs," but "yet he remains in this mortal life on earth. In this life he must control his own body and have dealings with men."⁹ This is the "outer man". Driven by his faith, he will live in such a way as to well-please God.¹⁰ More precisely, the relationship to God that causes the knowledge of being saved by a loving God makes one act according to God's love, makes one choose a way of life focused on acting in such a way. In explaining what he means by love of God, Luther concentrates on the question of "dealings with men". Love of God means to become "the servant of all,"¹¹ to "help, and in every way deal with his neighbor as he sees that God through Christ has dealt and still deals with him."¹² And when Luther further insists that the Christian ought not to act morally in order to secure his own salvation, but to "make your gifts freely and for no consideration, so that others may profit by them and fare well because of you and your goodness,"¹³ he lays down the principle of human action motivated by such a love: to do the good for its own sake. It is essential for my approach that Luther conceives certainty of faith as a motivation for doing the good for its own sake.

⁶ René Descartes, *Regulae ad directionem ingenii/Rules for the Direction of the Natural Intelligence*, ed. George Heffernan (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), regula 3.5.

⁷ Descartes, *Regulae*, regula 3.5.

⁸ Sven Grosse, "Heilsgewissheit des Glaubens: Die Entwicklung der Auffassungen des jungen Luther von der Gewissheit und Ungewissheit des Heils," *Lutherjahrbuch* 77 (2010): 54.

⁹ Martin Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian*, in *Luther's Works*, American Edition, ed. Harold J. Grimm and Helmut T. Lehmann, vol. 31 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 358.

¹⁰ Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian*, 359.

¹¹ Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian*, 358.

¹² Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian*, 366.

¹³ Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian*, 371.

If I may introduce Wittgensteinian terminology here, I would say: Luther's certainty is the basis of a particular *form of life*. Let me call it a form-of-life-certainty. A form of life, as I conceive it, consists of a number of beliefs and a given goal structure. For Luther, the central belief of the Christian form of life would be the belief in being saved by faith, whereas the goal structure culminates in the goal of pursuing goodness for its own sake. Luther's form-of-life-certainty is not a certainty in the way Wittgenstein understands the certainty of, for example, having two hands.¹⁴ The foundation of Luther's certainty is an inner experience: the experience of the ideal, redemptive love of God. It is this experience that triggers a feeling of certainty.

2. Kierkegaard's Ethical Stage

Luther's certainty of salvation is bound to a religious commitment. The experience triggering it is the experience of a transcendent Redeemer. I think it is possible to universalise Luther's certainty to one that does not (necessarily) imply any religious commitment. There is, one could say, a metaphysically more neutral certainty as a basis for a form of life orientated towards goodness for its own sake. In Søren Kierkegaard's theory of two stages, as developed in *Either-Or*, this becomes apparent.

In this work, Kierkegaard distinguishes between two stages of life. By stages of life he means forms of life that are hierarchically related one to another: an inferior esthetical and a superior ethical one. The two forms mainly differ in their goal structure, particularly in how they define what their respective highest goals are. For the estheticist, the highest purpose of life is to enjoy life. An individual has a number of possibilities of enjoyment and he will choose among them. Kierkegaard calls this an esthetical choice. He then distinguishes between different levels or sub-stages within the esthetical form of life. An estheticist may find the highest purpose of life by choosing an immediate goal, such as to become rich or to develop one's talent. On a higher level, he may pursue enjoyment wherever he can find it. On an even higher level, he may enjoy enjoyment or enjoy renunciation of enjoyment.

Still, I am not going to describe these sub-stages within the esthetical stage of life any further.¹⁵ My focus relies on the fact that the underlying feelings of the esthetical way of life are, for Kierkegaard, unrest and doubt because the individual has not yet become a self. Behind the esthetical form of life, there is no certainty whatsoever. On the contrary, it is characterised by an under-

¹⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969), entry no. 148.

¹⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, *Either-Or. Part II*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 180.

lying despair: “it is manifest that every esthetic view of life is despair, and that everyone who lives esthetically is in despair.”¹⁶ There is despair because human beings desire more than just different kinds of enjoyment: “nothing that is finite, not even the whole world, can satisfy the soul of a person.”¹⁷ The soul remains in a state of unrest because there is a desire to become a self and the esthetical individual has not yet *chosen* his own self, as Kierkegaard would put it. For becoming a self, the esthetical individual lacks, as we will see, a certainty similar to that of Luther.

What does Kierkegaard mean by a choice of one’s own self? He often refers to the self as the point of absolute or eternal validity within us,¹⁸ and many other times, he refers to it as just the absolute.¹⁹ Leaving out the metaphysical implications of this concept, absolute for him means that which is above the individual’s and the world’s finitude. The absolute within us is something different from our concrete determinations: our capacities, our inclinations, our passions, “influenced by this specific social milieu, as this specific product of a specific environment.”²⁰ In short, the absolute is the capacity to reason and decide on our goals. It is the rational self (or “rational soul”²¹ as it is called once in *Either-Or*), the abstract I of reasoning and deciding, that allows the individual (at least relatively speaking) to be free from concrete determinations: “there is something within him that in relation to everything else is absolute, something whereby he is who he is.”²²

To choose such an absolute self does not just mean to become conscious of this self, but to choose it in the sense of making the reasoning and decision-making agent within us the highest rule of our life. In a way, by absolute choice we choose the choosing of this abstract or absolute self. Moreover, the choosing of such an absolute self is a particular kind of choosing other than the esthetical choice between objects of enjoyment. One chooses a choosing for which the criterion of choice is not enjoyment.

Without explaining any further, Kierkegaard identifies absolute choice with the choice of good and evil: “only when I have absolutely chosen myself have I posited an absolute difference: namely, the difference between good and evil.”²³ Generally speaking, choice is always directed toward the good. Yet ethical choice, as Kierkegaard understands it, is different, because it makes of the individual a universal human being, or, better, a being that “expresses the universal in his

¹⁶ Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 192.

¹⁷ Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 203.

¹⁸ Cf. Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 210.

¹⁹ Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 213. In one place, he calls it the “soul” (Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 220).

²⁰ Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 251.

²¹ Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 222.

²² Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 192.

²³ Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 224.

life.”²⁴ In other words, being moved by the absolute consists of pursuing goals that pretend to be universal goods. It is to choose according to general laws formed by our reason, laws that are considered valuable independently of what is enjoyable for a particular individual at a given time.²⁵ And as choosing the universal good also means choosing it over against choosing evil, Kierkegaard can say: “when I choose the good, I choose *eo ipso* the choice between good and evil.”²⁶ In that sense, choosing oneself posits the difference between good and evil.

At the same time, absolute choice is the choice of choosing the universal good *for its own sake*. Kierkegaard expresses this by introducing the notion of duty. The ethical person does not seek to realise the universal good for the reason of enjoyment, but “places the meaning of life in living for the performance of one’s duties.”²⁷ What does it mean to do something because it is one’s duty? It means acting according to a moral law because reason tells us that it is good to do so; it is seeking to realise a universal good because reason tells us to do so. In that sense, the highest goal of the ethical is not enjoyment but a universal good achieved for its own sake. Kierkegaard insists that of course the ethical person wishes to be happy in what it chooses to do.²⁸ Nevertheless, the basic motivation for the ethical choice is not enjoyment. The esthetical is not banned from the ethical form of life; it comes back after having made the absolute choice, but only within the limits of a new highest goal. One may seek to enjoy, but only inasmuch as one’s enjoyment is indifferent to acting according to the absolute difference between good and evil. In that sense, to do something because it is one’s duty means to realise the universal good for its own sake.

We can summarise by saying that absolute choice is a decision to realise universal good for its own sake as the highest rule of one’s life. Addressing now the topic of certainty, we have to consider that, for Kierkegaard, absolute choice precedes the ethical form of life. Absolute choice is a decision for endorsing the ethical form of life, the formal decision to live in such a way as to realise universal goodness for its own sake. In *Either-Or*, this choice is accompanied by a certainty which is very similar to Luther’s certainty of salvation. It is most clearly expressed in the following quotation: “When the individual has grasped himself in his eternal validity [...] at the first moment, this fills him with an indescribable bliss and gives him an absolute security.”²⁹ The feeling of security triggered by absolute choice is mentioned several times in the text.³⁰ It is a feeling of certainty

²⁴ Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 256.

²⁵ Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 255.

²⁶ Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 219.

²⁷ Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 254.

²⁸ Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 252.

²⁹ Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 231.

³⁰ Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 254 f.

of having made the right choice. Kierkegaard compares this feeling with the soul resting confidently in the conviction of there being a providence.³¹ The ethical individual is not certain about salvation, but “rests with confident security in the assurance that his life is ethically structured, and therefore he does not torment himself and others with quibbling anxiety about this or that.”³² He is certain that his life is “ethically structured”. I would paraphrase this by saying that absolute choice makes us certain that to be oneself is to be ethically structured in the sense of choosing universal good as the highest rule for life. Absolute choice triggers a feeling of being certain of having achieved the highest possible form of life in choosing that which is ethical.

This certainty is a universalisation of Luther’s certainty inasmuch as it can be endorsed by any individual independently of any religious commitment. I don’t want to say that Kierkegaard’s ethical certainty could not be, at the same time, a religious certainty – indeed, maybe for Kierkegaard himself it is, which depends on how we interpret him – but, systematically speaking, it doesn’t need to be. Instead of an act of faith, we just have an ethical choice. And according to *Either-Or*, we are free to choose the ethical. It is something “every person can will if he so wills”³³ and the will “is within the person’s own power.”³⁴ As it is described here, absolute choice does not necessarily depend on divine grace.

3. Explanation by Cognitive Psychology

As a third step, I would like to suggest that, from a cognitive point of view, there is a general explanation for both feelings of certainty. From a universalisation of Luther’s certainty of faith, this leads me to its naturalisation. Why is the feeling of being saved or of grasping one’s self accompanied by a feeling of certainty? With reference to contemporary empirical psychology, I would like to argue that, in both cases, it may have to do with our general cognitive and conative constitution.³⁵

There seems to be a current consensus among empirical psychologists that the functioning of the brain/mind can be characterised by two different types of cognition. The Canadian psychologist Keith E. Stanovich calls them type 1 processing and type 2 processing. Most interesting for me is that, according to Stanovich, they implement two separable goal structures: type 1 processing

³¹ Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 257.

³² Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 257.

³³ Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 217.

³⁴ Kierkegaard, *Either-Or II*, 206.

³⁵ For more on cognitive and conative constitution in relationship to Kierkegaard see Jörg Disse, “The Two Process Model of Cognition and Kierkegaard’s Stages of Life,” *e-Journal Philosophie der Psychologie* 19 (2013).

serves the pursuit of goals that are in the interest of our genes and type 2 processing leads to goal satisfaction that is in the individual's interest.³⁶

Let me shortly characterise type 1 processing, even if it is not of much importance for us here. This kind of cognitive process is mainly automatic and unconscious, it is rapidly executed, it is mandatory when the triggering stimuli are encountered, and it is basically domain-specific: the different kinds of type 1 processing form independent mechanisms that respond to a limited array of domain-relevant stimuli in order to solve specific problems. Examples of type 1 processing are recognising faces, reading behavioural cues of others, recognising the presence of predators, or avoiding poisonous foods.³⁷ They are the product of a long-scale evolutionary adaptation, favouring the reproduction probability of the genes.³⁸ With Dawkins, Stanovich holds that, on this level of the functioning of organisms, the genes do not exist for the sake of the organisms but the organisms are mainly the means or vehicles for the survival of the genes.³⁹

Type 2 processing, on the other hand, relates to cognitive activity characterised by conscious awareness and executive control. Processing here is slow and domain-general: the processes can refer to all kinds of stimuli. It is our capacity of asserting and reasoning.⁴⁰ The key mechanisms are cognitive simulation and hypothetical thinking.⁴¹ Both depend on the operation of cognitive decoupling which allows us to distance ourselves from our primary representations triggered by real-world stimuli.⁴² They allow us to reason about alternative preferences,⁴³ to be critical about our own beliefs and desires,⁴⁴ and to manipulate the world.⁴⁵ Type 2 processing can override type 1 processing. In many cases, the interests of the genes and the vehicles coincide, but because of their capacity of type 2 processing, human beings can rebel against the selfish genes that drive them on the level of type 1 processing. We can, for example, choose not to procreate.

For Stanovich, the only conceivable highest goal of type 2 processing is the well-being or happiness of the individual or vehicle. And we ought to rebel against the interest of the genes because failing to do so would be harmful to the individual's well-being. We should use our type 2 processing to maximise our own happiness. Anything else would be a "thinking error," as Stanovich calls it.⁴⁶

³⁶ Keith E. Stanovich, *The Robot's Rebellion: Finding Meaning in the Age of Darwin* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 34.

³⁷ Stanovich, *Rebellion*, 40.

³⁸ Stanovich, *Rebellion*, 64.

³⁹ Stanovich, *Rebellion*, 5.

⁴⁰ Stanovich, *Rebellion*, 102.

⁴¹ Keith E. Stanovich, *Rationality and the Reflective Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 47f.

⁴² Stanovich, *Rationality*, 51.

⁴³ Stanovich, *Rationality*, 51.

⁴⁴ Stanovich, *Rationality*, 82.

⁴⁵ Stanovich, *Rationality*, 49.

⁴⁶ Stanovich, *Rationality*, 23.

In the last chapter of *The Robot's Rebellion*, his understanding of the human quest for maximising the individual's interest is rather elaborate.⁴⁷ Stanovich introduces Nozick's notion of symbolic utility – that we pursue values that are not directly connected to experienced utility. He also introduces Harry Frankfurt's notion of second-order desires, and he favours Nozick's idea of rational integration between first- and second-order desires, so that type 2 processing allows a reflective and critical evaluation of our desires. At one point, he even admits that ethical considerations could override vehicle well-being at times, particularly when the sacrifice to our well-being is minimal,⁴⁸ but he does not pursue this train of thought any further.

I basically adopt Stanovich's so called "two process theory," but I would like to modify it slightly with regards to the teleology of type 2 processing. In my view, reducing the goal structure of type 2 processing to the individual's interest underestimates the possibilities of the human mind. At the level of type 2 processing, I am therefore going to introduce a *mind's interest* alongside the individual's interest. Knowing and reasoning are based on the use of concepts, and concepts represent characteristics of objects which these objects have in common with other objects. In terms of our goal structure, this means that type 2 processing directs us to the general. There is, because of our cognitive constitution, a natural interest in the general. Furthermore, there is also a natural interest in proceeding from the less general to the more general – that is, to subsume statements under more general principles and finally to understand reality as such as a systematic whole. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant has called this the interest of reason.⁴⁹ I call it the mind's interest. It is not confined to theoretical knowledge but includes knowledge related to practical goal setting. We are interested in pursuing goods of the most universal kind. Feeding oneself is good, feeding one's family is better, but it would be best to feed every human being. This interest is an interest in the universal good for its own sake. The practical mind's interest in itself pursues the universal good for its own sake.

The existence of a mind's interest means that there is a natural desire or interest in knowing or reasoning and in relating this knowing or reasoning to our practical goal setting. Given its structure, the mind is interested in pursuing goods of the most universal kind. The desire for universal good for its own sake is a basic human desire because of the nature of type 2 processing, which feeds our desires with goals. Our brains have evolved in such a way that, for whatever evolutionary reason, there is a thinking mechanism within us that steers our desire towards realising the universal good for its own sake. We sacrifice our individual interest not only because there are inclinations within us which cause

⁴⁷ Stanovich, *Rebellion*, 207–75.

⁴⁸ Stanovich, *Rebellion*, 231.

⁴⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), B 365.

us to be driven by our genes, but also because of our mind's interest. And the structure of our mind is such that we would find it difficult to completely resist the mind's interest. It is probably because of this cognitive constitution that so few people use their type 2 processing solely for maximising their own happiness or for living esthetically, to say it with Kierkegaard. Being resolutely esthetical would be an uphill battle against our biological and psychological constitution as human beings.

What does this have to do with certainty? My proposal is that this conformity with our biological and psychological constitution is the basis for the certainty we may feel when we consciously adopt a form of life driven by the mind's interest, whether it is religious or only ethical. Therefore, I would say that it is type 2 processing, guided by the practical mind's interest, that is the foundation of Luther's faith and Kierkegaard's ethical form of life. More precisely, a feeling of certainty occurs because we feel that to follow the mind's interest is to conform with the highest potential we are capable of achieving as human beings. Life-form-certainty is a feeling of being in line with our highest conative and cognitive possibilities. Following the mind's interest, we feel being a self or even saved because we are naturally inclined to act in line with our highest conative and cognitive possibilities.

Of course, this proposal is an extension of Stanovich's theory from a first-person perspective. I have no empirical evidence in support for it. Yet in my view, there is no reason to reject a first-person explanation as long as there is not a third-person one contradicting it.⁵⁰ As I am unaware of the existence of any contradicting explanation, I maintain it to be plausible that the feeling of certainty described by Luther and Kierkegaard is the expression of a feeling of conformity with our highest conative and cognitive possibilities.

⁵⁰ For a more detailed explanation of this methodological choice, see Jörg Disse, *Desiderium: Eine Philosophie des Verlangens* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016), 23–42.

The Reformer in the Eyes of a Critic

Nietzsche's Perception and Presentation of Luther

Jan-Olav Henriksen

Nietzsche spreads comments and references to Luther throughout his oeuvre. The present article examines important strands in this material and asks to what extent we can get a coherent idea about Nietzsche's understanding of Luther from the material, or not. More specifically, does Nietzsche have any idea about the specific contributions of Luther to Western culture, or is Luther just one among several figures Nietzsche uses as part of his projection wall when he makes critical remarks about religion and Christianity? If at all, can this material tell us something about them both, Nietzsche and Luther?

Before I enter the presentation, there are two comments I want to make to understand the conditions for the presentation. The first is the one that shapes all Nietzsche scholarship, namely that because his works are mainly aphoristic, he, therefore, offers few lengthy arguments for any position he holds or claim he is making. The second remark relates to the content of the material analyzed; it is remarkable how much of it is shaped by establishing contrasts between different sites, positions, or movements, such as between Germany and Southern Europe, Renaissance and Reformation, Catholic and Lutheran, Reformation and Enlightenment. This observation is worth noting because such juxtapositions make what Nietzsche affirms more apparent, and identifies that towards which he is critical. Hence, the main analytical approach in the following is shaped by identification of the tension between affirmation and criticism.¹

¹ My emphasis on criticism in the following means that I do not present the views of the young Nietzsche on Luther and the Reformation, because this material is not related to philosophy of religion in any significant sense, and hence do not offer us much significant beyond the "common and arbitrary" descriptions. For this material, see Heinz Bluhm, "Das Lutherbild Des Jungen Nietzsche," *PMLA* 58:1 (1943), 264–288; the conclusion esp. 280, 287. Bluhm is the only scholar who has analyzed Nietzsche's relation to Luther in his oeuvre, but not from the point of view of philosophy of religion.

1. Praise for Luther and the Reformation

There are a few instances in which Nietzsche speaks positively of Luther's contributions. In *Morgenröte*,² under the heading *Luther der grosse Wohlthäter* [*Luther, the great benefactor*], Nietzsche sees Luther's most important result in how he contributed to the suspicion of the saints and the *vita contemplativa*. At this point, Nietzsche can be seen as siding with Charles Taylor³ in recognition of how the Reformation contributed to "the affirmation of ordinary life," as Taylor writes, by rejecting the contemplative way as the only legitimate mode of being a Christian. Furthermore, Nietzsche sees the results of Luther's early soul searching as contributing to a different mentality than the one provided by Catholic piety – and this contribution lies in the realization that Luther, along with every other Christian, is just as good (or bad) as are the saints. Nietzsche writes, "This was truly a rustic way of gaining one's case, but for the Germans of that period it was the only proper way. How edified they felt when they could read in their Lutheran catechism: 'Apart from the Ten Commandments there is no work which could find favour in the eyes of God – these much-boasted spiritual works of the saints are purely imaginary!'"⁴

There are some important elements of which to make note in this passage. First, there is here a tacit recognition of how the reformer places every human being on an equal stand and thereby contributes to the development of a more democratic Europe. Second, this very trait is then also one of the rare cases in which Nietzsche does not place his ideas about nobility and different classes in a polemic against the vulgar crowd. Third, there is no trace of him being ironic here; instead, here is recognition of Luther as a critic of religious sanctimoniousness and hypocrisy, and as such, Luther is much in accordance with Nietzsche's own concerns.

Nietzsche can also recognize how the Reformation and Luther contributed to the positive cultural development of Germany. He points to how the sermons on the pulpit were the only instances in which one could find some artistic eloquence and in which it "was really [the] only [...] form of public speaking which came close to being artistic." Because the preachers were conscious of the impact of language ("understood what a syllable or what a word weighs, how a sentence strikes, leaps, falls, runs, and ends"), he was attentive to how the words

² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Morgenröthe* 88, in *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*, Vol. 2 [KSA 2], ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1999), 82 f. In most cases, the English translations in the following are based on the internet source to Nietzsche's works at www.lexido.com, and then occasionally modified by the author, based on the German original.

³ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

⁴ Nietzsche, *Morgenröthe* 88, KSA 2, 82 f.

were to be used.⁵ Nietzsche psychologizes this capacity by pointing to how it has to do with the pastor's often-bad conscience, but this explanation does not level out his recognition of the cultural quality of the effort.

In the same section, though, he also points to Luther's contribution to the German language through his work with a German translation of the Bible. He can call it a "masterpiece" by the greatest master in preaching, and it is clear that it is Luther he has in mind. Luther's translation is the best German book ever published up until Nietzsche's times. Nietzsche could therefore also say that, "In comparison with Luther's Bible, almost everything else is mere literature – something that did not grow in Germany and hence also did not grow and does not grow into German hearts, as the Bible has."⁶

Given how much Nietzsche directs his criticism against pastoral asceticism in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, it is nevertheless striking that he gives Luther credit for his affirmation of sensuality – also in contrast to what he holds is contrary to many of Luther's (and Nietzsche's!) countrymen. "Perhaps Luther's greatest merit lies just in the fact of his having had the courage of his sensuality (it used to be called, prettily enough, 'evangelical freedom')."⁷

So far, then, we see how the affirmation of ordinary life, including sensuality, as well as Nietzsche's appreciation for the artistic element in language, opens up a positive affirmation of elements articulated by Luther in the Reformation. But also, when it comes to more distinct theologically related topics, Nietzsche could find elements worthy of positive recognition. On a more negative note, at least from the point of view of theological anthropology, he could identify the love of power as the demon in humanity. This is a profound observation that may run deep in theological terms, because it places humankind in a situation where it wants to be like God. Writes Nietzsche:

You may give men everything possible – health, food, shelter, enjoyment – but they are and remain unhappy and capricious, for the demon waits and waits; and must be satisfied. Let everything else be taken away from men, and let this demon be satisfied, and then they will nearly be happy – as happy as men and demons can be; but why do I repeat this? Luther has already said it, and better than I have done, in the verses:

'And though they take our life,
Goods, honour, children, wife,
Yet is their profit small,
These things shall vanish all,
The Kingdom it remaineth.'
The Kingdom! there it is again!⁸

⁵ Nietzsche, *Jenseits Gut und Böse* 247, KSA 5, 191.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral III*, 2, KSA 5, 340.

⁸ Nietzsche, *Morgenröthe* 262, KSA 3, 209.

As long as humans have power, they are content; this is the message in these remarks. Or, to rephrase, the reformer is depicted here as one who sides with Nietzsche in pointing out that it is the will to power that is the driving force in every human being, including the pious ones.⁹

Against the backdrop of the above, one could easily get the impression that Nietzsche is very much on the side of the Reformer when it comes to an understanding of central topics related to the human existence and recognizing his positive contribution to European and German culture. However, such would be a very one-sided and too-rash conclusion. The following sections will complicate the picture.

2. Scorn for Luther and the Reformation

Nietzsche remarks on the origins of the Reformation that it is no wonder that it originated in Germany, because in Germany, the corruption was not so widespread as in other parts of Europe. In this context, he could also praise the Germans for their Christianity. However, although it emerged as a protest against corruption, the Reformation brought about something of which Nietzsche did not approve. "Comparatively speaking, no people were ever more Christian than the Germans at the time of Luther; their Christian culture was just about to burst into bloom with a hundred-fold splendour, one night only was still lacking, but that night brought the storm which put an end to all."¹⁰ What the Reformation ended was the flourishing German culture, understood as the high culture. Vulgar culture entered. How it did so, Nietzsche spells out in a manifold of ways.

"The Conditions for God. 'God himself cannot subsist without wise men,' said Luther, and with good reason; but 'God can still less subsist without unwise men,' good Luther did not say that!"¹¹ When Nietzsche writes this, he places belief in God as something that is dependent upon the lack of wisdom, thereby identifying such belief in ignorance and stupidity. This position, which may develop into forms of delusion as well, stands in opposition to honesty. Nietzsche, therefore, sees honesty as one of the elements against which Luther defends himself. In an aphorism in *Morgenröte*,¹² he accuses Luther's position of being in opposition to both truth and honesty. We note here, then, that this construction affirms wisdom, honesty, and truth against the reformer's position, of which Nietzsche here appears sharply critical. He nuances his position slightly, though, by stating that there are fewer cases in which Luther defends himself

⁹ Cf. for this, Heinz Bluhm, "Nietzsche's View of Luther and the Reformation in *Morgenröte* and *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*," *PMLA* 68:1 (1953), 111–127; 123.

¹⁰ Nietzsche *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* 148, KSA 3, 492 f.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 129, KSA 3, 484.

¹² Nietzsche, *Morgenröte* 5, 511, KSA 3, 298.

against truth than against honesty – a statement that nevertheless contributes to defaming the reformer.

Issues regarding truth are also present in Nietzsche's later writings, in which he addresses Luther, as an Anti-Christ. In this context, Nietzsche rejects the idea that martyrs were supporting the truth, or that what they suffered had anything to do with truth at all. He sees in the martyr a "low [...] grade of intellectual honesty and such insensibility to the problem of 'truth,' that it is never necessary to refute him. The truth is not something that one man has, and another man has not: at best, only peasants, or peasant-apostles like Luther, can think of truth in any such way."¹³ Nietzsche idealizes the search for truth by making it hard to access, and requiring a type of intellectual honesty he does not find in the Reformer and his approach to truth. "'Truth,' as the word is understood by every prophet, every sectarian, every free-thinker, every Socialist and every churchman, is simply a complete proof that not even a beginning has been made in the intellectual discipline and self-control that are necessary to the unearthing of even the smallest truth."¹⁴

Nietzsche also polemicizes against Luther's rather pragmatic way of arguing theologically, which, according to Nietzsche, means that he also occasionally contradicts himself – a point that further underscores the lack of honesty and integrity suggested above in the Reformer: His shifting positions make it hard to find a firm basis for faith and truth. In Nietzsche's eyes, the Reformation therefore both supports and creates insecurity about freedom of thought and spirit.

The above elements also can be read as a backdrop for Nietzsche's placement of the Reformation within German culture in general. He sees in the Protestant type of religiosity a lack of the southern delicatessa he finds in other parts of Europe. The Protestant passion for God is both pushy and peasant-like. By contrasting the vulgar against religious delicacy, Nietzsche indirectly suggests that there may be more noble ways of displaying religiosity, but he does not develop them. Instead, he lists examples of how Augustine "lacks, in an offensive way, all nobility of gestures and desires," or how it comes to the fore in "some feminine tenderness and desire in it which pushes itself bashfully and ignorantly towards an *unio mystica et physica*, as with Madame de Guyon."¹⁵

3. Critical Remarks on Lutheran Theological Positions and Attitudes

Moving towards more substantial theological elements in the Reformation, Nietzsche addresses the relation between faith and works in a way that enables him to develop a critical approach to the basis for the Reformation in general.

¹³ Nietzsche, Anti-Christ 53, KSA 6, 234.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Nietzsche, *Jenseits Gut und Böse* 50, KSA 5, 70 f.

Nietzsche's argument here can be read as being based on a pragmatist position, which is not all that surprising, given how later scholars have identified a pragmatist approach in his writings.

Works and Faith. – Protestant teachers are still spreading the fundamental error that faith only is of consequence and that works must follow naturally upon faith. This doctrine is certainly not true, but it is so seductive in appearance that it has succeeded in fascinating quite other intellects than that of Luther (e. g., the minds of Socrates and Plato): though the plain evidence and experience of our daily life prove the contrary. The most assured knowledge and faith can give us neither the strength nor the dexterity required for action, nor the practice in that subtle and complicated mechanism which is a prerequisite for anything to be changed from an idea into action. Then, I say, let us first and foremost have works! And this means practice! Practice! Practice! The necessary faith will come later – be certain of that!¹⁶

The primacy of works and practice sets Nietzsche in sharp opposition to the Reformation insistence on faith before works. Nietzsche also seems strongly opposed to the notion of grace as it is expressed in the Reformation. Bluhm writes that, "Nietzsche was utterly opposed to the idea of grace. This attitude is, of course, consistent with his final philosophy. His conception of man was that of a self-sufficient, self-determining individual, who is definitely and irrevocably committed to running his own life."¹⁷ Although it can be argued that a theological and philosophical juxtaposition of the notions of faith and grace on the one hand, and works on the other hand, need not imply that works or practice must be subsequent to faith in temporal terms from a theological point of view; this order seems necessary. From a philosophical point of view, however, there are reasons to claim that practice is prior to faith, temporarily speaking, and that therefore, practice and the employment of works within the context of justification is what makes it possible to understand faith in the Gospel as a liberation from works. Nietzsche appears in the quote above as a perceptive theologian when it comes to the phenomenological basis for the conditions of faith and works in a theological context.

At an even deeper level, and now being a psychologist of religion as much as a philosopher, Nietzsche also addresses Paul's understanding of the law. It is relevant here, as his treatment of it points to a central element in the Reformation. Nietzsche does not see "the flesh" but the law as the problematic element that led to the trespassing of the law time and again. In stating this, Nietzsche sides with Paul in identifying the law's psychological effect on the believer, creating internal tension in him. He (Nietzsche) sees the same dynamics at work in Luther:

Luther must have experienced similar feelings, when, in his cloister, he endeavoured to become the ideal man of his imagination; and, as Luther one day began to hate the

¹⁶ Nietzsche, *Morgenröthe* 22, KSA 3, 34.

¹⁷ Heinz Bluhm, "Nietzsche's Final View of Luther and the Reformation," *PMLA* 71:1 (1956), 75–83; 77.

ecclesiastical ideal, and the pope, and the saints, and the whole clergy, with a hatred which was all the more deadly as he could not avow it even to himself, an analogous feeling took possession of St. Paul.¹⁸

Luther and Paul, therefore, share in a similar tension when it comes to the realization of their inability to fulfill the law. Nietzsche then sees their identification of the gospel as the way to overcome their own psychological problems.¹⁹

We find a similar treatment of the psychological background of Luther's position in other texts as well, especially in *Anti-Christ*, where Nietzsche outright writes that the position as a Christian "is simply a psychological self-delusion. Closely examined, it appears that, despite all his 'faith,' he has been ruled only by his instincts – and what instincts! – In all ages – for example, in the case of Luther – 'faith' has been no more than a cloak, a pretense, a curtain behind which the instincts have played their game – shrewd blindness to the domination of certain of the instincts ..."²⁰ The main notion in this quote is "cloak," I argue. Faith is something that hides the self from reality and implies a rejection of realities as they are, by hiding the real, psychological instincts that generate it.

Thus, Nietzsche's rejection of Christianity, also in Luther's mode, comes to the fore. He counters the position he criticizes thus with an affirmation of skepticism, for which he also provides psychological arguments.²¹ Against those with firm and fixed convictions, he idealizes the skeptic. "A mind that aspires to great things, and that wills the means thereto, is necessarily skeptical. Freedom from any sort of conviction belongs to strength, and to an independent point of view." Hence, the skeptic is the one who can remain independent, even from his own conviction, when he no longer needs it.

Contrary to the skeptic, the human who needs faith has renounced on his independence: "The 'believer' does not belong to himself; he can only be a means to an end; he must be used up; he needs someone to use him up. His instinct gives the highest honors to an ethic of self-effacement; he is prompted to embrace it by everything: his prudence, his experience, his vanity." Therefore, Nietzsche also sees the believer as one who does not have a free conscience. Here surfaces again a point already indicated, namely that faith and personal integrity are in opposition regarding truth, according to Nietzsche. "The believer is not free to answer the question, 'true' or 'not true,' according to the dictates of his conscience: integrity on this point would work his instant downfall. The pathological limitations of his vision turn the man of convictions into a fanatic – Savonarola, Luther, Rousseau, Robespierre, Saint-Simon – these types stand in opposition to the strong, emancipated spirit."²²

¹⁸ Nietzsche, *Morgenröthe* 68, KSA 3, 66.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Nietzsche, *Anti-Christ* 39, KSA 6, 212.

²¹ For the following, see *Anti-Christ* 54, KSA 6, 237.

²² Ibid.

As we can see clearly in the last quote, in much of Nietzsche's writings about Luther, he compares the reformer to other figures. For example, he compares "the deep, gentle spirit of Contarini" at the Regensburg disputation²³ to "Luther's hard head, full of suspicions and strange misgivings," which accordingly, showed resistance against him. At this point, Nietzsche also suggests that because "justification by grace appeared to him his greatest motto and discovery," Luther "did not believe the phrase in the mouth of Italians; whereas, in point of fact, as is well known, they had invented it much earlier and spread it throughout Italy in deep silence."²⁴ This psychologizing with regard to the interpretation of Luther runs through much of Nietzsche's comments about him.

Another historical figure that Nietzsche juxtaposes with Luther is Kant. Not only do they share the same "German pessimism,"²⁵ but they also "wish to see idealized in their morals their sincere instinct for obedience. Man must have something which he can implicitly obey: this is a German sentiment, a German deduction; it is the basis of all German moral teaching."²⁶ Nietzsche continues:

Submission, obedience, whether public or private: such is German virtue. Long before Kant set forth his doctrine of the Categorical Imperative, Luther, actuated by the same impulse, said that there surely must be a being in whom man could trust implicitly – it was his proof of the existence of God; it was his wish, coarser and more popular than that of Kant, that people should implicitly obey a person and not an idea, and Kant also finally took his roundabout route through morals merely that he might secure obedience for the person. This is indeed the worship of the German, the more so as there is now less worship left in his religion.²⁷

Furthermore, according to Nietzsche in *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* 358,²⁸ "Luther was badly endowed"; because he was "fatally short-sighted, superficial and imprudent," and he "lacked all the hereditary qualities of a ruling caste and all the instincts for power." Consequently, his intention to restore the Church "became involuntarily and unconsciously the commencement of a work of destruction." Why? "He gave the sacred books into the hands of everyone, they thereby got at last into the hands of the philologists, that is to say, the annihilators of every belief based upon books." Furthermore,

He demolished the conception of "the Church" in that he repudiated the belief in the inspiration of the Councils" and "he gave back to the priest sexual intercourse" – a fact that worked against the reverence that the people (and above all the women) had for him. "After Luther had given a wife to the priest, he had to take from him auricular confes-

²³ On these matters from a more historical angle, see Heinz Bluhm, "Nietzsche's Idea of Luther in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*," *PMLA* 65, no. 6 (1950), 1061–1062.

²⁴ Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* II, 226, KSA 2, 481.

²⁵ See Nietzsche, "Vorrede" in *Morgenröthe*, KSA 3, 14–15.

²⁶ Nietzsche, *Morgenröthe* 207, KSA 3, 188.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Nietzsche, *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* 358, KSA 3, 602–605.

sion; that was psychologically right: but thereby he practically did away with the Christian priest himself, whose most profound utility has ever consisted of his being a sacred ear, a silent well, and a grave for secrets.²⁹

In several places Nietzsche suggests that Luther cannot live up to the priestly ideals and his consequent “vengeful instincts of an unsuccessful priest in him” is allegedly the source of the Reformation he initiated. Especially problematic for Nietzsche is the rebellion against the Renaissance in Rome:

Instead of grasping, with profound thanksgiving, the miracle that had taken place: the conquest of Christianity at its capital – instead of this, his hatred was stimulated by the spectacle. A religious man thinks only of himself. – Luther saw only the depravity of the papacy at the very moment when the opposite was becoming apparent: the old corruption, the peccatum originale, Christianity itself, no longer occupied the papal chair! Instead, there was life! Instead, there was the triumph of life! Instead, there was a great yea to all lofty, beautiful and daring things! ... And Luther restored the church: he attacked it ... The Renaissance – an event without meaning, a great futility!³⁰

Thus, in Luther Nietzsche sees the end of all Renaissance ideals. The Reformation was not a fruit of the Renaissance, but the instrument to stop it and impede its positive consequences.

4. The Reformation as an Epoch between Renaissance and Enlightenment

Nietzsche often juxtaposes the two movements of Reformation and renaissance. He also, as should be apparent from the analysis above, sees Luther as an obstacle to the Enlightenment³¹ and as representing the opposite of all the qualities of the Renaissance period.³² In an expanded aphorism, he develops the contrast in a way that also highlights his understanding of the cultural condition for the Reformation and the difference between Italy and Germany:

The Italian Renaissance contained within itself all the positive forces to which we owe modern culture: namely, liberation of thought, disdain for authority, the triumph of education over the arrogance of lineage, enthusiasm for science and men’s scientific past, the unshackling of the individual, an ardor for veracity and aversion to appearance and mere effect (which ardor blazed forth in a whole abundance of artistic natures who, with the highest moral purity, demanded perfection in their works and nothing but perfection). Yes, the Renaissance had positive forces which up to now have not yet again become so

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Nietzsche, *Anti-Christ* 61, KSA 6, 250 f.

³¹ Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* 237, KSA 2, 200, cf. 199.

³² Bluhm comments aptly that to the “glowing tribute to the spirit of the Renaissance corresponds an equally vehement attack on the Reformation.” See Bluhm, “Nietzsche’s Idea of Luther in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*,” 1056.

powerful in our modern culture. Despite all its flaws and vices, it was the Golden Age of this millennium.³³

Given his remarks on how the Reformation originated out of corruption in the south, this idealization of the Italian culture contributes with significant nuances. However, it also provides a contrast to what he is critical of in the Reformation. Here, we see clearly how affirmation and criticism go hand in hand:

By contrast, the German Reformation stands out as an energetic protest of backward minds who had not yet had their till of the medieval world-view and perceived the signs of its dissolution – the extraordinary shallowness and externalization of religious life – not with appropriate rejoicing, but with deep displeasure.³⁴

Accordingly, the success of the Reformation is, in Nietzsche's eyes, due to cultural and political condition, and he is not much attentive to theological and ecclesial conditions. His idea of the "backward German character" makes him rely more on the political conditions.

The fact that Luther survived at that time, and that his protest gathered strength, lay in the coincidence of an extraordinary political configuration: the Emperor protected him in order to use his innovation to apply pressure against the Pope, and likewise the Pope secretly favored him, in order to use the imperial Protestant princes as a counterweight against the Emperor. Without this strange concert of intent, Luther would have been burned like Huss, and the dawn of the Enlightenment would have risen a bit earlier, perhaps, and with a splendor more beautiful than we can now imagine.³⁵

Nietzsche can therefore also say that the fact that "Luther's Reformation succeeded in the north, is a sign that the north had remained backward in comparison with the south of Europe."³⁶

5. Conclusion

The harsh criticism notwithstanding, it is striking how many different aspects of Luther and the Reformation appear in Nietzsche's optic. His contextualization of the Reformation in national (German vs. the South [Italian]) terms, as well as in cultural (Renaissance vs. Reformation) and psychological or mentality-defined terms (free spirits, openness, liberality vs. obedience, vengeance) offers a nuanced picture, whereas his well-known criticism of the Christian religion in general becomes more nuanced and presents us with a better understanding of how the critic Nietzsche views the reformer Luther. Nietzsche thus acknowledges the specific contributions of Luther to Western culture, and therefore, he is not only a

³³ Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* 1, 237, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, Vol. 2, 199.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Nietzsche, *Fröhliche Wissenschaft* 149, KSA 3, 493.

figure that Nietzsche uses as a projection wall when he makes critical remarks about religion and Christianity. Accordingly, the material I have presented tells us something about how both Nietzsche and theologian Luther appear in the eyes of the philosopher. Even though the previous analysis has not added much in terms of new philosophical insights, there may nevertheless still be food for thought in some of his criticism with regard to how we can see the Reformation as having had an impact on the philosophical culture of the Western civilization.

III. Reformation, Phenomenology and Metaphysics

Continuing the Discontinuity

Luther, Badiou and the Reformation

Rasmus Nagel

1. The Reformation between Continuity and Discontinuity

The name “Reformation” already indicates referentiality: Reformation – of what? Historians like to use “Reformation” as a term with capital R, denoting an epochal change, so the question of how the Reformation relates to the earlier traditions (the traditions it was supposed to reform) is an issue that defines the very meaning of the term. On the one hand, some church historians emphasize the epoch-making and radical change character of the Reformation, especially regarding the participation of laypeople and the new emerging public sphere. Thomas Kaufmann has recently even gone a step further and describes the reformer’s breakaway from the Roman church as “conversion,” like a change from one religion to another.¹ On the other hand, the last decades of historical research have increasingly pointed out the continuities between the reformers and medieval thought. Volker Leppin, for instance, portrays Martin Luther in his latest book *Strange Reformation [Die fremde Reformation]* as a man deeply rooted in the traditions of medieval mysticism.² Thus, the general question at stake is: How much of a breakthrough was the Reformation? How to systematically grasp the relation between the Reformation and the previous traditions? While it is impossible to go into the necessarily associated historical details here, I want to propose a philosophical tool that I think is helpful to think the relation between the Reformation and the Roman Church as a *continuation of discontinuity*. My hypothesis is that Kaufmann is right – but to Leppin’s terms. The Reformation was indeed a radical break but one that stands in continuity with previous traditions. In drawing on certain concepts of medieval mysticism, Luther actualized a critical potential that was already there in Catholic tradition. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer noted: After Christianity had become state religion of

¹ Cf. Thomas Kaufmann, “Reformatoren als Konvertiten,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 114:2 (2017), 149–176.

² Volker Leppin, *Die fremde Reformation. Luthers mystische Wurzeln* (München: C. H. Beck, 2016).

the western world, the critical impulse of Christian faith vis-à-vis the world was preserved within the monasteries as a way of life for the few and thereby particularized. In Bonhoeffer's view, Luther's criticism of the church did not amount to a secularization of religion but rather quite the opposite: The Christian critique of the "world" became something that applied now to every Christian. The monastic counter-culture was universalized. To put it in formal terms: The following paper proposes the idea that Luther's theology performed a paradigm change from what I call the universal-particular paradigm to the paradigm of universal singularity. These concepts are mainly based on the philosophy of Alain Badiou, so before coming back to the topic of the Reformation, I will briefly sketch some of Badiou's basic ideas.

2. Badiou and Universal Singularity

The relation between the universal and the particular, and similar (but not identical) issues like the relation between genus and species or the whole and its parts, are philosophical classics. The arguably most influential model of this relationship is the Porphyrian Tree, an encyclopedic way of classifying phenomena intensionally and extensionally – as, for instance, in biological taxonomy.³ The particular species are defined by their respective differences from each other and by their belonging to the common genus. Obviously, in this model universality and particularity are relational concepts since their meanings depend on each other. Something is particular because of its difference from another particular *against the backdrop* of a common system, which the particular always presupposes. Without this universal background, there would be nothing particular. Thus, it is appropriate to speak about the encyclopedic model as a *universal-particular complex* or *paradigm*, since it is a certain way of thinking about the universal as differentiated into a variety of particulars.

Alain Badiou is known as a staunch defender of universality, for which he employs many sources, among them St. Paul, to whom he ascribes "The Foundation of Universalism."⁴ What is often overlooked, however, is that while Badiou sets his concept of universality certainly in contrast to and against particularity, he does *not* develop it within the encyclopedic model. For quite some time now, postmodern theories have criticized universal claims by exposing their particu-

³ Cf. Paul Michel, "Verzweigungen, geschweifte Klammern, Dezimalstellen. Potenz und Grenzen des taxonomischen Ordnungssystems von Platon über Theodor Zwinger bis Melvil Dewey," in *Allgemeinwissen und Gesellschaft. Akten des Internationalen Kongresses über Wissenstransfer und Enzyklopädische Ordnungssysteme, vom 18. bis 21. September 2003 in Prangins*, ed. Paul Michel, Madeleine Herren, and Martin Rüesch (Aachen: Shaker, 2007), 106–111.

⁴ Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul. The Foundation of Universalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

lar origins and contextual conditions. In this view, universality appears just to be an illegitimate form of particularity that problematically claims to represent the whole *pars pro toto*. Basically, Badiou agrees to this criticism: “There is no possible universal sublation of particularity as such,” he writes.⁵ However, Badiou disagrees to the conclusion often drawn from this today, “that the only genuinely universal prescription consists in respecting particularities.”⁶ Instead, he introduces a third term: the singular. Two historical usages of the term have to be distinguished from Badiou’s idea of singularity. Many thinkers, like Thomas Aquinas, used the term “singular” simply instead of “particular” while fundamentally subscribing to the Porphyrian model.⁷ Other philosophers, most notably Hegel, employed singularity as a third term besides universality and particularity.⁸ However, for Hegel, the singular represents a further conceptual concretization or unfolding of what is already potentially there in the contradiction between the universal and the particular, so that the terms play mediating roles: the nation mediating the subject to the idea of the common good – or the Roman church mediating the believer to God.

Badiou, by contrast, does not integrate singularity into the encyclopedic system. The singular is not a sub-part of the particular or another part amongst parts but, in the words of Jacques Rancière, the “part-of-no-part”: that which cannot be represented within a certain encyclopedic order, but which is nevertheless present in it. As a matter of principle, for Badiou, the sets of what is present and of what is represented are never coextensive, and the singular is the symptomal point in a system that reveals its “representative lack,” both its failure to represent all which is present in it *and* its representative capability to represent the lack as such. Thus, the representative value of the singular does not amount to a further particular content but to the universal itself.⁹ Badiou’s singularity is a conceptual “shortcut” to the universal that no longer requires the mediation of certain particular contexts.

The idea of singularity is closely connected to Badiou’s concept of truth. In his view, truth is not so much something that can be stated propositionally by a subject but rather an event that constitutes its subject. (Thus, Badiou’s subject is not

⁵ Alain Badiou, “Eight Theses on the Universal,” in *Theoretical Writings*, trans. Ray Brassier and Alberto Toscano (London, NY: Continuum, 2004), 144.

⁶ Badiou, “Eight Theses,” 144.

⁷ Cf. Thomas Aquinas, STh I, q. 85, art. 3 (Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas* [= STh], trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 2nd ed. [London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1920]).

⁸ Cf. Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), para. 1323. “Das Einzelne” is sometimes also translated as “the individual”.

⁹ Cf. Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement. Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 9: “it is through the existence of this part of those who have no part, of *this nothing that is all*, that the community exists as a political community [...]” Italics R. N.

necessarily identical with an individual: A subject can include many individuals and not every individual is a subject.) While an event of truth occurs always within a given order, the event itself is extraordinary and incommensurable to the order:

[A truth] is thus an *immanent break*. ‘Immanent’ because a truth proceeds *in* the situation, and nowhere else – there is no heaven of truths. ‘Break’ because what enables the truth-process – the event – meant nothing according to the prevailing language and established knowledge of the situation.¹⁰

Thus, it is impossible to derive truth from knowledge, since the latter always represents what is accepted within a certain order.¹¹ This is related to Badiou’s statement that the particular can never be elevated into the universal. Instead, truth occurs through the singular, what Badiou calls the “site of an event,” a place that is present within the order but not represented by it.¹² The consequence of this is that an event appears as a rupture within being and creates a subject that is alienated from its former conditions or, to be more precise, a subject that now sees itself and the world in a new way according to the event of truth. Thus, the proper subjective stance towards a truth is a “fidelity to the event,” to remain faithful to the rupture and the way it challenged the given order of being, or in other words: to continue the evental discontinuity.

Badiou elaborates his conception of universal singularity engaging St. Paul. The truth event that constitutes Paul’s theology is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Although the decisive atheist Badiou sees this event as a “fable” with no serious truth value, he nevertheless recognizes the formal structure of an event in it, particularly in its universality.¹³ For Badiou, the Pauline foundation of universality is best expressed in Gal 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”¹⁴ The particular identities bear no truth value in themselves but have to be rearranged in the light of the singularity of Christ’s resurrection, a rupture that disrupts the order of social arrangements. Universality is no longer mediated

¹⁰ Alain Badiou, *Ethics. An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (London/New York: Verso, 2001), 42f, italics orig. More in detail: see Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London/New York: Continuum, 2005), 178–183. This is not equivalent with Bernhard Waldenfels’ distinction between ‘extraordinary’ and ‘intraordinary’ events. For Waldenfels, an intraordinary event would have a stabilizing and integrating effect on the order, whereas Badiou’s truth-event is immanent but extraordinary. Cf. Bernhard Waldenfels, “Die Macht der Ereignisse,” in *Ereignis auf Französisch. Von Bergson bis Deleuze*, ed. Marc Rölli (München: Fink, 2004), 449.

¹¹ “Knowledge” stands in close relation to what Badiou calls the “encyclopedia of a situation.” Cf. Badiou, *Being and Event*, 506.

¹² Cf. the overview in Badiou, *Being and Event*, 102.

¹³ Cf. Badiou, *Saint Paul*, 4.

¹⁴ There is no space here to spell this out in detail, but this idea of continuing discontinuity could be applied to Paul’s relationship to the Jewish tradition as well.

by a certain particular group or identity but by a singular event that concerns everyone, insofar it cannot be represented within the given situation. This results in a form of subjectivity that is no longer defined by belonging, adherence, social or economic conditions but by its fidelity to the eventual rupture and its consequences for how the subject relates to God, the world and itself.

The most radical (and much less romantic) example in Protestant theology for this shortcut of universal singularity is, of course, what Søren Kierkegaard called in *Fear and Trembling* the “teleological suspension of the ethical.”¹⁵ While the ethical stands for universality (understood in the universal-particular paradigm), Abraham’s (attempted) sacrifice of Isaac is an act beyond any mediation. The direct confrontation of Abraham with God’s command to kill Isaac is thus the extreme case of singularity.

As the individual [Abraham] became higher than the universal. This is the paradox which does not permit any mediation. It is just as inexplicable how he got into it as it is inexplicable how he remained in it. If such is not the position of Abraham, then he is not a tragic hero but a murderer.¹⁶

Kierkegaard describes the danger of Protestant theology: the singular position of the believer, directly confronted with God, cannot be guaranteed within a secured system of accepted knowledge. Faith includes the risk of irrepresentable alienation from established religious, ethical, or political standards.

3. The Reformation as Conversion?

The Roman-Catholic church exemplifies the universal-particular paradigm in its very name: The much-disputed hyphen between Roman particularity and Catholic universality is at the heart of many ecclesiological debates since the early church. The mediatory capability of Rome and of its successive apparatus concerns the core of Roman-Catholic identity. In August 2000, the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith* under its Prefect Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger published the declaration “*Dominus Iesus*” with the subtitle “On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ *and* the Church.”¹⁷ What appears to start

¹⁵ Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling/The Sickness unto Death*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 107.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration “Dominus Iesus”. On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church (= DI)*, 6 August 2000, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html. *Dominus Iesus* is also an attempt to settle the much-disputed issue about the ‘subsistit in’ in the ecclesiological encyclical *Lumen Gentium* §8, according to which the “one, holy and apostolic” church “subsists in the Catholic church” (Paul VI, ‘*Dogmatic Constitution of the Church. Lumen Gentium* [= LG]’, 21 November 1964, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-

as a declaration about the universal singularity of Jesus Christ turns effectively into Christ being mediated by the church as his particular *body*. While most protestant theologians would not generally dispute the ecclesiological status of the church as Christ's body, there seem to be some crucial differences in how to think this appendix "... and the Church." "Dominus Iesus" was heavily criticized for its anti-ecumenical statements, especially regarding the status of Protestant churches as "ecclesial communities" (DI 16) instead of churches in the full sense of the word. Many Protestant theologians could agree to the first part of the declaration, which state that the "unicity and salvific universality" of God's revelation in Jesus Christ is to be "*firmly believed*" (DI 5, 10, 11, 13, 14, emphasis in original). However, the same formulation is used in the second part about the church:

[I]n connection with the unicity and universality of the salvific mediation of Jesus Christ, the unicity of the Church founded by him must be *firmly believed* as a truth of Catholic faith. Just as there is one Christ, so there exists a single body of Christ, a single Bride of Christ: 'a single Catholic and apostolic Church.' (DI 16, emphasis in original)

The universality of Christ finds its representation through a particular body, the Roman church and the "true particular churches"¹⁸ (DI 17) which stay in apostolic succession and therefore in continuity with the foundation of the church through Christ. The Protestant churches do not enjoy this status because they "have not preserved the valid Episcopate" (DI 17).

Therefore, the most fundamental ecclesiological innovation of the Reformation was the abolition of a qualitative difference between clergy and laity and the proclamation of universal priesthood, for it meant an attack on the mediatory capabilities of the Roman hierarchy to represent the whole of Christianity. This fundamental departure from Roman ecclesiastical authority has recently even been interpreted as *conversion*. How is the discontinuity understood here? According to Kaufmann, "the Reformation was at its core a revolt of some of the representatives of the Latin European church against this very church,"¹⁹ so how does the term "conversion" apply, which usually means the change of religion?²⁰ As Kaufmann explains, in the medieval context the term originally denoted the dedication of oneself to a life in the monastery. This was the meaning Luther was

gentium_en.html.) The questions regarding the identity between the two have been addressed again in "Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church", where the "full identity" between the two is affirmed (see Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church*, 29 June 2007, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_responsa-quaestiones_en.html, third question.).

¹⁸ These are, most notably, the Orthodox churches.

¹⁹ Kaufmann, „Reformatoren als Konvertiten“, 149 f.

²⁰ Kaufmann refers to the definitions of "conversion" in religious studies here. Cf. *ibid.*, 152, notes 12 and 13.

familiar with: Conversion led to a form of life fully devoted to Christ, entailing radical change. This understanding of conversion was of course based on the biblical prototype of Paul and also his theology of justification: For Luther, conversion was grounded in the recognition of sin, repentance, and the reception of grace through the encounter with Christ. Thus, the way the reformers often staged their own biographical departure from the Roman church features certain similarities with conversion narratives.²¹ Nevertheless, as Kaufmann admits, Luther never used the term conversion to describe the change between the emerging confessions,²² even if his condemnations of the Roman church could often be as harsh as about Jews and heathens.²³ Luther's decisive step consisted in universalizing or "democratizing"²⁴ the necessity of the former solely monastic *conversio* to every Christian: "conversio involves all Christians; because of the priesthood of all believers it is relieved from the monastic domain and has become a concern of every Christian."²⁵

It is important to note, however, that the abolition of the qualitative difference between clergy and laity in the form of universal priesthood (the priesthood of all believers) can be interpreted within both paradigms, universal-particular and universal-singular. According to a popular interpretation, the Reformation was a 'de-particularization' of the sacred in favor of the profane and as such the forerunner of modern secularization.²⁶ Clerics became citizens of a new emerging public sphere, in which the state increasingly assumed the function of mediating and 'civilizing' religious differences. Thus, this interpretation of the Reformation stays within the universal-particular paradigm: The state replaces the church as the institution that registers and mediates the plurality of particular identities, the churches among them.

It is possible, however, to read the Reformation in another way. According to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, when Martin Luther left the monastery, this did not mean a secularization of the sacred but – quite the contrary – its *universalization*. Luther's well-known remark that "whoever comes out of the water of baptism can boast that he is already a consecrated priest, bishop, and pope"²⁷ does not reveal the clergy as actually profane, but it elevates the laity into what was exclusive to the clergy before. According to Bonhoeffer, Luther did not so much criticize the counter-cultural, non-worldly aspiration of monastic life but rather

²¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 159 f.

²² Cf. *ibid.*, 155.

²³ Cf. *ibid.*, 156.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Cf. Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation. How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012).

²⁷ LW 44, 129 (Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* [= LW], ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, Helmut T. Lehmann, and Christopher B. Brown, 75 vols (Philadelphia/St. Louis: Fortress Press/Concordia Publishing House, 1955 ff.).

its *exclusivity* that allowed the rest of Christianity to be content with the status quo:

Luther's return from the cloister to the world was the worst blow the world had suffered since the days of early Christianity. The renunciation he made when he became a monk was child's play compared with that which he had to make when he returned to the world. Now came the frontal assault. The only way to follow Jesus was by living in the world. Hitherto the Christian life had been the achievement of a few choice spirits under the exceptionally favourable conditions of monasticism; now it is a duty laid on every Christian living in the world.²⁸

It is crucial to understand Bonhoeffer's confrontation of "Christianity" and "the world" not as a call for separation or as anti-secular sentiment – and much less as a historical description. "*Nachfolge*" (as the German title of Bonhoeffer's book goes) is rather portrayed as a way of being in the world that questions its fundamental coordinate systems instead of retreating from it into the other-worldly safety of the monastic *via securior*. Bonhoeffer's reinterpretation of the Reformation is a performative attempt to mobilize "early Christianity" and the monastic "counter-culture" as a critical resource against the status quo.

His account appears similar to Kaufmann's insofar as they both emphasize the universality of conversion or discipleship. However, for Bonhoeffer, the decisive "twist" of the Reformation consisted in universal "clericalization," not in universal "laicization." Therein lies a fundamental continuity between Luther and his monastic forerunners that Kaufmann rather wants to dismiss. There is an important methodological reason for this dismissal and Kaufmann's emphasis on the discontinuity between the Reformation and the earlier tradition. Kaufmann's approach is formalist and historicist, insofar as he focuses on the issue of Protestant universality. This was (and is) indeed a major challenge for and departure from the Roman hierarchic model that is grounded in the mediatory function of the church. However, the other side of the coin would be to ask the question about the *content* of what is to be universalized: Luther did *not* want to convert to a different religious truth – instead, he tried to renew a truth that was present within the church but in danger of being blocked and hidden by its authorities. The historical fact that Luther and the Roman church have not been able to reconcile their differences, resulting in the definitive break in 1520 and in mutual condemnation, is not necessarily a proof of theological incommensurability. According to Kaufmann, however, an account of Martin Luther as a "reform Catholic" would require dogmatic rather than historical methods.²⁹ While it is certainly debatable whether alternative historical assessments of Luther (Leppin, Bayer) employ ahistorical methods, one may concede that the event

²⁸ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. H. Fuller, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1979), 51 f.

²⁹ Cf. Kaufmann, "Reformatoren als Konvertiten," 151, note 6.

of the Reformation requires an *engaged* perspective on it.³⁰ A purely historicist view may reveal a complex network of continuities as well as discontinuities – but it does not provide the criteria to decide the question of which event the Reformation is about, or, more precisely, if there is an event at all. As Badiou would put it, an unengaged perspective is only confronted with an “objective” multiplicity of differences. A truth event, however, is only discernible from the perspective of an engaged subject that has been created by the event (– a dogmatic perspective?). It is therefore inadequate to characterize the Reformation as ‘conversion’ because it does not entail the fidelity to a different truth event and it does not constitute an incommensurable worldview. Instead, it certainly stands in contrast to the Roman church on the question of how this fidelity is to be actualized. In Badiouan terms: the Reformation was not a conflict about truth but about ethics, of how to remain faithful to a truth.³¹ Another way to put this would be the distinction of form and content: the *Re-formation* was then about the question how to formalize the content of faith – universally instead of particularly.³²

4. Christ and the Pretty Woman

What Luther shared with medieval mysticism was that he understood faith as a direct relation to the event of truth, i. e. Christ.³³ It should not come as a surprise that Luther’s prime metaphor taken from mysticism is what Badiou describes as a love event: the coupling of the soul and Christ as bride and groom. The motif of mystical marriage is one example for Luther’s dependence on the late medieval mystics and it appears in a central passage: In his treatise *On the Freedom of a Christian*, Luther calls faith the “wedding ring”³⁴ that “unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her husband; by which mystery, as the Apostle teaches, Christ and the soul are made one flesh.”³⁵ Luther’s narrative reminds one of the movie “Pretty Woman” with Richard Gere and Julia Roberts: “Christ, that rich and pious husband, takes as a wife a needy and impious harlot, redeeming her from all her evils, and supplying her with all his good things,”³⁶ which Luther

³⁰ Cf. Volker Leppin, “Wie reformatorisch war die Reformation?,” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 99 (2002), 162 f.

³¹ Cf. Badiou, *Ethics*, 44: “the ‘ethic of a truth’ is the principle that enables the continuation of a truth-process.”

³² Of course, this includes the theological differences regarding the doctrine of justification.

³³ The Finnish Mannermaa school has emphasized the figure of union with Christ as *the* key motif of Luther’s theology; cf. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *Union with Christ. The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1998).

³⁴ LW 31, 352.

³⁵ Martin Luther, “On the Freedom of a Christian,” 1520, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/luther-freedomchristian.html> (better translation); see also LW 31, 351.

³⁶ *Ibid*; see also LW 31, 352.

famously called the “joyous exchange and struggle”³⁷. The aspect of struggle is to be emphasized: “Here we have the most pleasing vision not only of communion but of a blessed *struggle* and victory and salvation and redemption.”³⁸ The mystical marriage is not an escapist vision of pure transcendence but encompasses and recreates the entire human existence, including the abyss of sin, death, and hell. It is therefore closely connected to Luther’s theology of the cross, which is again heavily influenced by medieval passion mysticism.³⁹ In the sight of this radical notion of communion with God, Luther can exclaim: “Who then can value highly enough these royal nuptials? Who can comprehend the riches of the glory of this grace?” This would be the Christian notion of conversion, a notion that is already present well before the Reformation, albeit not in the universal form of the priesthood of all believers. At the same time, it is clear how Luther’s faith relates to truth but not to knowledge (see above), insofar the latter is based on the status quo and organizes the arrangement of different particulars within a universal framework. Faith, however, shortcuts this arrangement and relates directly to truth (God). History features many examples for how the idea of a direct relation to God endangered the mediatory function of the church as religious gatekeeper. It should not be overlooked, for instance, that medieval mysticism was a way particularly for women to presume uncommon roles unthinkable before.⁴⁰

While the *solus Christus* could also be formulated as a political event (“Christ [alone] is Lord”), mysticism emphasizes the relation to truth, that is Christ, as *love*. In his “Praise of Love”, Badiou defines love as seeing the world from the perspective of the two, of difference.⁴¹ For Badiou, love is not a unification but a union of two people *precisely in their difference*: Regarding Christian theology, we can reformulate: faith is seeing the world from the perspective of the lasting difference of God and man. The bride does not become the groom and vice versa. The doctrine of incarnation does not contradict this, but it constitutes the lasting

³⁷ WA 7, 25,34, trans. R. N. (Martin Luther, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [= WA], 80 volumes [Weimar, 1883 ff.]).

³⁸ LW 31, 351, italics R. N.

³⁹ See Oswald Bayer, “Vita passiva. Luther und die Mystik,” in *Die Kirchenkritik der Mystiker. Prophetie aus Gotteserfahrung*, ed. Mariano Delgado and Gotthard Fuchs, vol. 2 (Fribourg/Stuttgart: Academic Press/Kohlhammer, 2005), 104f.; Leppin, *Die fremde Reformation*, 60–63.

⁴⁰ See Herbert Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter. Untersuchungen über die geschichtlichen Zusammenhänge zwischen der Ketzerei, den Bettelorden und der religiösen Frauenbewegung im 12. und 13. Jahrhundert und über die geschichtlichen Grundlagen der deutschen Mystik*, 4th ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977), 325–344. Grundmann tells about a 13th century Bohemian bishop who complained about “young women and widows, who conduct, clothe and label themselves as religiosi without belonging to a pontifical approbated order. They do not join a legal order, so they have not to obey, and to, how they think, better serve God in such freedom.” *Ibid.*, 336 f. (trans. R. N.).

⁴¹ Alain Badiou and Nicolas Truong, *In Praise of Love*, trans. Peter Bush (London: Serpent’s Tail, 2012), 16.

difference of God and man *as love*,⁴² as a new way of seeing the world as God's beloved creation. Furthermore, Badiou describes a love event as something that is fundamentally asocial, in the sense that it cuts the natural ties of the loving couple to society, family and social norms.⁴³ Love constitutes something radically new that cannot be mediated by the surrounding universe but just the opposite: Love *reconstitutes* the universe, it colors the world around us in a new way. Leppin is right that Luther stands in continuity with medieval mystic theology – precisely insofar mysticism *already* constitutes a radical rupture.⁴⁴ This relationship of continuing the discontinuity can be described with Badiou as fidelity to an event.

I conclude with some short remarks about what this means for media theory, to avoid a possible misunderstanding, namely that the “shortcut” of the singular to the universal, bypassing the mediatory function of the particular, amounts to a general critique of media in favor of the direct and the immediate.⁴⁵ This misunderstanding could then be combined with the already mentioned confusion of subjectivity and individuality, and the influential Protestant notion of inwardness, leading to the opposition of the single individual and its immediate inner experience against the particular role of the ecclesial community with its various external media. The numerous interpretations of Kierkegaard as the theologian of individuality are a good example for this. If we want to avoid this reductive opposition, which I do, the task would be to conceptualize media *across* the paradigmatic distinction, i. e. to distinguish particular media and singular media. Luther's change of paradigms would then concern the use of media as well, by shifting to “Christ alone” as the singular medium, from which all other media are derived: the “minimal media”⁴⁶ of name and body and their further medialization in scripture, Holy Communion etc. The reformatory twist is that these media are no longer particularly mediated by the ecclesiastical hierarchy but aim for universal accessibility: precisely in their singularity, i. e. insofar they are not safely represented and mediated by the tradition but present an event that reconstitutes and reorients Christian existence.

⁴² Traditionally, Reformed theologians have emphasized this lasting difference more than their Lutheran colleagues.

⁴³ Cf. Badiou and Truong, *Praise of Love*, 79. Slavoj Žižek has repeatedly interpreted Lk 14:26 in a similar way. Cf. Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (London/New York: Verso, 2011), 101.

⁴⁴ This statement is, of course, limited to the already mentioned forms of Christ mysticism that influenced Luther's Christocentric theology. For a comprehensive collection of studies about the conflict between mysticism and the church authority see Mariano Delgado and Gottfried Fuchs, eds., *Die Kirchenkritik der Mystiker. Prophetie aus Gotteserfahrung*, 3 vols (Fribourg/Stuttgart: Academic Press/Kohlhammer, 2004).

⁴⁵ Oswald Bayer has shown that also the mystic parts of Luther's theology always involve God's word as the medium for mystic experience. Cf. Bayer, “Vita passiva,” 100 f.

⁴⁶ See the contribution of Philipp Stoellger in this volume.

A Phenomenological Inquiry about Transcendence as Radical Alterity

Patrick Ebert

1. Introduction

This chapter discusses Luther's notion of the hiddenness of God as an expression of the transcendence of God and the phenomenological articulation of transcendence as radical alterity or radical alienness [*Fremdheit*]. In accordance with texts such as Is 45,15: "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour" – "vere tu es Deus absconditus Deus Israhel salvator", Luther developed a thinking of the hiddenness of God, which became one of the fundamental motives in Luther's theological thought and his critique of scholasticism, whether regarding the doctrine of election, *sola gratia and sola fide* or the critique of reason. One cannot become justified through reason, knowledge, good will or work and participate in God's salvation but by faith only, which is the non-reciprocal, asymmetrical and unforeseeable gift of God in his grace. In his concealment, God cannot become an object of our knowledge, he cannot become part of the immanence of rationality. Accordingly, transcendence is essential for Luther's thinking about God and his revelation, as one can see in the *Heidelberger Disputation* or his early lectures. However, his most famous remarks on the *Deus absconditus* can be found in *De servo arbitrio*. In this dialogue with Erasmus of Rotterdam, Luther responds to Erasmus' argument in *de libero arbitrio*, in which he intends to show with Ez 33,11: "I desire not the death of the wicked [...]; turn ye", that even after the lapse man implicitly retains the ability to repent and thus grace must be understood as an assistance or partner.¹ Nonetheless, there is a second argument as a rhetorical question: If there were no implicit instruction, no implicit ability to repent, does that not mean that a pious God would "deplore the death of his people, which he himself is causing?"² As Volker Leppin highlights, it is Erasmus who poses the question of an inner inconsistency of God if one assumes Luther's doctrine of justification.³ Luther's answers to these

¹ Cf. Erasmus, "The Free Will," in *Erasmus and Luther: Discourse on Free Will*, trans. and ed. Ernst F. Winter (New York: Continuum, 2002), 1–94, 34.

² Erasmus, "The Free Will," 34.

³ Cf. Volker Leppin, "Deus absconditus und Deus revelatus: Transformationen mittelalter-

questions are well known: first, God's desire is not an instruction but rather an expression of his promise, whereby it is no proof for an implicit ability of man; and second, the aporia of God's lamentation and his predestination must not lead to the decomposition of God's unity but can be thought of in terms of the distinction of the *Deus absconditus* and the *Deus revelatus*. However, his remarks on the *Deus absconditus* in *De servo arbitrio* can become problematic: as Barth and Jüngel rightly highlighted, the talk of the *Deus absconditus* could raise the problem of a *contradiction of God versus God* even if Luther wanted to solve this problem. However, does that lead to giving up the transcendence in favour of an *utterly present revelation* and merging it in an *absolute immanence*? Ultimately, an *immediacy of God in and by faith*? However, what then remains of Isaiah's praise in Is 45,15: "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour"? What remains of God's answer to Moses request of beholding his glory in Ex 33:20: "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see, and live." This raises the question of a differentiated determination of the relation of the *Deus absconditus* and the *revelatus*, of *revelation and its transcendence*. How should we think of such a relation without falling back into a dualistic concept of a hidden metaphysical God?⁴ I would like to confront these questions in four steps. *First*, I will examine the problems that Barth and Jüngel highlighted, which can be strengthened by Marion's considerations on a metaphysical notion of transcendence. *Second*, I will propose another reading or a differentiated determination of the relation of the *Deus absconditus* and the *revelatus* based on Luther's notion of hiddenness in his *early lectures* and the *Heidelberger Disputation*. *Third*, I will try to outline this differentiated determination through a phenomenological reflection on transcendence as radical alterity or radical alienness regarding the phenomenality of the phenomenon. In a *final step*, I would like to sketch the theological implications of such a notion of transcendence. To make this clear, I will not propose a phenomenological theology or a theological phenomenology; rather, I simply try to show how a phenomenological approach to the concept of transcendence – which theology cannot explicitly reserve for itself – could help us think of transcendence from a theological perspective. As a guideline to our inquiry on transcendence, I will rely on the aspects of temporality and the structure of the event of revelation, respectively of phenomenality.

Before starting, I would like to make some remarks on the concept of transcendence: as Bernhard Waldenfels highlights, the conceptual distinction of transcendence and immanence is highly charged with speculations and needs

licher Theologie in der Gotteslehre von 'De servo arbitrio,'" *Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift* 22:1 (2005), 55–69 (56–57).

⁴ In the following, the notion of metaphysics does not mean a historical epoch of the history of thought, but is used as a strategical term to combine different aspects of certain styles of thinking that distinguish themselves by closure, totality, self-sufficient and pure presence and appropriation of alterity.

to be deconstructed.⁵ He proposes an approximation to these concepts on the ground of our experience, which leads us to an understanding of transcendence and immanence based on his thoughts of extraordinary and order and his responsive phenomenology. This advance will be clarified in the proceeding of our presentation. Next, it is essential to clarify the relation between hiddenness and transcendence. As will be shown, hiddenness could relate to something that is hidden behind something that is revealed. In this way, the hidden is still a something, a metaphysical entity, *a* or *the* transcendent (being?). However, hiddenness can also be understood based on withdrawal – as Heidegger did – as excess, or extra-ordinary. In this description, it comes close to the indicated notion of transcendence as radical alterity.

2. God versus God?

Taking a look at Barth's *Church Dogmatics*, one can find two important passages on Luther's notion of the *Deus revelatus*. First, the passage in §27 on *The Limits of the Knowledge of God*:

But in the revelation of God there is no hidden God, no *Deus absconditus*, at the back of His revelation, with whose existence and activity we have also occasionally to reckon beyond His Word and His Spirit, and whom we have also to fear and honour behind His revelation. It may often look like this in certain contexts in Luther [...]⁶

and second the passage in §31 on *The Perfections of the Divine Freedom*: "It cannot be denied that Luther sometimes spoke of his *Deus absconditus* as if he understood by this concept a *potentia absoluta* or even more a *potentia inordinata*."⁷

The same problem is highlighted by Eberhard Jüngel when he writes:

However much one can agree with Luther that we must orientate ourselves totally to the *revealed* and *proclaimed* God, [...] his talk of the hiddenness of God itself as a concealing hiddenness which is possibly a contradiction to the revelation of God is problematic. The hidden and the revealed God seem to stand in contradiction to each other, so that in the end it is [...] *God* against *God*.⁸

Jüngel's concerns are directed at the problem that a hidden and horrible divine subject could be inferred here. Both highlight the problem of a contradiction of God versus God, whether a hidden God behind or beyond the revealed God or

⁵ Cf. Bernhard Waldenfels, *Hyperphänomene: Modi hyperbolischer Erfahrung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012), 18.

⁶ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics II.1: The Doctrine of God: Part 1*, trans. T. H. L. Parker et al. (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 210.

⁷ Barth, *Church Dogmatics II.1*, 541.

⁸ Eberhard Jüngel, "The Revelation of the Hiddenness of God: A Contribution to the Protestant Understanding of the Hiddenness of Divine Action," in *Theological Essays II*, trans. Arnold Neufeldt-Fast and John B. Webster (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 120–144 (136).

an absolute God of metaphysics or the metaphysical concept of two wills of God. This criticism – even if it would not apply to Luther – highlights a problematic character of ‘transcendence’. If transcendence is understood as an absolute and pure transcendence in the dualistic contrast to an absolute immanence, it is still conceptualized as metaphysical: a or the transcendence or the transcendent is still conceived as metaphysical because as absolute and pure transcendence it is after all a metaphysical entity in an otherworldly ontological totality, which is hierarchically and teleologically related to an inauthentic/not-proper [uneigentlich] world.

In order to gain a better grasp of this problem, I would like to take a brief look at Jean-Luc Marion’s examination of *metaphysical transcendence*, the or a transcendent. In his thoughts on givenness and the phenomenon as a given, Marion reduces the gift and vice versa the phenomenon from all of its metaphysical conditions – i. e. transcendences – to a pure immanence of givenness. As problematic as this reduction may be, Marion provides us a quite fitting description of the metaphysical notion of transcendence, namely a giver of a gift, a cause or sufficient reason of an effect, the primacy of substance over accident, of causality over the event, a constituting or transcendental I of a phenomenon or an object. Now all of these transcendences are metaphysical entities or principles – a or the transcendent – that can be described from the view of temporalization as pure presence, or self-sufficient [selbstgenügsame] presence and from the view of structure as *originary* and *authentic/proper* [eigentlich]. Indeed, as Derrida showed in his inquiry on negative theology, even the epistemological negation has its ontological affirmation and is thus no less present and authentic/proper. Derrida calls this hyper-essentialism. Interestingly, however, Marion and his direct phenomenology of the pure gift and call would disagree on this point.

This raises the question of whether one should dismiss the concept of the *Deus absconditus* or transcendence in general. However, does this not lead to a full or utter presence of the revelation? Revelation without remainder? That would be the other extreme: pure immanence, a totality with no space for alterity. All experienced alterity is simply relative and nothing in the light of the harmonizing telos and arché. Nonetheless, are there only the extremes of pure and absolute transcendence or immanence?

Now Barth and Jüngel developed their own conceptions of the hiddenness of God that deal with these issues. For Barth, God’s hiddenness is the hiddenness of *God*, it is one of his properties or attributes and thus an element of revelation. Hiddenness does not refer to something hidden behind the revealed, but rather to the incapacity of human knowledge of God starting from himself. Alternatively, as McCormack writes:

[I]t is the hiddenness of the God who is fully present in revelation which calls into question the constructive activities of the human knower and, at the same time, establishes

them. [...] God establishes human knowing by giving to the recipient of revelation the knowledge of something he/she would never possess in the case of any other 'object' – i. e. a knowledge of the noumenal reality that God is. [...] Spirit-given knowledge of the 'hidden' Subject of this [i. e. Jesus of Nazareth] life.⁹

Barth's Christocentric notion of hiddenness is thus based on a theology of the cross.

For Jüngel,¹⁰ hiddenness cannot mean that God himself is dark, his Being cannot be a Being in itself closed and dark, but nothing but light. The hiddenness of this Being of God lies in the concept of the Hebrew *kabod*: it is the glory of God that hides or conceals him. However, this does not mean that he is unrelated. Light enables life. The Being of God as light means creation and thus a most intensive relation. On the other hand, this does not mean that God is knowable as hidden in his glory. Only revelation enables this knowledge, the knowledge of God's hiddenness in his glory. Hiddenness is thus an element of revelation. As often, Jüngel and Barth agree on this. Jüngel calls this first mode of hiddenness 'Ureigenschaft Gottes' – 'primal attribute of God'.¹¹ Hence, a second mode of hiddenness: the hiddenness of God under its opposite. In revelation, God becomes knowable, comprehensible and apprehensible,¹² albeit not according to human intuition or sight, but to faith: the concealment of the hiddenness of God. God's glory becomes present in human flesh. The first form of hiddenness becomes identifiable in a secondary hiddenness of a distinct human being.¹³ Jüngel calls it being present as the absent, and faith is the human attitude that lets God be present as absent.¹⁴

As one can see, Barth and Jüngel have a quite similar answer to the problem that emerges in the talk of the *Deus absconditus*. Importantly for my presentation, they share in common their inclusion of hiddenness into the structure of revelation and thus founding it on a Christocentric theology of the cross. This will be my point of departure for the following.

This paper will and cannot discuss these attempts, although I would like to raise some questions regarding the space appropriated to transcendence. Despite all of their valuable insights such as the inclusion of hiddenness into the structure of revelation, the foundation of revelation in a Christocentric theology of the cross, I am not entirely convinced that these attempts could ultimately avoid an

⁹ Bruce McCormack, "Beyond Nonfoundational and Postmodern Readings of Barth: Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology," *Zeitschrift für Dialektische Theologie* 13:2 (1997), 170–194 (189).

¹⁰ Cf. for the following: Jüngel, "Revelation," 123–131.

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 127.

¹² Cf. *ibid.*, 129.

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*, 129.

¹⁴ Cf. Eberhard Jüngel, "Quae supra nos, nihil ad nos: Eine Kurzformel der Lehre vom verborgenen Gott – im Anschluß an Luther interpretiert," in *Entsprechungen: Gott – Wahrheit – Mensch: Theologische Erörterungen II*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 202–251, 250.

immediate, utterly and self-sufficient presentification of the event of revelation within the realm of knowledge of God by faith. Because in faith God is fully present, knowable and apprehensible, a new mode of knowledge is established, which is no longer the mode of knowledge of objects, but a knowledge – as Barth says – that “involve[s] a real human viewing and conceiving, founded and ordered of course by Him alone [...]”¹⁵ The same holds true for Jüngel’s comprehension, apprehension and presentification of God by the new extraordinary mode of perception: faith. There are tendencies in which the extraordinary is merged in the order, as Waldenfels would put it,¹⁶ or the *saying* in the *said*, referring to Levinas.¹⁷ Indeed, even if one considers faith as an extraordinary way of responding, one only displaces the problem of the merging: *first*, faith as the new mode of perception, to be considered as the extraordinary mode of perception, which achieves an immediacy and presentification of God, reminds us of a metaphysical movement of the proper or authentic perception, thinking or what so ever. I will thematise this problem in our presentation of Heidegger under the topic of corresponding. If one considers the determination of faith as corresponding to God’s revelatory act, the suspicion arise as Waldenfels highlighted: corresponding requires a *nomos*, a coherent whole or entity, to which it can correspond. Even if this corresponding comprises not only *similitudo* but also *dissimilitudo*, as McCormack points out,¹⁸ it remains a similarity and dissimilarity to a certain kind of *nomos*.¹⁹ Hence, a *second* problem is the problem of hyper-essentialism. If faith is understood as the proper/authentic mode of perception that corresponds with God’s call or demand because it is extraordinary, then the extraordinary becomes present and the metaphysical structure is repeated at a higher level. Essentialism at a higher level is hyper-essentialism. As will also be shown, a relocation of this presentification under the topic of eschatology and the logic of promise and fulfilment cannot per se bypass the metaphysical character of the immediate presentification. As previously mentioned, these considerations will be made clearer in my analysis of Heidegger. One final remark: this must not be understood as a rejection of Jüngel’s or Barth’s position, but more as a supporting correction of certain traits in their positions in sharing their intentions.

¹⁵ Barth, *Church Dogmatics II.1*, 194.

¹⁶ Cf. Bernhard Waldenfels, *Order in the Twilight* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996).

¹⁷ Considering faith as God’s own extraordinary mode of responding in the third person of the trinity cannot solve the problem, because faith must still be the *human viewing and conceiving*, founded by God, for God to be true God, and human to be true human. Cf. Barth, *Church Dogmatics II.1*, 194.

¹⁸ Cf. McCormack, “Beyond,” 180.

¹⁹ Cf. Bernhard Waldenfels, *Antwortregister* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1994), 575–582.

3. Luther's Christological Hiddenness as an Element of Revelation

In now discussing another reading or a differentiated determination of the relation of *Deus absconditus* and *revelatus* based on Luther's early lectures and thoughts, I leave aside the question of a systematic doctrine of hiddenness and the extent to which his 'early' thoughts are still directing his 'later' thought in *De servo arbitrio* (1525) or whether his later thoughts contradict his early ones. Based on the attempts of Barth and Jüngel to think of hiddenness as an element of revelation, I will try to highlight this movement in Luther's own considerations about hiddenness.²⁰ In his *Lectures on the Psalms* (1512/13), there is the continuing motive of hiddenness, which is always linked to incarnation, humanity, humility and scripture: in short, the veiling figure in which God revealed himself. As Luther writes of Ps 18: "The hiding place of God is darkness [...]. This can be understood as referring to the mystery of the incarnation. For He is concealed in humanity, which is His darkness. [...] [I]t refers to the sacrament of the Eucharist, where he is most completely concealed. For that reason this can also be understood as referring to Christ's incarnation."²¹ Alternatively, in his interpretation of Ps 74: "Or certainly He hides Himself in the midst of His bosom, that is, He conceals Himself before them in His humanity because they do not believe Him to be God but only man. [...] [I]n its midst, I say, in the inmost part of that humanity, He is concealed."²² Concerning the connection of hiddenness and humility in Ps 77, Luther writes:

For just as divinity was veiled under the flesh of weakness, so His works were veiled in the weakness of suffering. [...] He has veiled these works under the weakness of suffering, as He has His deity under the humanity, so that by faith He might also veil reason and make foolish the wisdom of the world. [...] He is the One who [...] did not do manifest wonders in the strength of majesty but hidden wonders in the humility of suffering.²³

The same emerges in his *Lectures on Romans* (1515), where he writes e. g. in reference to John 1:14: "[...] Wisdom was made incarnate and is thus hidden [...]"²⁴.

²⁰ Cf. for the following argument, Marius Timman Mjaaland, *The Hidden God. Luther, Philosophy, and Political Theology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 89–108. However, Mjaaland recognizes a development in Luther's notion of the hiddenness of God from his *Lectures on the Psalms* to the *Heidelberger Disputation*. A development "from essence to existence, from power to suffering, from the invisible *supra nos* to the invisible within the visible" (Mjaaland, *The Hidden God*, 92). He identifies two "entirely different understandings of *deus absconditus* [...]: a hidden god beyond reason versus God hidden in suffering and weakness at the cross" (Mjaaland, *The Hidden God*, 93).

²¹ Martin Luther, *First Lectures on the Psalms I: Psalms 1–75*, vol. 10, *Luther's Works*, trans. Herbert J. A. Bouman (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974), 119–120. *Luther's Works* (= LW). Cf. Mjaaland, *The Hidden God*, 90–91.

²² LW 10, 445.

²³ LW 11, 34–35.

²⁴ LW 25, 223.

One final example of the ‘early’ Luther should suffice: in Thesis 20 of his *Heidelberger Disputation* (1518) – which defines who deserves to be called a theologian – Luther again connects revelation with the hiddenness in suffering, humility and shame of the cross:

[...] God wished again to be recognized in suffering, [...] so that those who did not honor God as manifested in his works should honor him as he is hidden in his suffering. [...] Now it is not sufficient for anyone, and it does him no good to recognize God in his glory and majesty, unless he recognizes him in the humility and shame of the cross.²⁵

Now, as Jüngel showed in *Quae supra nos, nihil ad nos*, this holds true even for Luther’s late stage of work.²⁶ Jüngel clarifies this by taking a look at Luther’s late *Lectures on Genesis* (1535–1545), where Luther reads on *Jacobs fight at the Jabbok* in Gen 32:23–33 (1543), one of the most impressive narrations of an encounter with God:

[...] we must conclude that God is the One who is hidden. This is his peculiar property. He is really hidden, and yet He is not hidden, for the flesh prevents us from being able to look at him. [...] So it seems that God is completely forsaking us and casting us away, because he is hidden to us and we are hidden along with Him. But in faith, in the Word, and in the sacraments He is revealed and seen.²⁷

Considering these ‘early’ and ‘later’ statements on revelation and hiddenness, one could conclude that Luther was able to think of hiddenness as an element of revelation, the hiddenness of incarnation and the cross, which refers to a much more complex and differentiated understanding of hiddenness than it seems to be in *De servo arbitrio*.

Nonetheless, something problematic remains: considering the role of faith as a mode of perception, wherein God is revealed and seen – present – a mode of recognition, which seems to accomplish a proper perception, a mode of understanding, which is a “knowledge of the invisible things”, an “understanding in concealment”²⁸, the question again emerges concerning whether this special mode of perception is understood as a proper/authentic mode of presentification without remainder, an extra-ordinary understanding. If this were the case, it would ultimately reiterate a metaphysical movement that still wipes out transcendence as radical alterity. Is it possible to make use of this differentiated determination of hiddenness as articulated by Luther, Barth and Jüngel without falling back into the problematic aspect of a presentification of transcendence/radical alterity in faith? This question will lead the following approach.

²⁵ LW 31, 52–53. Cf. Mjaaland, *The Hidden God*, 91–93.

²⁶ Cf. Jüngel, “*Quae supra nos*,” 232–251.

²⁷ LW 6, 148.

²⁸ LW 25, 224.

4. Transcendence in Phenomenology

I would now like to outline such a differentiated determination of hiddenness through a phenomenological reflection on transcendence as radical alterity or radical alienness regarding the phenomenality of the phenomenon. Within the phenomenological tradition, transcendence is considered to be a 'basic concept'. From Husserl's *immanent transcendence* to Heidegger's *transcendence pure and simple* [*Transzendenz schlechthin*] and Merleau-Ponty's *transcendence of the thing* right up to the *transcendence of the Other* in Derrida and Levinas, the question of the relation of transcendence and immanence is essential for the respective phenomenological conceptions. Some of these phenomenological attempts could reveal certain motives of thought that prove helpful for an articulation of hiddenness as an element of revelation.

In order to gain a glance into what phenomenology could say about transcendence, I will first consider the late Heidegger and his concept of Being. I will concentrate our investigation on the late writings after the so-called 'turn [*Kehre*]'. In doing so, I will leave aside the question of whether there was a turn at all and – if so – whether Heidegger's early *Being and Time* and his late thought are divided by a rupture. Following Cosmus and others, I prefer to talk about "a restless thinking" with the leitmotif of an anonymous phenomenology that deals with the definition of Being as dis-closure as the phenomenality of the phenomenon that is already leading in §7 of *Being and Time*:²⁹ "to let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself", to let be seen that "what does not show itself"³⁰, i. e. Being. Indeed, it is exactly this understanding of Being that is leading in Heidegger's late thinking.

Now Heidegger's late philosophy deals with the history of metaphysics to win back an original thinking of Being, his famous project of "overcoming [*Verwindung*] of metaphysics". Starting with the doubled beginning in Greek thinking – where an original experience of Being as *aletheia* and *logos* as gathering is converted into *idea*, truth as adequacy – the Latin translation of the motives of *energeia* into *actualitas*, truth into certainty and *hypokeimenon* into *subject* and *subjectivity*, to the final completion of metaphysics in Hegel's transformation of reason into the will of reason and Nietzsche's transformation into the will in its absoluteness, Heidegger detects the '*forgetting of Being* [*Seinsvergessenheit*]' as their common trait.³¹ Now this forgetting is not grounded in an incapacity of metaphysical thinking but rather in the 'default of Being [*Ausbleiben des Seins*]'.³¹

²⁹ Cf. Oliver Cosmus, *Anonyme Phänomenologie: Die Einheit von Heideggers Denkweg* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001).

³⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 30–31.

³¹ Cf. Martin Heidegger, "Metaphysics as History of Being," in *The End of Philosophy*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: The University Press of Chicago, 2003), 1–54; Martin Heidegger,

Being presences as withdrawal, as concealedness. Returning to the original understanding of Being, a new or alternate beginning is needed that experiences the truth of Being, the dis-closure of Being, the withdrawal of Being in the disclosure of being. Heidegger thematises this dis-closure of Being under different aspects in his late philosophy. *The call of Being*, which institutes *Dasein* as the shepherd of being, which is the place of the 'clearing of Being [*Lichtung des Seins*]' in 'nearness' as 'ek-sistence'.³² *The event* as the 'it' in 'it gives time/Being (there is) [*es gibt Zeit/Sein*]', which withdraws itself in its disclosure of time and Being, in giving time and Being.³³ *The language* that is considered as the *house of Being* and 'the showing [*die Zeigel*]' and to which man has to correspond. In this correspondence, language as event brings presence and absence into their own [*in ihr Eigenes*] in the movement of 'Owning [*Eignen*]'.³⁴

Even if Heidegger had reservations concerning the concept of transcendence as a metaphysical term, it is exactly this movement of dis-closure, presence in withdrawal, that Heidegger calls in *The onto-theological Constitution of Metaphysics* from 1957 with recourse to §7 of *Being and Time*, transcendence.³⁵

Now, as Derrida, Levinas and Waldenfels convincingly showed, Heidegger's important thinking on phenomenality as transcendence must nevertheless be criticised. *First*, concerning Heidegger's concept of corresponding: corresponding requires a *nomos*, a coherent whole or entity to which it can correspond. This structure of call and corresponding in which the diastasis, the temporal shift of call and response is dismissed ultimately leaves no space for transcendence.³⁶ *Second*, this *nomos* refers to a metaphysical hierarchic-dualistic concept of *authenticity and inauthenticity* [*Eigentlichkeit und Uneigentlichkeit*], which is still dominant and necessary in Heidegger's late thinking.³⁷ The thinking of home, one's own and thus the 'primacy of the same' is unabated in Heidegger's thought.³⁸ *The third* problem considers the nostalgic desire for presence that shows itself in Heidegger's notion of the eschatology of the event. This critique

"Sketches for a History of Being as Metaphysics," in *The End of Philosophy*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: The University Press of Chicago, 2003), 55–74.

³² Cf. Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeil (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 239–276.

³³ Cf. Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 1–54.

³⁴ Cf. Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (New York: Harper & Row, 1982).

³⁵ Cf. Martin Heidegger, "The onto-theological Constitution of Metaphysics," in *Identity and Difference*, trans. John Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 2002), 42–74(67).

³⁶ Cf. Waldenfels, *Antwortregister*, 575–582.

³⁷ Cf. Jacques Derrida, "The Ends of Man," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 111–136, 128–134; Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 207–272.

³⁸ Cf. Emmanuel Levinas, "Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity," in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987), 47–60(49–53).

considers the problematic relation of telos and arché or the two ends: end and telos come together in the presentificating completion.³⁹ In all of his emphasis on the withdrawal of the event of Being, Heidegger still considers his own thinking – the ‘recollecting thinking [*Andenken*]’ – as a presencing anticipation of the event. This problem also considers the problem of eschatology, understood as an anticipatable future, a future that is still perceptible and conceived in the mode of immanence: a provisional utopia.⁴⁰ With Levinas’ critical request to Bloch, one needs to ask such eschatological approaches: “But can one speak of transcendence when the relation with the utopian is still thinkable as realization and grasp?”⁴¹ Ultimately, Heidegger leaves no space for radical transcendence, only relative and thus surmountable transcendence: “a possibility of a passage through the foreign, and thereby the possibility of a return home into one’s own, and thereby that which is one’s own itself.”⁴²

Michel Henry presents another way of thinking of transcendence phenomenologically. In a critical engagement, Henry surveys the ontological monism in phenomenology,⁴³ the ecstatic mode of appearing, i. e. the appearance of something for someone: intentionality. This monism contains the aspects of the duality of the phenomenon and transcendental consciousness, the phenomenological distance between constitutive consciousness and constituted phenomenon and the rational-intuitive horizon as a transcendent enablement of the appearance of something, a constitutive alterity.⁴⁴ However, for Henry, “la manifestation de la transcendance n’est pas l’oeuvre de la transcendance elle-même.”⁴⁵ This is seemingly due to the vicious circle in the moment of *receptivity*: if transcendence is to be considered as the opening of the horizon and as the ‘how’ of the reception of this horizon, it is not resolved how transcendence could be the possibility of its very own receptivity.⁴⁶ Thus, Henry asks for the more original mode of the appearance of the subjectivity, the invisible appearance of life: for ecstatic appearance to actually appear, the appearing of life as pure immanence of self-

³⁹ Cf. Derrida, “The Ends of Man,” 119–136.

⁴⁰ Cf. Emmanuel Levinas, “Questions and Answers,” in *Of God who Comes to Mind*, trans. Bettina Bergo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 79–99 (97).

⁴¹ Levinas, “Questions and Answers,” 98.

⁴² Martin Heidegger, *Hölderlin’s Hymn ‘The Ister’*, trans. William McNeill and Julia Davis (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 54. Cf. Bernhard Waldenfels, *Topographie des Fremden: Studien zur Phänomenologie des Fremden 1* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1997), 135–136.

⁴³ Cf. Michel Henry, *L’Essence de la manifestation*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2011), 91.

⁴⁴ Cf. Henry, *L’Essence*, 81–104.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 279.

⁴⁶ Cf. Rolf Kühn, *Leiblichkeit als Lebendigkeit: Michel Henrys Lebensphänomenologie absoluter Subjektivität als Affektivität* (Freiburg and München: Karl Alber, 1992), 74. Cf. Henry, *L’Essence*, 281: “[...] le mode selon lequel s’accomplit la réception de l’horizon n’est pas celui qui fonde la réceptivité de la transcendance elle-même.”

givenness or self-affectivity is necessary, given that every self-affectation has an immanent drive to a secondary self-transcendence as the ecstatic reference to the world, i. e. intentionality.⁴⁷ This reveals Henry's understanding of material phenomenology: "It is only because we are already given to ourselves that we can be affected by the world"⁴⁸. If one follows Henry, immanence is thus the essence of transcendence.⁴⁹ The perception of the ecstatic requires the appearing of the self, of subjectivity. Now this self-manifestation of subjectivity must be thought as pure immanence and presence, free of any difference, alterity, rupture and temporal shift or lack.⁵⁰ However, it is also a manifestation that is not to be conceived as intentional but rather as a passive manifestation via self-affectivity. Henry extends this phenomenology of subjectivity to a phenomenology of the body or flesh to show that the selfhood that he described in his early work – *L'essence de la manifestation* – is not to be understood as a Heideggerian *mineness* [*Jemeinigkeit*] but rather it should be determined by an anonymous pathos, the passivity of the flesh or body.⁵¹ Nonetheless, how should one think of this passivity in the immanent self-givenness of life? Henry answers this question in his theological writings, whereby he distinguishes between a strong, naturating or transcendental self-affectivity of life – which Henry calls 'God' and is conditioned in nothing but itself – and a weak naturated self-affectivity, characterized by a passivity, the self-affectivity of man.⁵² Now, all self-affectivity requires a selfhood, which cannot be my own action or depending on me but rather is generated or conceived [*gezeugt*] by the strong self-affectivity of God. Selfhood as a gift. However, the selfhood of the strong self-affectivity is conceived by itself in the 'son' as the first living, whereas God is absolute life. The relation of father and son is again described as an immanent relation without alterity, whereby one could say that the immanence of human life as passive self-affectivity is founded on the immanence of the naturating self-affectivity of God. Deprived of all alterity and difference, the self-affectivity of life comes down to an utterly present immediacy of phenomenality, Life or God.⁵³ This leaves no space for transcendence. In self-affectivity life speaks itself about itself, like some kind of ventriloquism.⁵⁴ The problem seems to be founded on the elimination of

⁴⁷ Cf. Henry, *L'Essence*, 590.

⁴⁸ Dan Zahavi, "Subjectivity and Immanence in Michel Henry," in *Subjectivity and transcendence*, ed. Arne Grøn et al. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 133–148 (134).

⁴⁹ Cf. Henry, *L'Essence*, 309.

⁵⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 279; 350.

⁵¹ Cf. Bernhard Waldenfels, *Phänomenologie in Frankreich* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 351–352; Hans-Dieter Gondek and László Tengelyi, *Neue Phänomenologie in Frankreich* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011), 149–151.

⁵² Cf. Michel Henry, *I am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 106–107.

⁵³ Cf. Waldenfels, *Hyperphänomene*, 406–407.

⁵⁴ Cf. Bernhard Waldenfels, *Idiome des Denkens: Deutsch-Französische Gedankengänge II* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2005), 25–26.

all affection by the other or alien [*Fremdaffektion*]. Every relation to the other [*Fremdbezug*] is secondary to an originary self-relation.⁵⁵ The rejection of the metaphysics of the ontological monism – in aiming at a pure extra-ordinary – shifts to a hyper-physics in the meaning of a hyper-essentialism.⁵⁶ The problem of pure and self-sufficient presence is simply translocated to a higher but still immediate level. Compared with this originary immediacy, metaphysics has to be considered inauthentic [*uneigentlich*], itself being a classical metaphysical gesture.

5. Transcendence as Radical Alterity

In this final step, I would like to take a brief look at another way of thematising transcendence phenomenologically based on the considerations of Waldenfels, Levinas and Derrida, namely transcendence as radical alterity or alienness. Transcendence would then be described in at least five motives.

The *first* motive is the question of order or orders. In a philosophy of alterity, the thought of a comprehensive order or a basic order is to be rejected. In contrast to this, orders appear in the 'potentialis'. Thus, orders are always excluding and including. The alien is defined as a limit phenomenon par excellence. The alien is the extraordinary that exceeds the boundaries of any order, withdraws itself from the order and presents itself as a disturbance of this order. This motive can also be found in Levinas' considerations on the saying and the said. The saying shows itself only in the said but is never completely merged into it. There is always an excess of the saying.⁵⁷

Second, the experience of such an excess of the order and how it comes to pass may be described by a pathic-based and responsive-directed phenomenology. Alien is what strikes us and what invades us. The affected or patient occurs in the dative or accusative case, as a *me* or *to me*. Thus, pathos is to be understood as an encounter in which the 'whence [*Woher*]' of 'being-struck [*Getroffensein*]' is neither based on a 'what' nor suspended in a 'what for'.⁵⁸ The *Where-of* [*Wovon*] of the being-struck or encounter transforms into the *to which* [*Worauf*] of the response, in relating to it in speaking and acting.⁵⁹ This responding is now a speaking or doing that does not begin with oneself but elsewhere.⁶⁰ Thus,

⁵⁵ Cf. Bernhard Waldenfels, *Sozialität und Alterität: Modi sozialer Erfahrung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2015), 82, n. 9.

⁵⁶ Cf. Waldenfels, *Hyperphänomene*, 225.

⁵⁷ Cf. Bernhard Waldenfels, *Grundmotive einer Phänomenologie des Fremden* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2006), 15–33.

⁵⁸ Cf. Waldenfels, *Grundmotive*, 43.

⁵⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 44.

⁶⁰ Cf. Bernhard Waldenfels, *The Question of the Other* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2007), 31.

according to Waldenfels, the subject appears as a patient and respondent or *sujet à*. The encounter is now always too soon, the response is always too late: an original kind of anteriority. At this point, Waldenfels mentions the concept of the temporal-spatial diastasis. This emerging gap demands creative responses.⁶¹ However, pathos and response do not follow one another like two events, so they have to be imagined beyond all synchrony. The surplus of pathos that may never be completely used has to be emphasised: only if the alien is thought in terms of ‘pathos’ as disturbance, disruption, as a being-struck of something not determinable might one be able to free oneself from the ongoing back and forth of appropriation and expropriation and thus make the debate surrounding the alien more promising.⁶² One can find similar thoughts in Derrida’s phenomenological inquiry in *Voice and Phenomenon* and especially his motive of the *originative supplement*. In his deconstructive analysis of Husserl, Derrida comes across an originary temporal shift, a past, which has never been present. At the origin is always already the supplement, the origin is deferred. This view on temporality – as one can find it in Levinas’, Derrida’s and Waldenfels’ thought – also opens up new ways of thinking of the encounter of future, a future that is not thought based on immanence. Future is conceived in a messianic way, as *à venir*, the coming of the Other as *the always (yet) to come*, without any teleological completion and presentification. An eschatology that withdraws itself constantly in its coming as a non-anticipatable encounter.⁶³

Third, the question of the manner of experience is not to be separated from how to accommodate the alien. At this point, the concept of responsivity is introduced based on considerations of Waldenfels and Levinas.⁶⁴ However, more basic than the Levinasian responsibility, responsivity stands for an “answerability [...] by which we do not render account for what we have said or done, but through which we take up what comes from Others.”⁶⁵ The responsive difference becomes relevant here. “That *with which* I respond owes its meaning to the challenge *to which* I respond.”⁶⁶ One has to keep in mind the diastasis here in which the ‘*where-of* [Wo-von] of the encounter’ transforms (verwandeln) into the ‘*to which* [Worauf] the answer relates’. The response is to a demand, separated into two parts: first of all, a demand is an appeal to someone and second of all a

⁶¹ Cf. Waldenfels, *Grundmotive*, 67.

⁶² Cf. *ibid.*, 54.

⁶³ Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994); Jacques Derrida, “Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy,” *Oxford Literary Review* 6, no. 2 (1984), 3–37; Levinas, “Questions and Answers,” 95–98; Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht et al.: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991).

⁶⁴ Cf. Waldenfels, *Grundmotive*, 56.

⁶⁵ Waldenfels, *Question*, 28.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

pretension that extends to a certain something.⁶⁷ “In the appeal I receive there arise claims that demand something from me [...]”⁶⁸

In accordance with the demand, the response is also separated into two parts: the answer (responsive content) and the response (responding event).⁶⁹ Through this separation, Waldenfels is able to enhance the unavoidability of the demand, since even if the answer does not concur with the content of the demand, there remains a response to the demand. “[N]o answer is also a response.”⁷⁰ Considering responsiveness, Waldenfels concludes that it demands a logic of responding that leads to a responsive rationality originating from responding. This logic comprises numerous aspects: *first*, the alien demand gains a peculiar *singularity*, which facilitates a different kind of seeing, thinking and acting; *second*, the demand possesses an *unavoidability*; and *third*, the demand is given an *uncatchable delay* that leads to the aforementioned time displacement, the diastasis. *Fourth*, there is an *indissoluble asymmetry* between demand and response. They do not converge towards a common goal. However, Waldenfels notes that a response within this logic has to be considered as being *creative*. “[W]henever we respond, we invent to some extent that which we respond, but we do not invent that to which we are responding.”⁷¹ “One begins, but coming from elsewhere.”⁷²

Fourth, by means of the concept of *bodiliness* [*Leiblichkeit*], the matter of the interweaving of the alien and one’s own can also be clarified, the alien within ourselves. According to Waldenfels, bodiliness and alienness are most intimately interwoven since a bodily entity is never completely with itself. The human is not master in his own home.⁷³ *This alienness of the body* is linked to the *alienness of the Other*. *Intersubjectivity* is replaced by *intercorporeity*.⁷⁴ The Other encounters us in the form of a pathos, an alien-affection demanding responses, which constitutes community.⁷⁵

Now *fifth*, according to Levinas, within the demand of the Other there is always already the Third. This is why I would like to amplify the concept of the Third to show how Waldenfels as well as Derrida before him try to take Levinas’ considerations further. He stresses that the matter of interweaving does not lead back to a comprehensive or fundamental order since the demand truly comes from elsewhere.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, incursion, evasion, eruption, rupture, interrup-

⁶⁷ Cf. Waldenfels, *Grundmotive*, 59.

⁶⁸ Waldenfels, *Question*, 25.

⁶⁹ Cf. Waldenfels, *Grundmotive*, 60–61.

⁷⁰ Waldenfels, *Question*, 27.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 34.

⁷³ Cf. Waldenfels, *Topographie*, 27.

⁷⁴ Cf. Waldenfels, *Grundmotive*, 85.

⁷⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 85; Waldenfels, *Sozialität*.

⁷⁶ Cf. Waldenfels, *Topographie*, 124–125.

tion, etc. presuppose orders. The extra-ordinary is a contrast-phenomenon to order. It is about a necessary comparison of the incomparable from the perspective of a third instance, or order.⁷⁷ This leads to every justice inhabiting the aspect of injustice. However, only in this way can the genesis of order and its contingency be made visible.

6. Theological Transcendence as Radical Alterity

It seems to me that regarding the aspects of radical transcendence or alterity, excess, phenomenality, passivity and bodiliness, this last phenomenological attempt could provide helpful insights for describing the structure and temporality of revelation and faith as a gift without falling back into metaphysical assumptions or theories and taking radical transcendence as an element of revelation seriously. Especially if we think of hiddenness as an element of revelation based on a theology of the cross and incarnation, the thoughts on bodiliness, supplement, re-presentation and de-presentation or mediality could be very productive for theology:

First, transcendence as withdrawal in excess describes *transcendence as an element of phenomenality*. Transcendence could thus be described as an element of revelation.

Second, this transcendence cannot be reduced to another – this time other-worldly – ‘what’, ‘cause’ or ‘metaphysical’ instance, which would simply reiterate the game of presence on a higher level. It is radical alterity that shows itself only in the response, as trace, as disruption of orders. It is not the ‘pure extraordinary’ but rather the *extra-ordinary* that shows itself only in the order.

Third, phenomenality is thereby constitutively connected to *bodiliness*, to *incarnation*, to *scripture*: in short, *mediality*. Regarding the concept of the *Third*, *intercorporeity* and the *alienness of the Other* new ways of thematising different ecclesiological aspects are also opened up.

Fourth, a phenomenological approach in the horizon of radical alterity as an encounter that describes the experience of such an excess by a *pathic-based and responsive-directed* phenomenology could deliver a fruitful insight into the constitution and structure of faith. Faith as pathic-based responding, faith in the accusative or dative case. It is not an intentional action, starting all by itself; rather, it is faith out of *pathos*, in which *grace* (*sola gratia*), *faith and testimony* come together.

Fifth, the *temporal-spatial diastasis*, the emerging gap between pathos and response that demands creative responses and from which a responsive rationality – in its five elements of singularity, unavailability, temporal delay,

⁷⁷ Cf. Waldenfels, *Grundmotive*, 127–128.

indissoluble asymmetry, and responding creativity – originates could help us to describe faith as a responding constitutively unable to presentificate the demand, the encounter to which it responds, and thus faith that leaves space for radical alterity, for transcendence.

Revolution of Passivity

Agamben on Paul and Politics

Taylor Weaver

1. Introduction

In a thorough genealogy of critique, protest, or reform Paul retains a prominent place. Adolf von Harnack noted this by pointing to his presence in the thought of Augustine and Luther, as well as his place in the clash between Marcion and the Apostolic Fathers.¹ Such an estimation of Paul's revolutionary place can be updated through a coterie of modern touchstones: Kierkegaardian connections, Nietzschean anti-Paulinism, and Heidegger's mystic Paul.² But, also by pointing to contemporary manifestations of the philosophical reception of Paul. Such receptions nearly ubiquitously are interested in types of revolutionary political thought and activity. This Pauline trope is easily obscured because of social functionalist approaches in New Testament studies,³ as well as Paul's continued normalisation; seeing radical trajectories in Pauline thought depends, then, on the context in which he is read.

This essay teases out further radical trajectories of political protest in Paul. But, in order to unearth and make apparent novel Pauline activity this essay reads Paul alongside Agamben, one of Paul's most well known philosophical re-interpreters. What does Agamben bring to the table; or, what has not already been said about Agamben and Paul? Despite a bountiful collection of work contouring the edges of Agamben's Pauline figuration, Agamben's political philo-

¹ Adolf von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. 1, trans. Neil Buchanan (London: Williams and Norgate, 1897), 136, as seen in Simon Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless* (London: Verso, 2012), 156.

² Simon Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless*, 155–56.

³ See L. L. Welborn, "Marxism and Capitalism in Pauline Studies," in *Paul and Economics: A Handbook*, ed. Thomas R. Blanton, IV and Raymond Pickett (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 370–76. Welborn points out that so-called new consensus authors, such as Wayne Meeks, worked from a functionalist perspective, assuming the stabilising impacts of Pauline Christianity. In light of this overwhelming perspective among Pauline scholars, it is necessary to keep one's eyes open for destabilising possibilities. As Welborn notes, "as a functionalist, Meeks assumes that 'the sort of questions to be asked about the early Christian movement are those about how it worked' within a structure whose hierarchies [it] does not challenge" (p. 371).

sophical work has rarely come into contact directly with Paul's *collective experiments*; Paul's apostleship, his messianic centre, reverberates in the agitative form of his trans-local *ekklesia*. The juridical-factual conditions of the *ekklesia* are expropriated, lived *hōs mē* in a mode of passivity.

In order to offer an augmented radical Paul, this essay underscores passivity and aspects of withdrawal in Agamben. Drawing out passivity will require paying attention to: 1) Agambenian inoperativity; and, 2) noting how passivity and withdrawal have manifested concretely, especially in the case of the Tarnac affair, a confrontation that displays the agitating effects of withdrawal well. Elaborating the Agambenian traces in the Tarnac affair provide a bridge to underlining aspects of withdrawal in Paul that go beyond Agamben's own delineation of inoperativity in Paul. Agamben's past work helpfully points to temporal incisions "in the Messiah," but ignore Pauline activities gesturing to the deactivation, the "as if not," of the community's socio-political place. New aspects of a Pauline "form-of-life" emerge, then, through reading Agambenian concepts of passivity, withdrawal and inoperativity as types of political agitation that parallel Pauline social activity. Thus, Paul's political-social movements become a type of agitation inviting change. This isn't revolution, however, as the agitation comes precisely through the suspension of the laws of socio-political order.

2. A Broad Passivity

The Coming Community, like Agamben's *Homo Sacer* series, is concerned with a larger problematic, namely the subordination of being by modern politics and ethics. Or, put another way, Agamben seeks an attempt to think being that renders it inoperative. In fact, in *The Coming Community* he makes clear that the "paradigm of the coming politics" is "inoperativeness and decreation."⁴ This represents an eschewal of attempts to ground human nature in specific, proper blueprints, such as *homo economicus*, or *homo approprians*. The human subject is only grounded in a common through the impossibility of humanity's union. Or, as Agamben writes, "humans are being separated by what unites them."⁵

In a general sense, this expresses a radical potentiality. In another, more specific sense, it is a gloss on the history of political work as the "work of man

⁴ Greg Bird, *Containing Community: From Political Economy to Ontology in Agamben, Esposito, and Nancy* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2016), 111, quoting Agamben, *La comunità che viene* (Torino, Italy: Bollati Boringhieri, 2001), 92.

⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 115. See also, Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: SUP, 2016), 237–38. He writes: "Alone by oneself' is an expression of intimacy. We are together and very close, but between us there is not an articulation or a relation that unites us. We are united to one another in the form of our being alone. What customarily constitutes the sphere of privacy here becomes public and common."

as man.” This account of political work has usually been read as a type of operativity, and thus always excludes a certain kind of inoperative life. Operativity, then, has made the slide from the metaphysical and political task to the biopolitical, or to life itself. Operativity is the subsumption of life into the cascading machines of operations, or the work of the law. We can see here the beginnings of Agamben’s biopolitical concerns that blossom more fully after *The Coming Community*.

Agamben points to the possibility of impotentiality, or that there could be an improper inoperativity instead of a compulsion to work. For Agamben impotentiality resides in being one’s own lack, or in relation to one’s own incapacity. Agamben draws on *Bartleby*, for instance, as a source for liberation that follows from potential re-imaginings of forms-of-life “by deactivating the dispositive of the sovereign exception through the exposure of the hiatus, silence, discontinuity between band and life.”⁶ As Alejandro Vallega suggests, in order to escape the problems of operativity, there must be a rethinking of “ontology beyond metaphysics and the rationalist logic of production.”⁷ Perhaps more important for the purposes here are the Paulinist resonances that are deeply intertwined with concepts of inoperativity. These are keenly pointed to by Ward Blanton when he notes that the agitative effects of withdrawing communities participate in a coming politics. This is made explicit when one recognises the importance of unplugging from the “everyday function of contemporary life” with a “view to the transformative wonder about how the new life, the new age, might ‘reappropriate’ and ‘reinvent’ our inherited identities and modes of living.”⁸ This, for Blanton, is made manifest in a realisation of the law’s uselessness, and becomes clear when thinking about concrete political realities connected to Agamben. But, inoperative aspects are also directly brought out of Paul through Agamben’s reading. He writes that for Paul the Messiah “deactivates and renders inoperative the law as well as the angels and, in this way, reconciles them with God.”⁹ Further, for Agamben, Paul’s life in the Messiah is

[...] marked by a special indicator of inoperativity, which in some ways anticipates the sabbatism of the Kingdom in the present: the *hos me*, the “as not.” In the same way that the Messiah has brought about the law and, at the same time, rendered it inoperative [...],

⁶ Alejandro A. Vallega, “After Lives: On Giorgio Agamben and the Coloniality of the Sovereign Exception (from a Latin American Perspective),” in *Contemporary Italian Political Philosophy*, ed. Antonio Calcagno (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2015), 181.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 182.

⁸ Ward Blanton, “The Invisible Committee as Pauline Gesture: Anarchic Politics from Tiqun to Tarnac,” in *Saint Paul and Philosophy: The Consonance of Ancient and Modern Thought*, ed. George van Kooten, Gert-Jan van der Heiden, and Antonio Cimino (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 300.

⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom of Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa and Matteo Mandarini (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 166.

so the *hos me* maintains and, at the same time, deactivates in the present all the juridical conditions and all the social behaviors of the members of the messianic community.¹⁰

These suggestive Pauline glosses are possibly complicated by two further issues: the prevalence of competing radical Pauls that, in contrast, may seem more viable for reading him in the modes with which this essay is concerned; and, critiques of Agamben that suggest his political philosophy has little connection to concrete situations, which would delimit viability for a thorough connection with Pauline politico-social activity.

Competing radical Pauls, especially figurations by Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, break from the social functional readings of New Testament scholars mentioned in the introduction. And, in fact, in some crucial ways they add to important elements encountered in the Pauline figuration I am constructing. Note Badiou's subjectivated Paul. Such a Paul is thoroughly radicalised by the eventual impossibility of his Christophany, which breaks thoroughly from the 1st century Mediterranean material situation. Such an interpellation, the calling of one to fidelity to the Event, breaks through the existing regimes of discourse. In a sense, it cannot help but be a type of withdrawal from an opposition of dominant forms (for Paul the binary of Jewish and Greek cosmologies). However, while Badiou's interpellated Paul is compelling and useful for his project, Agamben's reading invites a layering of the complex of a messianic calling of Paul onto the foundation of a historical situation that intimates a continuation with the past (the thoroughly Jewish Paul), while providing a revelatory break that occurs through dwelling in an inoperative mode. And, further, that historical foundation invites not simply reading the Paul who creates communities of Empire resistance as individually called, but it allows for thinking of the movements of the Pauline community differently, as will be elaborated in the final section.

However, in order to think of Paul in such a manner, there needs to be a reckoning with the second issue, namely the seeming disconnection from the political. In order to highlight the political dimension I want to bring to the fore notions of passivity. Passiveness, in fact, is a political activity (though this should not negate the fact that Agamben is concerned with not giving into the "practical prejudice"),¹¹ one seen in Agamben's *oeuvre* as variously, and in differing shades, as "impotentiality," "inoperativity," a "messianic coming," a "community of withdrawal," and the figure of Bartleby the Scrivener.^{12,13} Inoperativity, as an

¹⁰ Ibid, 248.

¹¹ Ibid., 105.

¹² Robert Sinnerbrink, "Impropriety/Inauthenticity," in *The Agamben Dictionary*, ed. Alex Murray and Jessica Whyte (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 101–102. These terms have different nuances, and separate histories. Inoperativity, for instance, being borrowed from Bataille and showing up in Blanchot. Impropriety relates to the use of "authentic" and "proper" in Heidegger's thought. Crucial for our purposes is what Robert Sinnerbrink writes about impotentiality, connecting the term to Agamben's disavowal of appropriative gestures.

important Agambenian gesture, can be seen in a type of ontological debt, one that eschews economic valuation and flows directly from the broader thought of Heidegger, who grounds much of the political philosophical thought of not only Agamben, but a larger collection of thinkers surrounding him, most notably Jean-Luc Nancy and Roberto Esposito.^{14,15} This debt is the common withdrawal that defines humanity. Agamben, for instance, writes in *The Coming Community*

Since being most proper to humankind is being one's own possibility or potentiality, then and only for this reason (that is, insofar as humankind's most proper being – being potential – is in a sense lacking, insofar as it can not-be, it is therefore devoid of foundation and humankind is not always already in possession of it) humans have and feel debt. Humans in their potentiality to be and to not-be, are, in other words, always already in debt; they always already have a bad conscience without having to commit any blameworthy act.¹⁶

Agamben draws on the Heideggerian notion of ontological debt, being-guilty. And, this being-guilty of the individual resonates with the originary guilt that flows from Heidegger's interest in Luther, and a Lutheran Paul.¹⁷ There is a theological resonance here, one that admits basic creedal realities that have been a major part of the Christian theological tradition since at least Augustine. Inoperativity, however, has a more technical definition beyond connections with

This disavowal distances Agamben from Heidegger, but connects him to a particular figuration of Paul that “depends on the ‘use’ to which we put the impropriety” of our historically conditioned existence. Crucially, Sinnerbrink's reading of Agamben's *The Coming Community* points to a possible improper (non-essentialised and non-operational) existence that eschews the “proper,” while also not giving into nihilism.

¹³ Alex Murray, “Passivity,” in *The Agamben Dictionary*, ed. Alex Murray and Jessica Whyte (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 148. While Murray identifies passivity as an inessential concept in Agamben's corpus, I disagree primarily because of its close association with inoperativity, impotentiality, and other, similar terms. It is true that, explicitly, the term does not show up often; however, the concept is woven throughout Agamben's texts, playing an important role and connecting directly to those more important terms like inoperativity, impotentiality, and withdrawal.

¹⁴ Nancy and Esposito, notably, have been engaged in similar work to Agamben, especially in regards to the intersection of ontology, community, and politics.

¹⁵ Thanos Zartaloudis, “Heidegger, Martin,” in *The Agamben Dictionary*, ed. Alex Murray and Jessica Whyte (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 91–92. As Zartaloudis makes clear, there is a strong connection between Heidegger's reading of potentiality and the use of the concept by Agamben. These are not the only important shared discourses between the two thinkers, and any perusal of Agamben's *oeuvre*, no matter how superficial, ends in a confrontation with Heidegger's broader thought.

¹⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 43–44.

¹⁷ See, Martin Heidegger, *Phenomenology of Religious Life*, trans Matthias Fritsch and Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004). Also see Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless*, 167–69. As Critchley notes, Heidegger comes to Paul through Luther. It should be noted, as well, that Agamben relates many key Pauline concepts to a variety of philosophical thinkers in his commentary on Romans, *The Time that Remains*, including Walter Benjamin (whose work includes incisive readings of messianism), G. W. F. Hegel, Karl Marx, and Max Weber.

Heidegger. Prozorov notes that inoperativity “denotes a specific kind of action that [...] does not minimise but rather augments the possibilities of use,” which will become more clear as we explore examples of political movements close to Agamben.¹⁸

This at best seems to result in a weak politics, as if Agamben is, as Greg Bird writes, “incapable of grappling with real material relationships.”¹⁹ No one denies that this is one of the more frustrating aspects of Agamben’s work. Despite the political angle of Agamben’s work, overt prescriptive aspects are absent precisely because he does not often touch contemporary political drama, instead working on subjects that seem tangential.²⁰ The question remains: Where does the theoretical work touch the practical, on-the-ground reality of a situation? Through this absence Agamben is often glossed as entertaining either a pessimistic nihilism, or a head-in-the-cloud messianic mysticism. If Agamben’s project has a political end, it could appear as a brotherhood of monks caricatured as out-of-touch, “religious,” committed to forms-of-life that are essentially privileged and therefore exacerbate tensions;²¹ in other words, a-political in most senses of the term. Agamben becomes a thinker whose concerns and theoretical projects are easy to brush aside because they are read as abstracted musings.²²

3. Passivity and Political Agitation

What about images of practical politics? Two significant points can help elaborate the previous section and bridge to the figure of Paul. Firstly, in thinking with Agamben, it is important to recall the radical Italian political past that informs his context. The early 60s – late 70s were a time that marked the emergence of radical political movements that preceded and shaped the recently popular black bloc tactics.²³ Autonomia movements generally “withdrew” through obscuring

¹⁸ Sergei Prozorov, *Agamben and Politics: A Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 33; Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*. Agamben, writing after Prozorov’s definition, makes this more clear in *The Use of Bodies*.

¹⁹ Bird, *Containing Community*, 105.

²⁰ Prozorov, *Agamben and Politics*, 30–32. As Prozorov notes, Agamben’s political mode is described as “paradigmatic” in a Kuhnian sense. A singular instance, such as the *Muselmann*, or *homo sacer*, “illuminates the set to which it belongs.” Such specific historical phenomena (though, a paradigm can escape strictly historical phenomena, such as the figure of Bartleby) have significance that go beyond their context, establishing a “broader problematic context.”

²¹ Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life*, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

²² Prozorov, *Agamben and Politics*, 2–3. Prozorov notes, for instance, that typically readers of Agamben miss his “affirmation of a radically new politics,” and that when this politics is noted it is normally dismissed as “utopian, naive and incoherent.”

²³ Black bloc tactics are broadly anonymous protestations of capital and state governance that usually occur around high profile political events. They are marked by non-violent protest

their identity, stealing in obvious manners, and trying to live out anti-capitalism through not-so-subtle worklessness; anti-capitalist and anti-state action were the primary goals of these radical movements. The hope was that capitalism would be subverted, perhaps even stopped, if the machine's operational power was cut off.²⁴ The operation of the machine cannot persist without subjects that embrace formation through practices of capitalist work. Because of the steady dissolution of rights under diminished labour union power (and the rigidity of Keynesianism), *Autonomia* movements, while wildly variant, embraced the "repudiation of the work ethic and alienated labour in favour of personal and community development and fulfilment."²⁵ Workers and students were key. These political forms contextualise Agamben's social space even in the absence of biographical information detailing concrete activities or associations that he himself had during this period. In fact, *Autonomia* movements envelope the entire left political scene in Italy during the 60s and 70s, and its thinkers and impacts are still detected in the 21st century.²⁶ Agamben, then, was confronted with these political activities and organisations that developed in Italy, not to mention broader activist movements in France and other places.²⁷

Secondly, evidence points to Agambenian connections with the French anarchist community at Tarnac.²⁸ The history of this community needs to be briefly recounted as it perfectly illustrates the reaction of the "sovereign" power to withdrawing subjects. A group of 20 university students moved to the small, sparsely populated Tarnac region of France in 2004 to start a collectivist community. The community bloomed to approximately 100 people by 2008. At around the same time the anonymous collective, the Invisible Committee, released a manifesto, *The Coming Insurrection*, an anti-capitalist work advocating disruptions of state-infrastructure as a means of political interruption. The popularity of the manifesto attracted attention of government agencies. Soon after, the French government was on high alert, and an "insurrectionary" event happened. A heavily travelled French rail line was interrupted, having two horse-shoe shaped rods placed across overhead wires, resulting in significant delays. Soon after a heavily

and damage of private property that represent the domination of capitalism. Black bloc tactics received considerable attention during the inauguration of Donald Trump on 20 January 2017, but were present as well at the inauguration of Barack Obama's first term as President in 2008.

²⁴ Sylvere Lotringer and Christian Marazzi, "The Return of Politics," in *Autonomia: Post-Political Politics*, ed. Sylvere Lotringer (New York: Semiotext[e], 1980), 8–21.

²⁵ David E. Lowes, *The Anti-Capitalist Dictionary: Movements, Histories and Motivations* (London: Zed Books, 2006), 19.

²⁶ Antonio Negri, for example, was a prominent political theorist during this period.

²⁷ David Kishik, *The Power of Life: Agamben and the Coming Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 1; Prozorov, *Agamben and Politics*, 33. Importantly, Kishik notes, in a biographical section supplied by Agamben, that Agamben was present during the tumultuous 68 movement in France (p. 1). Prozorov writes that "Autonomist Marxist movements in Italy in the late 1970s" influenced Agamben's understanding of inoperativity (p. 33).

²⁸ Blanton, "The Invisible Committee," 295–310.

armed contingent of around 150 police stormed the Tarnac community and arrested twenty people, detaining ultimately nine. Evidence against them initially included contact with the manifesto, *The Coming Insurrection*, and even rumours that some in the small farming community had been involved in authoring the manifesto.²⁹ They were labelled terrorists by the French state, though ultimately released due to lack of evidence.

Interestingly, Agamben has possible connections to the Invisible Committee, and there are certain resonances of his work in *The Coming Insurrection*.³⁰ Turns of phrase, terms, and a messianic, almost Paulinist, inclination fill the book, and the broader work of the Invisible Committee.³¹ What is perhaps most important here is the possibility that this community represents an agitating withdrawal; “terrorist” activities that are only incidentally related provide enough justification for the state to perform extreme actions against a withdrawn, farming community. In fact, as French journalists have made clear, it was not merely the insurrectionary event that precipitated the state’s action; they had been surveilling the community for months.³²

These events and movements may seem on the surface to not represent a Bartleby-esque withdrawal. But, in Agamben’s work on Bartleby, the clear fascination is with the figure who, as a legal scribe, withdraws from his work saying simply, “I prefer not to.” As Jessica Whyte, in her book on Agamben’s political thought, *Catastrophe and Redemption*, writes, “in Bartleby, Agamben sees an approach to the law that [...] makes it possible to unwork the sovereign relation.”³³ This is the sense in which Bartleby is “messianic,” as for Agamben the messianic is a weak force throughout history that undoes the normative force of the law. In this sense, a loose connection can be made, perhaps gesturing to performative agitation, a communal inoperativity.

4. Pauline Protestations

Fascination with Paul has been briefly noted above, especially the messianic aspect of this Paulinism that draws Agamben toward the apostle. But, in what follows a tentative passive reading of Paul is proffered, an experiment in thinking Pauline action as realising inoperativity through socially *transgressive*, revolutionary action. The use of “transgressive” is intentional, as it steps back from the qualifier “subversive” that is so very popular among New Testament scholars,

²⁹ Ibid., 299.

³⁰ Blanton, “The Invisible Committee,” 295. Blanton quotes Agamben as saying that the writers of the manifesto are “friends of mine.”

³¹ Ibid., 296–97, 299–300, 304–09.

³² Ibid., 298.

³³ Jessica Whyte, *Catastrophe and Redemption: The Political Thought of Giorgio Agamben* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2013), 98.

such as N. T Wright or J. D. Crossan; their Pauline figurations come too close to exemplifying a sort of theological hero who is exempt from any sustained criticism.³⁴

If messianism is partly about suspending the law, and thus becomes a crucial area of exposure between religion and law, then it gains its inoperative importance in that suspension. Part of Paul's messianic thought, thinking which aims toward resistance³⁵, can be utilised for this purpose by noting the obverse values that make up a sort of Pauline ontology.³⁶ It may be that the only way to truly grasp this Pauline figuration is through accepting an "anti-imperial" Paul.³⁷ While departing from grounding a Pauline figuration solely in historical-critical work, it is important to note the division among scholars on the degree that Paul was "anti-imperial," exemplified most famously in the public debates between John Barclay and Wright.³⁸ However, even critics of the anti-imperial Pauline figuration, such as Barclay, admit that a Paul uninterested in referencing Empire is still concerned about the contestation of powers. He cannot help but present a counter-social ethic. But, the key toward the "passive" Paul is precisely in noting that he is not subversive, or, rather, that he *cannot* subvert and will not change the social sphere. At best, he is only able to make space for communities that transgress those values, and through such transgression point toward possible futures-to-come. Agamben, while abstracting such a notion, points to this when he notes, in a Heideggerian fashion, the

³⁴ Robert J. Myles, "The Fetish for a Subversive Jesus," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 14:1 (2016), 52–70. Myles' article, while focusing on Jesus, exemplifies a tendency that is quite clear when surveying Wright's Paul scholarship.

³⁵ Here, resistance is referred to in as most a broad way as possible. I do not, here, want to make any claims regarding the historical Paul and anti-imperial discourse. Instead, in a more broad way, it is much more difficult for an interlocutor to deny that the values and theological/ethical ideology of Paul is *wholly* compatible, *prima facie*, with the Roman Empire. Pauline communities contained forms of resistance, even if these were superficial.

³⁶ Whyte, *Catastrophe and Redemption*, 89. The use of "ontology" here is meant to be contentious. Here, it is being used in a broadly Agambenian sense, in that Paul is not being read as a thinker of simple social relations, but as a political thinker whose *oeuvre* invites passive political gestures that say something about reality. Whyte, in *Catastrophe and Redemption*, notes that for Agamben it is in "destabilization of metaphysical foundations, particularly of the human, in the camps that he sees the possibility of a profane salvation." Here, again, there is a resonating ontological edge. Crucially, Whyte carries on noting that it "is in the very danger consequent to the destabilization of the category of the human that Agamben identifies the possibility of a politics that would no longer be premised on the creation of a bare life."

³⁷ This has become a contentious claim, though perhaps most importantly because of work in postcolonial criticism which recognises that many biblical texts merely replace one form of domination for another.

³⁸ See John M. G. Barclay, *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2016), for an overview of Barclay's arguments against an anti-imperial Paul, including his side of the debate with Wright. For an audio version of the famous debate, see http://www.andyrowell.net/andy_rowell/2007/11/audio-from-a-fe.html, accessed on November 1, 2017.

queer space of *kairos*, a suspension of time that, while noting the past, anxiously awaits an unstable, infinite futurity.

Transgressive values have the possibility to create in the sovereign the response that the Tarnac community received from the French state. Instead of direct action, state powers are agitated precisely through the withdrawal, the frustration we see with *Bartleby's* employer at his response when asked to perform his necessary duties: "I prefer not to." Paul's messianism is an attempt at relaying a division in time, and while Agamben sees this, perhaps most clearly, represented in 1 Corinth 7:29–31, his insistence that the *ekklesia* is connected to the *klesis*, or interpellation of the subject, leaves room for thinking Paul's community building attempts as an interruption, a form of withdrawal, perhaps a "revocation of the vocation."³⁹ Agamben uses such language to point to a hollowing out of the messianic subject, and this hollowing out is precisely an embracing of inoperativity. Thinking this way, Paul's community building becomes an inchoate attempt at transgressing values in such a way that a radical potentiality (the potential not be actualised) is opened up for the subject, that the community becomes known through "preferring not" to operationalise within a sovereign structure; this puts Paul's missional activity in a different, explicitly political light. This is the key to impotentiality in Agamben, aligning with the recognition that there is always the potentiality within the Pauline community to actualise their relation to the broader societal structure.⁴⁰ Pauline communities irrupt within a form of antagonistic relations with broader communities and structures of power that attempt to call the subject to a particular mode of being, namely to a broader structure that admits a pyramidal reality of patronage that ends in the penultimate dominance of the Roman Empire, second only to deity.⁴¹ Pauline communities, through withdrawing from these power structures, realise a basic impotentiality. Resistance is founded precisely through a subjectivation that notes a *Bartlebian* withdrawal, but in strategic ways that agitate within the irruption of messianic time. In the midst of catastrophe one finds redemption. Or, as Whyte writes in relation to Agamben, it is "precisely from the darkest

³⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 31, 41.

⁴⁰ Kevin Attell, "Potentiality/Impotentiality," in *The Agamben Dictionary*, ed. Alex Murray and Jessica Whyte (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 160.

⁴¹ John K. Chow, "Patronage in Roman Corinth," in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. Richard Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), 104–125; see also the lively discussion in Richard Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000); John K. Chow, *A Study of Social Networks in Corinth* (Worcester, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992); Adam Winn, ed., *An Introduction to Empire in the New Testament* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2016); and Warren Carter, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament: An Essential Guide* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006). For example, Chow notes, writing about patronage systems, that the "networks of relationships in Corinth can roughly be seen as a hierarchy made up of the emperor, Roman officials, local notables, and the populace."

depths of modern biopolitics, from among the lives that border on death, that Agamben believes that a new politics of creative potentiality may emerge.”⁴²

Agamben utilises, foremost, Romans and Corinthians as significant sources for thinking about time, subjective interpellation, and the place of the messianic. Perhaps most famously he relies on *ta me onta* passages in Corinthians, as well as the famous “as if not” (as referenced above), texts that point to a epochal break in time through messianic flourish.⁴³ However, in order to recognise Paul as a thinker of withdrawal with Agamben, but also alongside those agitating political movements that parallel the passivity of a Bartleby who reveals the insecurities and cracked foundations of the law, it is necessary to recognise that passages supporting Agamben’s reading of the messianic also support a broader passivity that leaks into the communal structure. Pauline communities eschewed identitarian concerns in the modern sense (similar to the Agambenian expropriation, a messianic use of property without ownership), and this is perhaps the foremost popular conception of his community structure identified; we can note, then, communal formula in several places, most significantly Galatians 3:28 ff.⁴⁴ However, with regards explicitly to identity, these communities existed on the margins of society and eschewed any identification with imperial powers;⁴⁵ if there is an identity to be grasped, it is found in the suffering figure of Christ and enacted in rituals, like Eucharist. Marginality, then, subsists in a broad religio-politico-social realm, but likewise this “realm” is decidedly not an abstracted universalism, but instead takes place in lived life with a goal of “creating new patterns of common life.”⁴⁶ The question is what allows that common life to persist, and within what specific social place that common life occurs. Insofar as the communities Paul is surrounded by transgress various religio-politico-social assemblages through both organising resources and attempting to enact alternative accounts of com-

⁴² Whyte, *Catastrophe and Redemption*, 22.

⁴³ 1 Corinth 1:28; 7:29–31; Agamben, *The Time that Remains*, 23–37, 95–97; Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*, 139. In a rather straight forward section in *The Highest Poverty* he suggests that the “as-if-not” in Paul hints at inoperativity, writing “using the world as not using it or abusing it” is a central definition of the Christian form of life. Cf. Gert-Jan van der Heiden, “The Dialectics of Paul: On Exception, Grace, and Use in Badiou and Agamben,” *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 77, no. 3 (2016): 171–90. Van der Heiden’s article provides a great discussion on the importance of, especially, *katargein*, in Paul and Agamben, contributing to ongoing discussion about inoperativity in Paul.

⁴⁴ It is crucial to recognise that these formulae shift in orientation, but also that they are found in contested letters. This seems to suggest that they are foundational for the general understanding of a Pauline community. Likewise, it is also important to point out the history of these formulae, and their use in philosophical readings of Pauline universalism, that have become increasingly uncomfortable to New Testament scholars.

⁴⁵ This is precisely why some scholars have noted the seeming inconsistencies with the portrait of Paul encountered in the Acts of the Apostles.

⁴⁶ John M. G. Barclay, “Neither Jew nor Greek’: Paul and Multiculturalism,” in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. Mark G. Brett (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 1996), 210.

mon life, the newness agitates.⁴⁷ But, these agitations cannot persist, because a refusal always tempts a response from dominant cultural forms, despite Pauline communal forms being nearly identical, as if they are a type of suspension.

5. Conclusion

Does this lead to “practice”? Adam Kotsko may be helpful when he says of Agamben’s project:

What is to be done? Clearly we can’t expect any kind of ‘political program’ from Agamben [...] but, what I find most helpful about his work is the way he calls that very distinction into question. In Agamben’s account, an abstruse scholastic debate can have an astonishing impact on economic and governmental forms centuries later, while the way priests and monks (and sadomasochists) live out their day-to-day lives can have profound effects on the level of ontology [...] Theory and practice, study and play, both have equal rights here because both converge at the horizon of anthropogenesis – and thus give us the opportunity to make the small change that will allow us to become human again but differently this time. If Agamben is calling us to do anything, it is to dare to attempt that small change that will make all things new.⁴⁸

It is in this sense that we can detect paralysing realities in the Pauline story, not only through Paul’s community formation, but also through the explicit and subtle tweaks that Paul creates through his new forms of community that transgress normative social, political, and religious relations; these changes, no matter how the degree of subtlety or transgression, must be taken seriously, even if the only hope found within them is always coming, awaiting a redemptive swerve. While nuanced, these shifts have consequences that can be seen in later Christian assemblies that either reject the Pauline form through capitulating to sovereignty, or augment the Pauline forms, dying in the process. Death is a result of the agitation of the sovereign through choosing to not do that which we are told to do. Paul represents, then, to a degree that has not been explicitly brought out by Agamben, a loose representation of those forms of inoperativity that Agamben has frustrated some scholars with. Agamben does not often utilise the peculiar, shifting contemporary political scene, but we can see in Paul (like other temporally removed subjects used by Agamben) a political form that exhibits passive tendencies, a type of withdrawal that comes close to dangerously agitating sovereign forms.

⁴⁷ For Pauline resource organising, see especially 2 Corinthians 8–9.

⁴⁸ Adam Kotsko, “What is to be Done? The Endgame of the *Homo Sacer* Series,” in *Agamben’s Coming Philosophy: Finding a New Use for Theology*, ed. Adam Kotsko and Colby Dickinson (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 243–244.

The Beginning

K. E. Løgstrup's Metaphysics of Existence in the 1930s

Svein Aage Christoffersen

The critique of metaphysics has been a showpiece for Protestant theology at least from Albrecht Ritschl and onwards, via Wilhelm Hermann, Rudolf Bultmann and Karl Barth to Gerhard Ebeling. In this tradition, metaphysics is understood as irrelevant and misleading to the foundation of theology.

There are, however, two different critiques of metaphysics in Protestant theology, and the tension between them culminated in the 1930s, not least due to the increasing strength of neo-orthodox theology. In the 1930s, a denominational strain was introduced into the Protestant critique of metaphysics by the reformed theologian Karl Barth, on the one hand, and the Lutheran theologians Rudolf Bultmann and later Gerhard Ebeling, on the other. To Barth and his followers, metaphysics was just a kind of natural theology and hence, quite the opposite of God's revelation. Bultmann and the Lutherans, on the other hand, carried on the tradition from Ritschl and Hermann, maintaining that metaphysics conveys a false understanding of reality and especially a false understanding of what it is to be a human being. In the metaphysical way of thinking, man is understood in the same way in which we understand things in this world. Hence, the specific way in which man is present in the world, the human mode of existence is overlooked. Ebeling has a shorthand term for this Lutheran critique of metaphysics, "*Situationsvergessenheit*," "obliviousness to the human condition." The tension between these two strains of a critique of metaphysics was reinforced by the fact that Barth constantly suspected the existence of a kind of natural theology in the Lutheran position, while the Lutherans accused Barth and his followers of neglecting the human condition.¹

This Protestant critique of metaphysics was strengthened by Heidegger's critique of metaphysics as a kind of onto-theology. No wonder Protestant theology henceforth was eager to distance itself from any kind of metaphysical thinking. Metaphysics was natural theology, it was "*Situationsvergessenheit*" and it was ontotheology.

¹ Cf. Ruth Görnandt, *Die Metaphysikkritik Gerhard Ebelings und ihre Vorgeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

However, precisely in the 1930s, when the theological and philosophical critique of metaphysics was at its peak, a young Danish theologian and philosopher, K. E. Løgstrup, took the first steps of reintroducing metaphysics into Lutheran theology. To understand some of the presuppositions for this, we must look very briefly at the cultural and ideological situation in Germany in the 1930s.

1. German “Primalism” in the 1930s

In the 1930s, Germany was hit by a political, social and cultural tsunami. The Weimar republic fell apart, National socialism took over the political arena and, after the election in 1932, Adolf Hitler became the Chancellor of Germany, or “Reichskanzler.” Violent forces swept old hegemonies aside and established new orders. Everything was in a state of flux, open to change and transition, to renewal and metamorphosis. From a current point of view, well aware of the catastrophic end of it all, the course of events in Germany in the first half of the 1930s may be difficult to understand. Most difficult to comprehend is the sheer enthusiasm that pushed this political and cultural tsunami forward.

It is not just in retrospect that these years stand out as a turning point in German and European history. On the contrary, it was just this feeling of having reached a decisive turning point in history that fueled the tsunami with enthusiasm, excitement and great expectations. It was *Kairos*, it was the right moment for a new course and a new order of living, and people felt they were challenged by fate to grab it, in order not to fall back into a process of decline and dissolution. This turning point was long awaited. People were excited in their expectations and anticipations of a new beginning, of new possibilities for a healthy, strong and natural life, not just for the individual, but for society, for Germany. The old had to be swept away to make way for a new beginning. A powerful driving force in this enthusiasm was “an irresistible and seemingly inexplicable attraction to beginnings, a compulsive recollection of origins and roots.”²

August Wiedmann has called this longing for a new beginning “primalism.” Broadly speaking, primalism denotes the human impulse to penetrate to the presumed primal layers of existence:

Primalism is based on the belief that the deeper one cuts through the historically accumulated ‘crusts’ of thinking, sensing, feeling – of society, culture and religion – the closer one approaches the original core of things, the truth and the mystery of life. At its simplest, primalism seeks to restore man’s primary ties to his fellow men, to nature, to life, and to the Great Beyond.³

² August K. Wiedmann, *The German Quest for Primal Origins in Art, Culture and Politics 1900–1933. Die “Flucht in Urzustände”* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995), 4–5.

³ Wiedmann, *The German Quest*, 4.

From Wiedmann's point of view, origin stands for a diversity of things: "for foundations or beginnings cosmological, chronological, ontological, epistemological, sociological, psychological or aesthetic."⁴ Wiedmann focuses on three topics for this primalizing quest: Nature, Life and the Sacred.⁵

However, a common feature in all these different quests for primal origins is a comprehensive critique of modernity. Quoting Wiedmann again:

[...] the primalizing inclination springs from man's loss of meanings and direction in a complex modern world without unifying faith and culture. Primalism arises as the instinctive reflex of an uprooted mind or consciousness made homeless by modernity, a consciousness which gropes for a new sense of fullness. Almost invariably, the primalizing temperament takes issue with the failures of modernity, or with its 'corrosive' consequences.⁶

2. Løgstrup in Germany

In these turbulent years, K. E. Løgstrup was in Germany. He had passed his exams in theology at the University of Copenhagen in 1930, and then he went to Göttingen, Freiburg, Strasbourg, Tübingen, Berlin, Vienna and Paris. He attended lectures by Heidegger, Hans Lipps, Henry Bergson, Friedrich Gogarten and others, some of whom were clear supporters of the new political order in Germany. With regard to theology and especially with regard to philosophy, Løgstrup was like a sponge. He absorbed all the knowledge he could get, and he was excited by all the new ideas that broke through in the philosophy of life, in phenomenology, in the philosophy of existence, etc. He won a gold medal at the University of Copenhagen for his paper on Max Scheler in 1932, and he submitted his first manuscript for a doctorate in theology in 1933, investigating phenomenology as a turning point in the history of philosophy.

The first half of the 1930s was a formative period in Løgstrup's intellectual and personal life. He received impulses, impressions and ideas that marked his thinking for the rest of his life, especially regarding his critique of modernity, his phenomenological approach to philosophy and theology, and the idea that life has an origin, a source that is more basic than the cultural shape in which we always must wrap it.

Løgstrup subsequently developed all his new ideas during his years as professor of theology at the University of Aarhus, 1943–1975. After his retirement, he started to unfold the metaphysical framework for these ideas in four volumes entitled *Metaphysical Considerations (Metafysiske Betragtninger, 1978–1985)*.

⁴ Wiedmann, *The German Quest*, 5.

⁵ Wiedmann, *The German Quest*, 349.

⁶ Wiedmann, *The German Quest*, 5.

However, Løgstrup died before this project was completed, and the last two volumes were edited posthumously by some of his pupils.

My aim in the following is not to explore Løgstrup's metaphysics in full bloom, but to uncover some basic ideas at the starting point of his metaphysical thinking. This starting point determined the course of his development into metaphysics and explains why Løgstrup's kind of metaphysics in his later years deviates from the mainstream understanding of metaphysics in Protestant theology.

3. The Emergence of Løgstrup's Metaphysics

The way in which metaphysics emerges in Løgstrup's phenomenology is obvious already in his first doctoral manuscript in theology, entitled "The Religious Theme in the Epistemological Problematic," which he submitted at the University of Copenhagen in 1934. Løgstrup had, in fact, submitted his manuscript four times before he eventually obtained his doctorate in 1942, but that is another story. I will concentrate on the first version from 1934. It is unpublished, but it is available in the Løgstrup archive in Aarhus.⁷

On the one hand, Løgstrup's manuscript from 1934 shows the decisive significance that Heidegger's philosophy had for his own philosophical development. From Løgstrup's point of view, Heidegger represented the absolute turning point in the history of the development of modern philosophy. It is clear that Løgstrup's own philosophy, and not least his metaphysics, emerges from the encounter with Heidegger's philosophy, in particular with *Sein und Zeit* from 1927. In Heidegger, Løgstrup found a new point of departure both for philosophy in general and for his own philosophical work. On the other hand, this manuscript also shows how and why Løgstrup, already at this early point, in the beginning of the 1930s, finds it necessary to diverge from Heidegger and find his own path with regard to the question of metaphysics.

Metaphysics was not Løgstrup's main interest in the 1930s. His main interests were ethics, epistemology and phenomenology. Still, as he worked his way through seminal works in the phenomenological wave in German philosophy, Løgstrup recognized how metaphysical perspectives time and again arose as an integrated part of the arguments, albeit often as something to be avoided. Løgstrup, however, was not paralyzed by the possibility of being contaminated by metaphysics. On the contrary, from his point of view, metaphysics was unavoidable.

⁷ K. E. Løgstrup, *Det religiøse motiv i den erkendelsesteoretiske problemstilling* (Aarhus, 1934 [unpublished]). A more comprehensive presentation of Løgstrup's manuscript is found in Svein Aage Christoffersen, "The Ethical Demand and Its Ontological Presuppositions", in Hans Fink and Robert Stern (eds.), *What is Ethically Demanded?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), 168–185.

Løgstrup's point of departure in his 1933 manuscript is Kantianism in German philosophy in the first decades of the 20th century. From Løgstrup's point of view, the key question in Kantian epistemology is the problem of the division between subject and object in the process of obtaining knowledge. However, Husserl had dissolved this subject-object dichotomy by his understanding of consciousness as an intentional act. When consciousness as such is understood as an encounter with the object, any attempt to ascribe some parts of obtainable knowledge to the subject and other parts to the object is futile. Thus, Husserl initiated the development of phenomenological philosophy after the First World War. In addition to Husserl, Løgstrup mentions Max Scheler, Hans Lipps and Martin Heidegger. Independently of each other, both Lipps and Heidegger had broken away from the epistemological scheme in Kantian philosophy and established a kind of existential philosophy. This departure from the epistemological scheme in Kantian philosophy is the main reason for Løgstrup's preoccupation with German contemporary philosophy.

In the eyes of Løgstrup, Husserl is just an intermediate figure. The breakaway from Kantian schematics was initiated by Husserl, and substantiated by Scheler, but completed by Heidegger and Hans Lipps in their "existential philosophy," which is the term Løgstrup uses in order to distinguish between Husserl on the one hand and Heidegger and Lipps on the other. The term "existential philosophy" is to the point insofar as the understanding of human existence is marked as the demarcation between Husserl on the one hand and Heidegger/Lipps on the other.

In the end, the Kantian scheme restricts knowledge to scientific knowledge. By destroying this scheme, Husserl and subsequently Heidegger and Lipps paved the way for a phenomenological approach to the understanding of life. However, in the eyes of Løgstrup phenomenology is not a coherent theory, let alone a science. Philosophy is not in any way constructive. The task of philosophy is to make explicit our everyday understanding of phenomena given in our pre-scientific experience, before they are subjected to scientific or academic discourse. This presupposes a primordial openness to life as a task put into our own hands.

4. Existential Philosophy and Metaphysics of Existence

According to Løgstrup, existential philosophy starts with the presupposition that man is unavoidably interwoven in, and entangled with, the world. There is no such thing as an ideal observer position. There are no spectators; every one of us is a participant.

When things are qualified as intentional objects, as in Husserl, the many ways in which we are involved in the world are strongly simplified. In existential philosophy, on the other hand, this simplification is replaced by an understanding

of man's involvement with the world as complex and impossible to schematize. Man's involvement in the world is characterized by diversity, and hence the world is characterized by diversity, too. The idea that man's involvement in the world is impossible to schematize remained a constant idea in Løgstrup's thinking.

Philosophy is not just a way of making explicit our everyday understanding of the phenomena, and hence of our different modes of existence. Philosophy itself is a mode of existence. Furthermore, according to Heidegger's distinction between authentic and inauthentic modes of existence, philosophy has to be an authentic mode of existence, in order to fulfill its task. However, this implies that philosophy is morally qualified, which, according to Løgstrup, means that philosophy also has to make moral demands. But Heidegger denies this, Løgstrup says, quoting *Sein und Zeit*: "Existential Interpretation will never seek to take over any authoritarian pronouncement as to those things which, from an existential point of view, are possible or binding."⁸ The distinction between authentic and inauthentic modes of existence is not a moral one, according to Heidegger, and for this reason, Løgstrup parts company with Heidegger.

The crux of the matter, according to Løgstrup, is Heidegger's understanding of the term *existentiell*. This term, Løgstrup says, may be understood in two different ways. On the one hand, *existentiell* may be taken as a reference to an understanding of human existence as possibilities of existence. This understanding is *existentiell* in so far as the understanding presupposes this kind of existence. You have to exist this way in order to understand existence accordingly. The understanding is *existentiell* in so far as the starting point is human existence understood as possibilities of existence. But you do not have to choose among different modes of existence in order to understand this. This is Heidegger's way of thinking, according to Løgstrup.⁹

But *existentiell* may also be taken as a reference to a demand. You are obliged to solve the problem of human existence in a certain way. This is a moral situation. You have to decide. Your own existence is at stake. This understanding of existence is congenial to the exploration of human existence as morally qualified, whereas Heidegger's is not.¹⁰

Behind this briefly stated but far-reaching critique of Heidegger is a different understanding of life. In Løgstrup's view, existence is not balance and tranquility, peace and quiet. Existence is struggle and tension. To exist as a human being is to be involved in a battle between opposing forces. You cannot assume the position of spectator or exempt yourself from the ethical demand in this battle. You have to take a stand. Hence, morality is not a secondary addition to human existence. There is no such thing as a position outside and over the realm of morality,

⁸ Løgstrup, *Det religiøse motiv*, 253.

⁹ Løgstrup, *Det religiøse motiv*, 253.

¹⁰ Løgstrup, *Det religiøse motiv*, 254.

not even for philosophers. Human existence is qualified morally from the very beginning, and this is what Heidegger fails to see in his existential philosophy. What Løgstrup is aiming at is a phenomenology which is able to unfold the moral foundations of our existence.

As an indication of his own position, Løgstrup uses the term “the metaphysics of existence,” in Danish “tilværelsens metafysik.” He admits that this usage is polemical. Kantian philosophy made metaphysics subordinate to epistemology. But now Kantian epistemology has been abandoned, making way for a new kind of metaphysics. Thus, Løgstrup’s aim is not to revive an old kind of metaphysics. By adding the word “existence” to “metaphysics,” he heavily modifies it. The task of metaphysics is not to explain, but to describe. There is no beginning from scratch in this kind of metaphysics, no metaphysical answers to the questions of “why.” That we exist is not just the starting point; it is the conclusion as well. Existence is enigmatic and mysterious, loaded with ethical demands.

5. Heidegger’s History of Being

Løgstrup’s expression “the metaphysics of existence” is most probably borrowed from Heidegger, although Løgstrup does not say so explicitly. But in the years around 1930, Heidegger uses the expression “Metaphysik des Daseins” referring to his own philosophy, as for example in *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* in 1929. And Løgstrup uses the word “tilværelse” in his rendering of Heidegger’s “Dasein.”

Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik is dedicated to Max Scheler and not without reason. Scheler died suddenly in 1928, 53 years of age, and Heidegger was almost panegyric in his obituary.¹¹ In a lecture shortly afterwards, he spoke about his last conversation with Scheler. They agreed upon many things, Heidegger said, but especially about the miserable state of affairs in philosophy, and for this reason they both thought that now was the time to “risk again the step into an authentic metaphysics, that is to develop metaphysics from the ground up.”¹² They had parted, Heidegger said, in “the glad mood of a propitious struggle,” but then he added:

Scheler was optimistic and believed he had found the solution, while I was convinced we had not yet even raised and developed the problem radically and totally. My essential intention is to first pose the problem and work it out in such a way that the essentials of the entire Western tradition will be concentrated in the simplicity of a basic problem.¹³

¹¹ Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. M. Heim, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), 50.

¹² Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations*, 132.

¹³ Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*.

According to Peter Trawny, Heidegger experienced a philosophical crisis in the years after the publishing of *Sein und Zeit*. He had certainly established himself as the new star on the philosophical firmament, but he was neither satisfied with his own philosophy nor with philosophy in general. Thanks to what Trawny calls a “narrative,” which, according to Trawny “comes to him” and revolutionizes his thinking, Heidegger finds a way out of the crisis.¹⁴

The narrative that Trawny refers to is Heidegger’s idea of the History of Being. The focal points in this narrative are the beginning of philosophy, the end and the new beginning. However, this narrative revolves not only around the beginning of thinking from a purely historical point of view, but also the beginning understood as the origin of thinking. Heidegger finds the beginning and the origin in the pre-Socratics while the narrative that follows is one of successive decay as the origin of thinking is forgotten. The decay is expressed in metaphysics, in which Being (“Sein”) from Plato on is increasingly understood on the basis of beings (“das Seiende”). Thus philosophy loses sight of Being itself. This metaphysical mode of thinking reaches its end in Nietzsche. Nietzsche completes and dissolves metaphysics, but this brings with it the possibility of a new beginning. This new beginning is, however, not a return to or repetition of the historical beginnings of thought, but a turn towards the origin of thought in so far as Being can again emerge in thought. Thus, Heidegger’s History of Being has a clear primalistic sign, to use August Wiedmann’s terminology. It is about returning to Being as the source and origin of thought and beings.

6. The Black Notebooks

Heidegger’s recently published *Black Notebooks* offer an interesting insight into his philosophy of Being in the 1930s. The first Notebook is lost, but the second one from 1931 opens in the following way, as a kind of introduction to these notes:

Was sollen wir tun?
 Wer *sind* wir?
 Warum sollen wir *sein*?
 Was ist das Seiende?
 Warum geschieht Sein?¹⁵

In the end, Heidegger’s philosophy is propelled by one single basic question, the question of Being, of what it means for something to be. Seen from one point

¹⁴ Peter Trawny, *Heidegger und der Mythos der jüdischen Weltverschwörung* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2015), 17.

¹⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Überlegungen II–VI (Schwarze Hefte 1931–1938)*, in *Gesamtausgabe* 94, ed. Peter Trawny (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2014), 1.

of view, Heidegger's work on the question of Being is a purely philosophical project, and it is relevant to ask what practical significance such a philosophy of Being might have. However, as we see in the quotation above, this question of Being has far-ranging consequences. It not only implies a question of who we are, why we are, and what we have to do, but also a more comprehensive question of what that Being is.

Thus, Heidegger's philosophy of Being cannot be separated from an understanding of beings, of things, objects, thoughts etc. When the ontological difference between Being and beings is forgotten, the understanding of beings is distorted as well. Thus, a new philosophy of Being will also bring about a new disclosure of beings. The philosophy of Being will teach us to see, grasp and comprehend beings in a new light, and, thus, also change our way of life. Heidegger's philosophy of Being is then largely also a critique of contemporary ways of dealing with beings. The philosophy of Being ends, thus, in a comprehensive critique of modernity.

Being is not static, immovable, but ongoing. And from Heidegger's point of view, precisely in the year 1931 in Germany, something completely decisive takes place. A new era in the history of Being, a new beginning as a return to the origin of thinking has become possible. Heidegger's philosophy of Being is transported by an epochal clarity of vision in so far as he believes that he can initiate a new era in the history of Being in Germany in the 1930s.

This epochal thinking was the reason behind Heidegger's assumption of the rectorate at the University of Freiburg in 1933 and his subsequent membership in the National Socialist Party, NSDAP. In NSDAP and in Hitler's leadership, Heidegger saw the power to wipe the old culture away and make possible a new cultural beginning. Heidegger's mission in the rectorate must be seen in this light. He wanted to give the German universities a new beginning. He wanted to be the spiritual leader, the one who took the University back to its origin and its essence in genuine thinking. Heidegger wanted to give the University a new beginning by taking it back to what thinking essentially was, before Christianity and modern technology and mathematics destroyed it all. This mission was the historic mission of the German people.

Heidegger's expectations to NSDAP and Hitler soon faded away and he realized that his rectorate was a mistake, so he resigned after only a year. However, in his opinion, the mistake was not his belief in the necessity of a new beginning, but the idea that the new beginning could be realized through the National Socialist Party. Nevertheless, Heidegger did not give up his party membership until the end of the war.

7. Heidegger's Metaphysical Anti-Semitism

The *Black Notebooks* have unleashed an earthquake not just in the community of Heidegger researchers, but far beyond, due to several anti-Semitic passages. The extent or depth of Heidegger's anti-Semitism is heavily debated, but that is not the main question here. The interesting point is the connection between Heidegger's philosophy of Being and his anti-Semitism.

Heidegger's anti-Semitism is closely connected to his critique of modernity. In Heidegger's view, modernity has rendered man rootless. Modern man has lost contact with the origins of life and has become estranged and alienated from earth, soil, place, the native and the people. Most people have become homeless, anemic and utilitarian. They have forgotten Being, and Being has withdrawn and remains absent.

In this understanding of modernity from the perspective of the history of Being, the Jews are positioned as representatives of modernity, as modernity's forerunner and avant-garde. The Jews are homeless, rootless. They have no homeland, no soil of their own. They do not come from the earth, and they are the proponents of modern technology. From Heidegger's perspective, he is not attacking the Jews, he is defending himself against their modernity.¹⁶ Peter Trawny characterizes the anti-Semitism in Heidegger's philosophy of Being as a contamination. Thus, he is saying that the philosophy of Being is not in itself anti-Semitic, but that it has been contaminated from the outside, by anti-Semitic thought. Put in another way, this means that we can achieve a pure and uncontaminated philosophy of Being by removing the anti-Semitic features. However, it is not quite so simple, as anti-Semitism is closely connected with Heidegger's critique of modernity, and his belief in the German people's outstanding mission. He eventually replaces Hitler and the NSDAP with Hölderlin, but his discriminatory emphasis on the epochal significance of the German people is not reduced by that. Heidegger's accusations against the Jews are metaphysical.¹⁷

What should we call Heidegger's philosophy of Being? Trawny does not want to use the term "re-mythologizing" despite the fact that Heidegger himself referred to it as "Mythologie des Ereignisses." Rather, Trawny calls it a narrative.¹⁸ However, a narrative can be anything from a fairy tale to a novel to an historical account. The question then is what kind of narrative Heidegger's history of Being is. If one does not want to use the term, "mythic narrative," it is reasonable to call it "a metaphysical narrative." Heidegger's history of being is a story about the

¹⁶ *Überlegungen XII–XV (Schwarze Hefte 1939–1941)*, in *Gesamtausgabe* 96, ed. Peter Trawny (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2014), 46. Cf. Donatella di Cesare, "Heidegger's Metaphysical Anti-Semitism," in *Reading Heidegger's Black notebooks 1931–1941*, ed. by Ingo Farin and Jeff Malpas (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 185 ff.

¹⁷ Di Cesare, "Heidegger's Metaphysical Anti-Semitism," 181 ff.

¹⁸ Trawny, *Heidegger und der Mythos*, 17.

inception of thinking, its downfall and its new beginning, in light of the question of the truth of Being as the basic metaphysical question. Seen this way, the philosophy of Being corresponds precisely to the program Heidegger set up in his last conversation with Max Scheler: through a radicalization of the basic questions in metaphysics Heidegger wanted to work out an authentic metaphysics “in such a way that the essentials of the entire Western tradition will be concentrated in the simplicity of a basic problem.”¹⁹

8. The Differences

If we return to the kind of metaphysics that Løgstrup started elaborating in 1934, at least three aspects clearly differ from Heidegger’s metaphysics. Firstly, Løgstrup’s metaphysics does not contain the kind of metaphysical clear-sightedness or “clairvoyance” that we find in Heidegger’s philosophy of Being. Løgstrup did not “perceive” the time he lived in as a decisive epoch in the history of Being. On the contrary, Løgstrup emphasized that also from a metaphysical perspective life remains a riddle and a mystery. Metaphysics gives no answers. It makes room for a phenomenological description of the human condition, but it does not explain it.

Secondly, what distinguishes Løgstrup from Heidegger is Løgstrup’s understanding of the relationship between metaphysics and ethics. Ethics is a *sine qua non* for Løgstrup in his work with metaphysical questions. From Løgstrup’s point of view, the conditions of life are at their very base ethically and morally qualified. Whether they want to or not, people are thrown into the battle between good and evil. Every individual faces an inescapable ethical demand. A relevant metaphysics must thus be capable of making explicit what it involves to be subject to such a demand. According to Løgstrup, Heidegger’s philosophy does not do this.

The ethics of Heidegger is a disputed theme. Diana Aurenque is among those who have argued that Heidegger’s philosophy and in particular his philosophy of Being is not at all without ethics. On the contrary, there is a profled ethics in his view of man’s existence in the world as a “dwelling”:

As he puts it in “Letter on Humanism”, “Dwelling is the essence of Being-in-the world”. He thus explicitly relates the theme(s) of ‘being-in’, themes raised in his early work, to that of dwelling, and thus to thinking about ethos.²⁰

In my opinion, Aurenque is right. But she is also right when she points out that “to dwell poetically one has to forfeit the very domain of the moral, a domain

¹⁹ Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations*, 132.

²⁰ Diana Aurenque, “Heidegger On Thinking About Ethos And Man’s Dwelling,” *Architecture Philosophy* 2:1 (2016), 39–53; 39.

in which good and evil have already been decided upon”.²¹ It is precisely on this point that Løgstrup disagrees with Heidegger. It is not up to the individual to differentiate between good and evil. The differentiation between good and evil is given with man’s existence in the world. Thus, the individual is subject to a demand. Heidegger’s ethics may well contain a kind of obligation, but not a demand. Heidegger’s anti-Semitism may perhaps not be a direct consequence of his ethics, but it is not incompatible with his ethics either.

For Heidegger, “dwelling” has a kind of normativity. “To dwell poetically” is what man must do in order to associate with being in a way that corresponds to its essential mode of appearance:

To dwell poetically thus means to persist in that openness in which things come to the fore first and show themselves in their truth. It is about opening up to, and letting in, the truth of things, the truth of other people, of the world.²²

“To dwell poetically” means to feel at home in and to make peace with this world as it in truth is. “To dwell poetically” means that man can both live and die reconciled to this world. Heidegger’s philosophy of Being is thus a form of soteriology. Løgstrup’s metaphysics is not soteriological. Metaphysics does not make it possible for man to reconcile himself with this world such as it is. On the contrary, metaphysics keeps the individual in a constant rebellion against and resistance to evil and destruction, and this is the third point that distinguishes Løgstrup’s metaphysics from Heidegger’s philosophy of Being.

It is obvious to ask why Løgstrup finds it necessary to distance himself from Heidegger already in 1933 and never accept the metaphysics of Being that Heidegger eventually develops. We can find the explanation in the last chapter of the thesis manuscript from 1934, with the title “The religious motive in the epistemological problem.” The religious motif that Løgstrup finds here in the (Kantian) epistemological theory is the idea of the individual outside of and above the world, placed in a position in which he is free to acknowledge the world such as it is. This placement of the individual outside of and over the world tends to make the individual himself God.²³ In contrast, from a Christian point of view, it is not man but God who is outside and over the world, which he has created and creates, while man belongs to this world as created.²⁴ Seen this way, there is a contradiction between the Christian idea of creation and Kantian epistemology. In 1934, Løgstrup does not use the idea of creation as a critique of Heidegger’s philosophy, but there can be no doubt that it is precisely the idea of creation that leads him to distance himself from Heidegger.

²¹ Aurenque, “Heidegger,” 48.

²² Aurenque, “Heidegger,” 46.

²³ Løgstrup, *Det religiøse motiv*, 277.

²⁴ Løgstrup, *Det religiøse motiv*, 278.

9. Picasso's Guernica

Løgstrup's phenomenology is strongly indebted to Scheler, Heidegger and especially Hans Lipps. But if we are asking for parallels to his metaphysics in the 1930s, we have to go outside theology and philosophy and take into account ordinary people's reactions to the waves of violence and brutality following in the footsteps of fascism. These reactions also found their way into the art of the 1930s, for example in Pablo Picasso's iconic painting *Guernica*. From this point of view, *Guernica* may – perhaps surprisingly – be taken as a visualization of some important points in Løgstrup's metaphysics.

The Second Spanish Republic from 1931 was a weak institution built on sand, and in 1936 a civil war broke out between the Nationalists led by General Franco, and the Republican Government. The Government had nevertheless decided to take part in the upcoming World's fair in Paris in 1937, which was planned as an "International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life". The Government intended to use the Spanish Pavilion as a propaganda coup to alert the world to the Republic's dignity and wealth of culture, even faced with the mortal threat of an internecine war.

In January 1937, the Government had commissioned a mural from Spain's most renowned artist at the time, Pablo Picasso, who was living in Paris. However, Picasso had never been one to make political statements in his art, so, although he wholeheartedly supported the Republican government, he accepted the commission hesitantly, and in the following months struggled to find a way to complete his mission, mainly by different drafts focusing on the artist and his model.²⁵

Then, at the end of April, everything changed dramatically, when German warplanes supporting General Franco bombed a small village called Guernica in northern Spain on the evening of April 26. The village was of no military importance, but had great significance as a symbol of Basque freedom and independence. The attack destroyed most of Guernica. The victims were primarily women and children. This was plain and simple terrorism. It was "total war."

The shocking news of the bombing reached Paris the following day, and Picasso immediately grasped the motif for his painting: *Guernica*. After one month of intense work, the 3.5-meter high and almost 8-meter wide painting was delivered on May 27.

However, the painting was not an immediate success. The reaction of the public was mixed. Some objected to the mural's modernist style and asked for a more traditional painting, while others criticized Picasso's painting as lacking in political commitment, faulting it for not offering a vision of a better future.²⁶ The

²⁵ Gijss van Hensbergen, *Guernica. The Biography of a Twentieth-Century Icon* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 31.

²⁶ Hensbergen, *Guernica*, 76–77.



Fig. 1: Picasso, Guernica. © 2019.

Photo Art Resource/Scala, Florence/John Bigelow Taylor

painting has of course been interpreted in many different ways, but my aim here is not a comprehensive interpretation, rather it is to point out some metaphysical traces in the painting.

10. The Metaphysics of Guernica

In this painting, we are both within a room and outside in the open air. Slightly to the right a woman is floating out of a window with a flame-lit lamp in her hand. It is not farfetched to think of Nietzsche's "Tolle Mensch." There is darkness over the land.

Slightly to the left there is a light bulb hanging from a roof, but the bulb is at the same time the pupil of an eye. Some have seen it as an evil eye, but it may just as well be taken as the artist's eye. In religious iconography, we often find God represented by an eye. But Picasso was an atheist. He did not believe in a God who is monitoring everyone and everything. However, the artist is an eye, and the artist can make us see what he sees with his modern, secularized eye.

At the far left, a woman is screaming to heaven, with a dead child in her lap. On the opposite side, another woman is stretching her arms to heaven, entrapped by fire from above and below. A third woman drags herself forward, with her head turned upwards, in the direction of the lamp. A soldier, decapitated, lays on his back, with a broken sword in his hand. A horse is on its knees, deadly wounded, while a bull stares unaffectedly in another direction, or at us.

The allusions to bullfighting are obvious. Bullfighting is a ritual of death. We usually think of it as a fight between a bull and a matador. But it is also a fight between the bull and the matador's horse; a fight in which the horse often must

pay with its life. For this reason, the horse's vocal cords are cut to prevent it from screaming in fear at the bull's attack. The large gaping wound in the horse's side is a major focus of Picasso's painting. The horse screams to heaven in anguish, in a twisted pose, but is not able to make a sound. A silent scream resounds throughout the painting.²⁷

Of course, the painting is a protest. However, it is more than just a protest. In the eyes of Franco, Hitler and Mussolini, no one has an inherent right to live. Hence, by the logic of warfare and terrorism, they could destroy Guernica and most of its inhabitants. Picasso, on the other hand, contradicted this inhumane logic. In the name of life and freedom, he contradicts the victory of death and oppression. The painting is not just a protest against pain and death; it is a statement in support of the victims' humanity and right to life and freedom.

In his statement in support of life and freedom, Picasso invokes a religious imagery in order to express the sanctity of the victims' life. The figures are mainly tilted upwards by their heads and eyes. Picasso takes their silent screams to heaven in protest against the violence and the cruelty. There is of course no heaven to receive the protest. When Picasso nevertheless directs the screams and the protest at heaven, he gives the fate of the victims' weight and importance. The bombing is not just a small move in a game of war: it is an outcry of injustice.

The religious allusions in the painting underline the metaphysical connotations in the painting. The bombing of Guernica was not just destructive and painful; it was a sacrilege. The soldier on the ground stretches out his arms as he is crucified, and there seems to be stigmata on his open palms, as signs of martyrdom. The woman crying over her dead child is molded in the shape of Mary with the dead Jesus in her lap. Picasso's figure is a modern Pietà. However, the woman is not bending her head in sorrow or thoughtfulness, as in Michelangelo's famous *Pieta* in Rome. She is crying out her despair towards heaven. This connects with another important motif in religious art, the massacre of the innocent in Matthew 2:16–18.

According to the art historian Gijs van Hensbergen, Picasso has transformed the bombing of Guernica into a "silent requiem"²⁸. The death ritual has become a requiem for the innocent. Hence, the victims' humanity and human rights are taken to be sacrosanct. The statement in favor of the victims' right to life and freedom is obvious, and the metaphysical connotations are made explicit in Hensbergen's characterizing of the painting as a requiem. However, this characterization also tones down the protest, the anger and the despair. For this reason, a more appropriate reference may be found in Peter Berger's book, *A Rumor of Angels*.

²⁷ Hensbergen, *Guernica*, 70.

²⁸ Hensbergen, *Guernica*, 54 ff.

11. The Metaphysics of Condemnation

In *A Rumor of Angels*, Berger looks for signals of transcendence within the secularized world. One such signal is the *condemnation of misdeeds*: “This refers to experiences in which our sense of what is humanly permissible is so fundamentally outraged that the only adequate response to the offense as well as to the offender seems to be a curse of supernatural dimensions.”²⁹ Particularly interesting from our point of view is that Berger takes the misdeeds of the Nazi war criminals as a point of reference for this curse of supernatural dimensions.³⁰ Confronted with the misdeeds of Adolf Eichmann and his like-minded, our modern, relativizing frame of reference seems to break down. Not only are we constrained to condemn, we are constrained to condemn absolutely, which means that we give the condemnation the status of a necessary and universal truth. However, this truth cannot be empirically demonstrated to be either necessary or universal. To claim this truth, we must look beyond the realm of our “natural” experience for validation of our certainty, Berger says.³¹

Berger seems to take this universal claim a step further into the realm of metaphysics when it comes to the question of punishment. The actual punishment for such misdeeds may of course be a matter of debate, but irrespective of this, no human punishment seems to be “enough”:

These are deeds that demand not only condemnation, but damnation in the full religious meaning of the word – that is, the doer not only puts himself outside the community of men; he also separates himself in a final way from a moral order that transcends the human community, and thus invokes a retribution that is more than human.³²

According to Berger, then, in the condemnation of misdeeds, we transcend the factual and the empirical. We take several steps into the realm of metaphysics. The condemnation as such is metaphysical insofar as it invokes a kind of sanctity on behalf of the victims. The misdeeds are sacrilege. The metaphysical connotations are in the condemnation and in Picasso’s invocation of religious imagery to express his anger and abhorrence.

There is no declaration of human rights in Picasso’s painting. No declaration of the sanctity of life. The sanctity of life is visible only in the condemnation of the massacre of the innocent. There are no metaphysical answers in Picasso’s picture either, no historical clairvoyance explaining the meaning or the necessity of it all. There is no reconciliation, no metaphysical soteriology and no assurance that life eventually will gain the victory. Picasso is thrown into a battle

²⁹ Peter L. Berger, *A Rumor of Angels. Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural*. (New York: Doubleday Anchor Book, 1970), 65.

³⁰ Berger, *A Rumor of Angels*, 65.

³¹ Berger, *A Rumor of Angels*, 66–67.

³² Berger, *A Rumor of Angels*, 67–68.

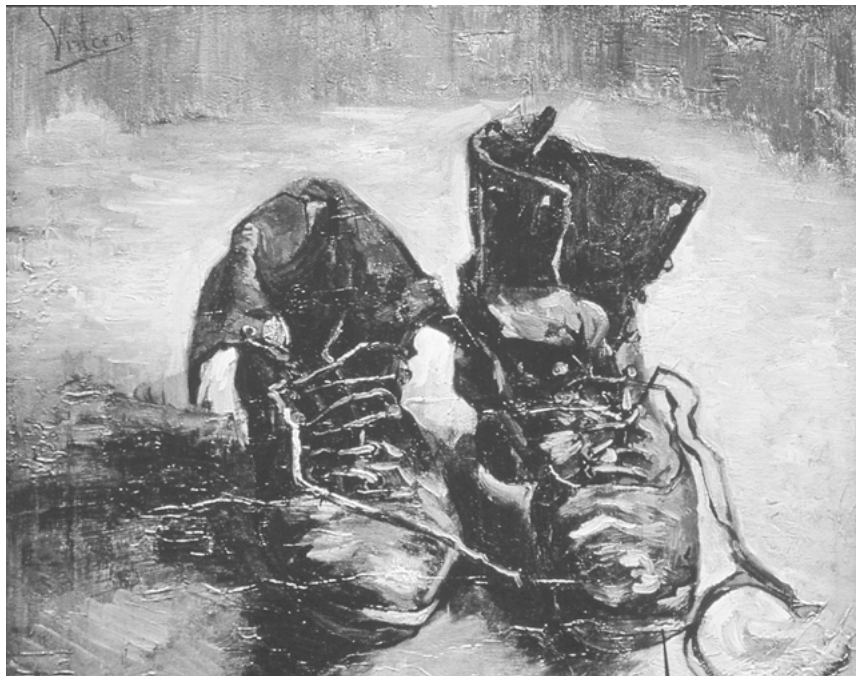


Fig. 2: Van Gogh, Shoes. © 2019. Photo Art Resource/Scala, Florence

between life and death, between good and evil, and he is compelled to take a stand.

When Heidegger in the 1930s looks for a painting which may be used to express his Philosophy of Being, he selects a pair of peasant shoes painted by Vincent van Gogh. Løgstrup's metaphysics, on the other hand, is more in tune with Picasso's *Guernica*.

Protestantism and Its Aesthetic Discontents

Dorthe Jørgensen

1. Introduction

The Reformation and Kantian criticism are important historical prerequisites for the philosophy of religion I wish to introduce. This philosophy and the critical considerations it includes build on the religio-philosophical implementation of philosophical aesthetics and hermeneutic phenomenology accomplished in my book *Den skønne tænkning* (Beautiful Thinking).¹ Philosophical aesthetics and hermeneutic phenomenology must be regarded as products of both reform and criticism, and the philosophy of religion presented in this chapter is itself an example of protest – a reformatory and critically informed protest against the 19th–20th centuries’ spiritually restrictive outcomes of the Reformation and of Kant’s critical thought, including that period’s strained perception of *experience* and *aesthetics*.

In *Den skønne tænkning*, I show that philosophical aesthetics and hermeneutic phenomenology can be seen as pathways to the metaphysics of experience. I regard philosophical aesthetics as a not yet actualised possibility and hermeneutic phenomenology as an unintended resumption of this possibility. Phenomenologists and hermeneutic philosophers such as Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer had no clear understanding of the aesthetic roots of their thinking. Their resumption of aesthetics came without recognition of the fact that phenomenology and hermeneutics represented further developments of something previously initiated rather than initiations of something new. The cause of this is the disregard that philosophical aesthetics was subjected to shortly after Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten’s introduction of it in the 18th century. Philosophical aesthetics was first neglected in favour of philosophy of art, later in favour of the study of art. The metaphysics of experience presented in *Den skønne tænkning* actualises the not yet actualised possibility that aesthetics thus remained.

Aesthetics was introduced as a philosophy of faculties rooted in traditional metaphysics, and a simple repetition of it today would therefore not be

¹ Dorthe Jørgensen, *Den skønne tænkning: Veje til erfaringsmetafysik. Religionsfilosofisk udmøntet* [Beautiful Thinking: Pathways to the Metaphysics of Experience. Religio-Philosophically Implemented] (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2014).

meaningful. Aesthetics must be actualised, which also means interpreted, and the actualisation accomplished in *Den skønne tænkning* includes hermeneutic phenomenology and its unintended resumption of aesthetics. Therefore, the result is not philosophical aesthetics as it was conceived by Baumgarten, nor is it hermeneutic phenomenology as conceived by Heidegger, but the philosophy of experience that is now possible. Between aesthetics, phenomenology, and the metaphysics of experience there is thus kinship, but not identity. Unlike aesthetics, the metaphysics of experience presented in *Den skønne tænkning* endeavours to transgress all dualist philosophy of mind and traditional metaphysics; unlike phenomenology, this is done without confusing aesthetics and subjectivism, and without inviting any anti-metaphysics.

The metaphysics of experience is philosophy of the experiences of transcendence that are traditionally described as, for example, religious or aesthetic experiences and which constitute what in *Den skønne tænkning* is denoted “the intermediate world.” It is philosophy about experiences that neither objectively identify something given nor are simply subjective constructions that only say something about the person having them. The metaphysics of experience deals with something that is meta-physical but it does so in a modern way. It is a non-essentialist philosophy that includes both the aesthetic and the religious dimension of our experiences and of the not yet actualised volatile-indeterminate possibilities they include. In *Den skønne tænkning*, I identified traces in philosophical aesthetics and hermeneutic phenomenology of such philosophy of experience, and through a religio-philosophical implementation of aesthetics and phenomenology, I created the basis for work with theology and aesthetics founded in the metaphysics of experience. This chapter is therefore based on the religio-philosophical part of *Den skønne tænkning*.

2. Protestant Ambivalence

For centuries, Protestantism distanced itself from the aesthetic; ever since the introduction of philosophical aesthetics, Protestant theologians problematised this discipline. What Baumgarten referred to as sensitive cognition (*cognitio sensitiva*), his contemporaries mistook for sensual experience. They confused the perfect sensitive cognition with which he identified the experience of beauty with completely sensual experience, and they thus accused him of sensualist fanaticism.² Baumgarten’s aesthetics was known primarily through Georg Friedrich Meier’s dissemination of it, and Meier fortified this sensualistic misinterpretation.³ Such a misinterpretation might partly explain the unfortunate way

² Jørgensen, *Den skønne tænkning*, 107, footnote 191.

³ Jørgensen, *Den skønne tænkning*, 129–30; Georg Friedrich Meier, *Anfangsgründe aller schönen Wissenschaften, Teil I–III* (Hildesheim/New York: Georg Olms Verlag), 1976.

in which many thinkers, including Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Søren Kierkegaard, used the words “aesthetics,” “aesthetic,” and “the aesthete.” Using these words to denote something sensual and fanatic without ethical or epistemological value hampered or even prevented the establishment of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline dedicated to the exploration of sensitive cognition. As a result, neither the Nordic nor the English-speaking countries have any tradition of philosophical aesthetics, but only of art theory and philosophy of art.⁴

Hegel’s understanding of the word “aesthetics” can be studied in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, in which he mentions that the word “aesthetics” is an inadequate term for his lecture topic. According to Hegel’s interpretation, aesthetics is the science of sensation whereas his lectures would present the philosophy of fine art.⁵ Likewise, Kierkegaard problematised the aesthetic despite the fact that he was very conscious of the aesthetic qualities of his texts, that he showed great aesthetic sensitivity in his analyses of specific works, and that he himself lived as an aesthete. Kierkegaard’s characterisation of the aesthetic exudes fascination; nevertheless, he diminished the aesthetic compared with the ethical and the religious; and, although he was not entirely negative towards it, Kierkegaard identified the aesthetic with immediate and noncommittal pleasure.⁶

Hegel and Kierkegaard both problematised what they referred to as “the beautiful soul” and “the aesthete,” respectively. The beautiful soul was the 18th century’s interpretation of the Greek idea of *kalokagathia* (beauty-and-goodness) understood as the highest ideal of man.⁷ In the middle of the 18th century, the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury actualised this idea when introducing his own concept of moral beauty, which spread in a personalised, interiorised and subjectively appealing form as the beautiful soul.⁸ However, in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel criticised the fervour of the beautiful soul for being empty abstraction, and

⁴ See Dorthe Jørgensen, “Why Do We Need Philosophical Aesthetics?” *Transfiguration: Nordic Journal of Religion and the Arts*, 2009, 17–34.

⁵ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, Vol. I, trans. Thomas Malcolm Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 1.

⁶ For the so-called philosophy of stages (the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious [a and b]), see, in particular, *Stages on Life’s Way* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, of which the latter is an extensive postscript to *Philosophical Fragments*. Søren Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life’s Way: Studies by Various Persons*, eds. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments 1–2*, eds. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); *Philosophical Fragments*, eds. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

⁷ For the history of the beautiful soul, especially in the 18th century, see Robert E. Norton, *The Beautiful Soul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995). For a discussion of the original Greek idea of *kalokagathia*, also see Julius Jüthner, “Kalokagathia,” in *Charisteria: Alois Rzach zum achtzigsten Geburtstag dargebracht*, eds. Maximilian Adler et al. (Reichenberg: Verlag von Gebrüder Stiepel, 1930), and Hermann Wankel, *Kalos kai agathos* (Diss. Würzburg, Julius-Maximilians-Universität zu Würzburg, 1961).

⁸ Anthony Ashley Cooper (3rd Earl of Shaftesbury), *Characteristics of Men, Manners,*

thus also for being morally ugly rather than beautiful.⁹ He saw the beautiful soul as an expression of romantic fancy, and this view was repeated in Kierkegaard's presentation in *Either/Or* of the aesthete.¹⁰

According to Kierkegaard, the aesthetic attitude to life is a stage on the way to the ethical and the religious attitudes, although it constitutes a dimension that cannot be left behind but must be integrated. The aesthete is characterised by *not* being able to integrate the aesthetic; he is stuck in it, that is, in his spontaneous needs and immediate pleasures. The aesthetic attitude to life is most clearly described in the piece "Crop Rotation" in *Either/Or*.¹¹ As shown in this piece, the aesthete's demands for variety and intensity make his life fall apart and plunge him into an eternal quest. Unlike the aesthete, who thus flees from himself, the ethicist chooses himself. He takes responsibility for what he is and for his life. But this ethical attitude to life is surpassed by the religious attitude, the focal point of which is faith that suspends the ethical and cannot be rationally proved.

3. A Protestant Need for Aesthetics

Hegel and Kierkegaard were not alone in this ambivalence of the aesthetic and aesthetics. Protestantism implied an intensive subjectification of theology, as focus moved from the church and its rules to the relationship between God and the individual. The autonomy of the individual life of faith can be considered a phenomenon of modernity, just like the simultaneous autonomy of art and the reflection on the aesthetic. But the modernisation process did not only result in a partial liberation of the individual person from the church institution, or in the arousal of a new fervour. In an era of modern science and demands for exact evidence for both what can be measured and what cannot, the subjectification of faith also meant that the truth value of theology became precarious. The risk of subjectivism thus associated with this subjectification was a challenge for theology, which, in the aftermath of this development, often treated aesthetics as a symbol of the problem or as the actual cause of it. Theology's relation to the aesthetic became as strained as rationalism's relation to it was *before* Baumgarten, and even strained in the same manner.¹²

Opinions, Times, ed. Lawrence Eliot Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2003, especially "The Moralists" in the second volume.

⁹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. and trans. Terry Pinkard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 380–87.

¹⁰ Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or, Part I–II*, eds. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), Part I.

¹¹ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or, Part I*, 223–41.

¹² Despite Kierkegaard's aversion to the philosophy of reason (*Vernunftphilosophie*), his philosophical and theological subordination of the aesthetic to the ethical and the religious is structurally analogous to the rationalists' understanding of the aesthetic as nothing but a

However, ironically, it is perhaps Protestants who are in *particular* need of aesthetic imagination, and thus also of aesthetics understood as the philosophy of the experience with which this imagination is connected. The idea of incarnation is important to all Christians, but Protestantism is also characterised by the dualist way of thinking that has prevailed in modern time. Thanks to Protestantism's sharp distinction between the physical and the spiritual (when compared with Catholicism, for example), it introduced a conception of nature as non-holy, it subjectified and individualised the relation to God, it rejected the idea of transubstantiation, and it removed many sensual elements from the service. It could therefore be suggested that Protestants need aesthetic imagination even more than others, so that they themselves can create a link between what in their view is more separate – the physical and the spiritual or the material and the immaterial.

The emergence of Protestantism might even be considered one of the historical prerequisites for the development of philosophical aesthetics. That is: a historical prerequisite for the formation of aesthetics understood as an individual philosophical discipline, the central object of which is the aesthetic experience and thus also aesthetic imagination. Until the emergence of Protestantism, theology itself dealt with aesthetic issues in the form of the philosophy of beauty, but Protestantism separated elements that previously hung together in aesthetic immediacy, and it thus paved the way for a possible exclusion of aesthetic issues from theology. As such, Protestantism furthered a theology that was hostile to aesthetics but perhaps also created a need for aesthetics, as the phenomenon denoted "aesthetic experience" does not disappear by being banned or ignored. Whatever the case, when Baumgarten introduced philosophical aesthetics, which was indeed designed to overcome problems caused by the dualism of his day, including the contradiction between understanding and feeling, he presented a possible response to such a need.

Given the idea that Protestants might have a particular need for increased aesthetic imagination, one might expect that Protestant theologians would take particular interest in working systematically with aesthetics. But, even nowadays, many prefer to keep theology and aesthetics apart, because, like Kierkegaard, they fear that theology will be aestheticised if it approaches the aesthetic and the philosophy of it, that is, aesthetics. Kierkegaard identified the aesthetic with a sensuality and sentimentality, the autonomy of which would result in relativistic aestheticisation. An aestheticisation of theology would thus by definition imply a relativisation of it. It would subsume the religious to the aesthetic or theology to aesthetics, make faith dependent on taste and elevate beauty higher than the divine. This is why Kierkegaard distinguished systematically between the aes-

precursor of the logical, but in rationalism the transition between these levels was smoother and less problematic.

thetic and the ethical, and, with this distinction, also between the aesthetic/ethical and the religious.

4. Not just Subjective or Objective

Be that as it may, philosophical aesthetics is actually *not* an expression of subjectivism. Baumgarten broke with the traditional objective aesthetics, as he did not regard beauty as a property of objects. But, in his aesthetics, beauty is not just a subjective construction; on the contrary, it is a phenomenon for a perceiving subject. Sensitive cognitions are thus experiences of the phenomenon that beauty forms. They are sensate experiences that qualify as cognitions because they do not only perceive the many marks of given objects but also some kind of unity in the diversity. Sensitive cognitions let us sense the universal in the particular without losing sight of the uniqueness of the singular; that is why they bring insight. They transcend the concrete without abstracting from it, and they make us recognise not only what things are or can be used for, but what they mean to us.

Similarly, Baumgarten did not simply reproduce the traditional metaphysics, nor did he make himself guilty of anti-metaphysics. On the contrary, by introducing aesthetics, he introduced an alternative to traditional metaphysics that differed from the latter by approaching the experience more closely. According to the new metaphysics that aesthetics thus forms, there *is* indeed something that is objectively given – but this “something” exists only as a *possibility*, and it requires effort to turn it into subjective reality; because the sensitive cognition that is the topic of aesthetics does not identify anything present, nor does it simply project imaginations. Sensitive cognitions are rather cognitions in which objectively given possibilities of experiencing beauty are subjectively actualised. So that which is objectively given we know only in the subjective form in which we appropriate it, but the possibility we thus actualise is not created by us – it is something we receive.

Shortly after Baumgarten, Immanuel Kant presented his transcendental-philosophical argument for the universality of pure judgments of taste.¹³ He demonstrated that experiences of beauty are individually formed but also common: they are personal but not private, for they are communicable and agreeable; they are products of the so-called “common sense” (*sensus communis*). Through systematic attempts to move beyond the subject-object cleavage, hermeneutical phenomenologists such as Heidegger later pointed out the objective truth value of subjectively experienced phenomena. Using the artwork as his

¹³ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

example, Heidegger demonstrated that sensate experiences let us realise the very fact *that* something actually does exist.¹⁴ Experiencing that both we and what we perceive are parts of something larger encourages us to reflect on *why* and *how* the existent is, and such experience invites theological thought. Recently Gernot Böhme argued, with a basis in both aesthetics and phenomenology, for an *Asthetik* understood as a philosophy of perception (*Wahrnehmung*) that is also designed to suspend subjectivist relativism.¹⁵ While Jean-Louis Chrétien has argued that precisely sensate and as such aesthetic-sensitive experiences are the way to God: they are revelatory.¹⁶

5. Creative Susceptibility

In spite of aesthetics' non-subjectivist character, many theologians remain sceptical of its focus on the experience and its interest in the creative aspect of the experience, which they see as expressions of fanaticism. However, the sensate experience denoted "sensitive cognition" by Baumgarten differs from what he referred to as "logical cognition" not only by being productive but also by being receptive in a different manner. Sensitive cognitions do not only depict but are also open; their productivity requires susceptibility. Susceptible to the many marks of the concrete, sensitive cognitions are also open to "the material perfection of metaphysical truth" (as it was dubbed by Baumgarten). Otherwise they would not be able to create unity in diversity, give form to something that is otherwise not accessible, and actualise the metaphysically given possibility of beauty. Only this way, that is, sensitively, are we lifted in the direction of the metaphysical, which, in the thought of Baumgarten, means in God's direction.

As it is creative, sensitive cognition is analogous to God's act of creation, but it creates subject to divine creation: cognition itself does not manufacture the truth that the metaphysically given and by cognition aesthetically seized possibility of insight forms, nor does it itself produce the object of this insight. It is in the contemplation of the beautiful that we come closest to truth, which however presupposes that the contemplation itself is beautiful, that is, driven by sensitive cognition or rather by trying to perfect this cognition. Furthermore, there is an empirical subject involved in sensitive cognition and in the effort to perfect it – a subject with feelings, sensations and presentiments, to whom the cognition happens but who does not control it, as it presupposes a metaphysically given

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. and ed. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Thought, 2013).

¹⁵ Gernot Böhme, *Asthetik: Vorlesungen über Ästhetik als allgemeine Wahrnehmungslehre* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2001).

¹⁶ Jean-Louis Chrétien, *The Call and the Response*, trans. Anne A. Davenport (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004).

possibility. This is one more way in which sensitive cognition is dependent on openness: one must make oneself available – for the possibility to appear.

The source of the productive quality of cognition was referred to as *phantasia* by Baumgarten and as *Einbildungskraft* by Kant. The previous paragraph thus showed that fantasy or imagination brings something into the world, but that it does so in susceptibility to something that fantasy or imagination itself cannot produce but must be open to.¹⁷ In modern theology, including Chrétien's, a kindred understanding of human existence as both receptive and productive, and as productive in its receptivity, also plays an important role. Faith is interpreted as a response (that is, to a call) which is only possible if one is attentive, and this response is interpreted as an activity that by itself contributes something to the "dialogue" between God and human. God calls us in the form of the Word, and we respond in prayer and worship that interpret the Word rather than just repeating it, so prayer and worship are co-creative. This interpretive and thus co-creative dealing with the Word can be considered a hermeneutic condition, but the awareness of it increased along with modern subjectification. We may therefore conclude that without receptivity there would be no theology; but, without simultaneous productivity, there would be no *modern* theology.

6. The Ethical in the Aesthetic

Imagination plays a prominent role in the theology that has approached aesthetics in recent decades. I refer in particular to the efforts made internationally to develop new disciplines such as "theological aesthetics," "aesthetic theology," and "religious aesthetics."¹⁸ But genuine dialogue between theology and aesthetics is still often prevented by prejudices according to which the aesthetic is not enough in itself and faith is more fundamental than aesthetic experience.

The first of these prejudices can be found in the works of K. E. Løgstrup, which means that the problem – namely, theology's stubborn relation to aesthetics – is *not* resolved by resorting to him rather than Kierkegaard. In *Kunst og erkendelse* (Art and Knowledge), Løgstrup says that an understanding of the

¹⁷ It is often appropriate to distinguish between "fantasy" and "imagination," as Kant did. However, in the present context, it is not particularly relevant to make such a distinction and it merely complicates the comparative reading of Kant and Baumgarten. For now, I therefore use the words as synonyms (for what Kant understood by imagination, not fantasy) and later I only use the word "imagination." For a comprehensive presentation of various historical philosophies of imagination, including Kant's philosophy and his distinction between fantasy and imagination, see Dorthe Jørgensen, "The Philosophy of Imagination", in *Handbook of Imagination and Culture*, eds. Tania Zittoun and Vlad Petre Glăveanu (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 19–45.

¹⁸ See the chapter "Åbenheden i mellemverdenen" [The Openness of the Intermediate World] in *Den skønne tænkning*.

aesthetic inspired by Kierkegaard “rages” in continental thought.¹⁹ In his words, we usually “take it for granted in a Kierkegaardian sense, not only that life is split up in an aesthetic and an ethical province, but that the aesthetic is a treacherous escape from our practical life and ethical duties.”²⁰ In continuation of this, Løgstrup differentiates between two different kinds of “aesthetic experience.” The term “aesthetic experience” may denote a way of approaching life in which there is no break between vision and action. In this case, what a person experiences is a “revelation of life’s wealth of possibilities and contradictions, and carried away he promptly acts out of a great spiritual surplus.”²¹ Far more often, however, the term “aesthetic experience” means to relate in a pleasure-seeking way to what happens, and to which one thus fails to relate in a responsibly practical way.

According to Løgstrup, it was “aesthetic experience” in the latter sense of the term that Kierkegaard referred to when writing about the aesthete, and Løgstrup’s description is correct, which also means that his criticism is justified. Nevertheless, he was mistaken in using this to construct a narrow concept of aesthetics by presenting the described lack of responsibility as the essence of aesthetic experience.²² Løgstrup’s objection might be right, especially if he is addressing it to Kierkegaard reception until the end of the 20th century rather than Kierkegaard himself, but Løgstrup also contributed to the pejorative use of the words “aesthetics,” “aesthetic” and “the aesthete” for which he criticised Kierkegaard. Løgstrup’s negative charge of these words is evident in what I quoted above, and it can also be observed elsewhere in *Kunst og erkendelse*. For example, concerning the error of judgment one might make when judging an object’s aesthetic qualities, he says that it is caused by the fact that “in aesthetics more is always at stake than aesthetics,”²³ thus indirectly saying that something is missing in what is “just” aesthetic. According to Løgstrup, there is always some kind of interest, that is, non-aesthetic needs and desires, involved in an aesthetic judgment, and this interest may interfere with the assessment of the aesthetic aspects of the object. Actually, what Løgstrup considered most crucial in the

¹⁹ K. E. Løgstrup, *Kunst og erkendelse: Kunstfilosofiske betragtninger. Metafysik II* [Art and Knowledge: Art Philosophical Considerations. Metaphysics II], eds. Svend Andersen, Karstein M. Hansen, Ole Jensen, Rosemarie Løgstrup, and Viggo Mortensen (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1983), 56.

²⁰ Løgstrup, *Kunst og erkendelse*, 56.

²¹ Løgstrup, *Kunst og erkendelse*, 56. For example, Løgstrup also uses the expression “aesthetic experience” in “Min tids tre fromhedsbølger: En smule subjektivt set” in which he describes the commitment of science as “an aesthetic experience and if it does not remain this way, I cannot imagine it is worth the effort.” See K. E. Løgstrup, “Min tids tre fromhedsbølger: En smule subjektivt set” [The Three Waves of Piety in My Time: Somewhat Subjectively Seen] in *Solidaritet og kærlighed og andre essays* [Solidarity and Love and Other Essays], 146–157, eds. Ole Jensen, Svend Andersen, Karstein M. Hansen, Rosemarie Løgstrup, and Viggo Mortensen (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1987), 151.

²² Løgstrup, *Kunst og erkendelse*, 56, footnote.

²³ Løgstrup, *Kunst og erkendelse*, 83.

aesthetic was what is *not* aesthetic: “The more one manages to delude oneself into thinking that one’s interest in the work of art is purely aesthetic, the more effectively its pseudo-beauty serves one’s non-aesthetic interests. The deeper the self-deception is, which means the more unconscious it is, the more the non-aesthetic interests are pumped up and the more the aesthetic is masked.”²⁴

7. The Religious in the Aesthetic

Among the previously mentioned prejudices that still impede the dialogue between theology and aesthetics, we also find the idea nourished by some theologians – including some of those involved in the development of theological aesthetics – that the experience of faith is and must be more fundamental than any other kind of experience; therefore, it cannot spring from *aisthesis*. Or as Mirjam-Christina Redeker puts it: “The perception [Wahrnehmung] of God must continue to be the criteria for any human *aisthesis* and all factual human perception.”²⁵ A similar dogmatics is known from philosophical hermeneutics, though, in hermeneutics, it is not the experience of faith but hermeneutic understanding that is given the priority. Gadamer insisted that aesthetics can only be particular, whereas hermeneutics is universal and includes aesthetics.²⁶ Gadamer’s reasoning was that the work of art – which to him was the aesthetic object, that is: he identified aesthetics with the philosophy of art – “tells us something” and thus requires understanding, which means that the work belongs to what is the topic of hermeneutics.²⁷ In this way, Gadamer let hermeneutics dominate aesthetics, and similarly theologians such as Redeker let aesthetics be dominated by theology when they reduce aesthetics to a theological auxiliary discipline.

In opposition to Gadamer, I demonstrated in *Den skønne tænkning* that it is actually not the work of art but sensitive cognition that is the topic of aesthetics, and that this cognition is hermeneutic *in itself*: it brings insight. Not only hermeneutic understanding but also sensitive cognition includes, qua cognition, the element of understanding that Gadamer searched for in vain because he insisted on defining it hermeneutically rather than aesthetically. Similarly, in *Den skønne tænkning*, I explained that the theological claim for regarding the experience of faith as the measure of all other experience is based on a limited understanding of *aisthesis* and a reductive concept of *experience*. *Aisthesis* is regarded as devoid of faith, often it is even identified with physical sensation, and the applied con-

²⁴ Løgstrup, *Kunst og erkendelse*, 83.

²⁵ Mirjam-Christina Redeker, *Wahrnehmung und Glaube: Zum Verhältnis von Theologie und Ästhetik in gegenwärtiger Zeit* (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2011), 363.

²⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, “Aesthetics and Hermeneutics,” in *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 95–104, trans. and ed. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 5.

²⁷ Gadamer, “Aesthetics and Hermeneutics,” 3.

cept of experience usually comprises only sensory experience, empirical experience, scientific experience and perhaps life experience, but not experience of transcendence or a surplus of meaning.

Therefore, in *Den skønne tænkning*, I introduced a concept of *basic experience* to describe a level of experience characterised by a trinity of sensation, faith and comprehension. Basic experience is the sensitive level of experience at which anything at all appears to us, and which by aesthetics was named “the aesthetic.” Here we are thus *not* talking about singular experiences, but about the sensitively sentient being-there-in-the-universe-together-with-whatever-else-there-is without which there would be no consciousness. In this presence, we sensitively sense what is: ourselves in our presence and what we are together with in it. As Baumgarten noted, there is understanding, which he referred to as cognition, even at this basic level, and, in *Den skønne tænkning*, I added that this understanding is due not only to the sensitive aspect of the experience but also to the faith, in the sense of *trust*, with which we respond to the sensitively provided insight. Already at the aesthetic-sensitive level of experience, which basic experience represents, we thus find not only *sensation* but also *faith* and *comprehension*. In our sensations we sensitively comprehend ourselves, each other and the world around us, and we spontaneously have faith in what we comprehend: we trust the insight we receive in our sensitive experience. We sense, comprehend and have faith in what we comprehend when our experience is something that *happens* to us instead of being something we, ourselves, *do*; and this is precisely what goes on at the level of basic experience, at which there is yet no subject or object but only *Dasein*.

8. Aesthetic Formation

Our day is not characterised by having an eye for basic experience, however, or for its elements of sensation, faith and comprehension; on the contrary, our day is dominated by rational thought and aestheticism. The rational way of thinking opposes faith and comprehension, or theology and philosophy. It cultivates what it refers to as reason, but which in fact is rationality, at the expense of everything that has anything to do with faith, religion and theology.²⁸ No one expresses this ideology more explicitly than the militant atheists, but it can be observed everywhere in society. The tendency to juxtapose faith and comprehension is also present in Kierkegaard’s works and in the reception of his thought, but here it is in reverse. We could take as an example Johannes Climacus’ study in

²⁸ Until now I have translated the Danish word *forstand* (in German: *Verstand*) as “understanding,” but, to emphasise my point by avoiding potential confusion with “understanding” in the hermeneutic sense of the word, I now use the word “rationality” to translate *forstand*.

Philosophical Fragments of philosophy understood as the rational view of the world, and of theology defined by faith that cannot be understood rationally and thus also not philosophically. In this study, a distinction between reason and rationality is also missing; likewise, one misses an eye for philosophy that does not insist on comprehending everything rationally but revolves sensitively around the rationally incomprehensible.

Aestheticism makes itself present in the form of a widespread tendency to reduce aisthesis to physical sensation, to identify aesthetes with fanatics, and to cultivate this sensualism and fanaticism. Even in philosophy this takes place. Michel Foucault's idea about shaping oneself and one's life as a work of art, also called "self-creation" and "aesthetics of existence," may be mentioned as an example.²⁹ Whereas the Greek *kalokagathia* had a common ethics as its sounding board, and even the 18th century beautiful soul was aware of common values, the aesthetics of existence referred to by Foucault is associated with a postmodern distrust of everything universal and of the subject regarded as the seat of moral knowledge and action. This aesthetics of existence lacks both the morals of *kalokagathia* and the fervour of the beautiful soul. It is the expression of an individualistic aestheticism and it thus represents what not only Hegel and Kierkegaard but also Heidegger and Gadamer criticised aesthetic man for.

While it is justified to criticise aestheticism, it is wrong, however, to link aesthetic man to it. Baumgarten referred to the aesthete as *felix aestheticus*, that is the lucky aesthete in the sense of the successful aesthete.³⁰ All human beings are equipped with what is needed to cognise and think sensitively, which in short is: *feeling, sensation and presentiment*.³¹ The lucky aesthete is the person whose sensitive cognition is perfected and whose cognition and thinking is thus *beautiful*. This perfection requires aesthetic practice and teaching, and such aesthetic formation is important because beautiful cognition and thinking have not only cognitive but also ethical and religious significance. In the experience of beauty, something appears as valuable in itself, and we see ourselves and what we are surrounded by as parts of something larger. This was the message of the Greek

²⁹ Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 350–51.

³⁰ Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Ästhetik 1–2*, Latin-German, trans. Dagmar Mirbach (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2007), §§ 27 ff.

³¹ "Feeling, sensation, and presentiment" is the reformulation used in *Den skønne tænkning* of the conglomerate of lower cognitive faculties by which Baumgarten defined sensitivity. In *Aesthetica* §§ 30–37, these faculties are described as 1) increased sensitivity (*acute sentiendi*); 2) the disposition for imagining something (*dispositio ad imaginandum*); 3) the disposition for penetrating insight (*dispositio ad perspicaciam*); 4) the disposition for recognising something and memory (*dispositio ad recognoscendum et memoria*); 5) the poetic disposition (*dispositio poetica*); 6) the disposition for having a taste that is not ordinary, but refined (*dispositio ad saporem non publicum, immo delicatum*); 7) the disposition for anticipating and expecting something (*dispositio ad praevidendum et praesagiendum*); 8) the disposition for characterising one's perceptions (*dispositio ad significandas perceptiones suas*).

philosophy of beauty, which was transformed by Baumgarten into a philosophy of the very *experience* formed when things appear this way to us.

But unfortunately we have become beauty blind. We nurture our understanding and physical senses, but we overlook the sensitivity that feeling, sensation and presentiment form, and which is where the encounter with beauty happens. We confuse the beautiful with the pretty, and we cultivate the sublime or wonderful as if they were something different, whereas, in antiquity and the Middle Ages, they were aspects of the then far richer concept of beauty. Hence, there is a need for aesthetic formation, today understood not only as the cultivation of sensitivity considered necessary by Baumgarten but as a revival of our sensitivity as such, because we have forgotten the openness represented by it to what exceeds understanding and sense perception. Otherwise, if we neglect the need for aesthetic formation, we exclude revelation.³² Kierkegaard was right in insisting that revelation is not dependent on *us*; that it is not a product of the kind of experience we ourselves do and control. But revelation is an occurrence and thus indeed an experience, though of a kind that happens to us and the event of which we may become blind to. It is such an insensitivity that prevails today and intensifies the need for aesthetic formation: the need to rehabilitate our sensitivity and restore our openness to what exceeds understanding and sense perception, yet is accessible in its inaccessibility, namely in interaction with our creative susceptibility.

³² Not only in Chrétien's *The Call and the Response* but also in his *Hand to Hand*, for example, one can find support for this view. Jean-Louis Chrétien, *Hand to Hand: Listening to the Work of Art*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003).

IV. Critique, Protest and Reform

Religious Agency as Vehicle and Source of Critique

A Pragmatist Contribution

Ulf Zackariasson

American pragmatism stresses the primacy of practice. When life runs its course, you cannot simply will yourself in some Cartesian fashion into a state of doubt. Nor can you, however, just will yourself into a state of tranquillity when serious disruptions occur in the transactions between organisms and their environment. Pragmatists take this to suggest that problems originate and ultimately have to be resolved in practice in the sense that the only way to determine whether proposed solutions are really helpful or not involves bringing them to bear on the concrete situations where the problems first emerged, to see how well they actually work.

This is no anti-intellectual creed. From a pragmatic point of view, there are – and should be – no rigid distinctions between practice and theory, conceived as *reflection on practice*. In fact, practice is anything but unthinking or routine behaviour: it is from the very start shot through with various kinds of reflection. When John Dewey famously criticised what he called “spectator theories of knowledge” and their disregard of practice, he was particularly critical of the long-standing tendency in Western thought to reduce practice to a space where we apply knowledge and critical insights generated via reflection.¹ With regard to religion and the philosophy of religion, spectator theories of knowledge would typically see the philosophy of religion as a self-sufficient activity with a set of discipline-specific problems that it can discuss and resolve independently of the rough and tumble that is religious practice.

Now, personally, I am a pluralist in the philosophy of religion: I believe that there are many valid questions and fruitful paths of inquiry into human phenomena that are as complex and multifaceted as religion. At the same time, however, I concur with Dewey’s critique in the sense that I, too, believe that practice, including religious practice, has received too little attention in philosophy, and not least in the philosophy of religion. In this paper I want to explore how, by taking the primacy of practice seriously, we can develop philosophical reflection on critique, protest and reform, and further our understanding of how to improve the conditions for constructive criticism of religion.

¹ John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty: A Study of the Relation of Knowledge and Action* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1929), chap. 4.

Hence the purpose of this paper: *I argue that pragmatism offers a fruitful path to understand and explore religious practice's ability to function as both a vehicle and a source of critique of religion, and that increased attention to practice can help the philosophy of religion become a more diverse and relevant academic discipline.* To give the discussion more focus, I will introduce and develop, for my purposes, sociologist Laura Leming's concept of *religious agency*, and use it to discuss two *exemplary instances of critique*, as I shall call them. I argue that, compared with the more traditional philosophy of religion, a pragmatic approach can help us understand and make better use of such critique in practice. At the same time, these examples aid the articulation of a more thoroughly practice-oriented pragmatist philosophy of religion.

1. Working with Exemplary Instances: A Word on Method

Before I start, I have a comment on method. Linda Zagzebski has recently suggested that exemplars play a very important role in moral development. Inspired by Saul Kripke's and Hilary Putnam's work on reference in semantics, she suggests that we do not typically *first* articulate an exhaustive definition of a moral property such as courage, and *then* go on to look for cases where that property is instantiated. On the contrary: we rather start with exemplary cases of courageous behaviour or of courageous persons that we single out with the help of the emotion *admiration*; after that, we can begin to discuss in earnest what these examples have in common, what we can learn from them, and so on.²

One attractive feature of this way of working is that it is explicit about the value-laden character of philosophy. In reflection, as everywhere else, we have to start from where we stand, and acknowledge the influence that position has on us. To identify something as courageous, for instance, is to acknowledge a value in it, even when that courage is exercised in the pursuit of causes that we do not support. Let me take a simple example. According to an account of the battle of Waterloo that I read as a child, the courageous but futile charge of Napoleon's Imperial Guard deeply impressed the British soldiers, although they certainly could not have wished for the charge to succeed. The soldiers' emotions rather constitute a deeper kind of normative assent: Hilary Putnam has argued that, to be able to use thick moral concepts like "courage," we need to embrace some kind of (mainly inarticulate) conception of a flourishing human life, where being courageous is a *better* human property than being a coward or completely foolhardy.³

² Linda Zagzebski, *Exemplarist Moral Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

³ Hilary Putnam, *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

For present purposes, the important point is that we should distinguish two different senses of “exemplary.” First, we can judge critique to be *exemplary with regard to content*, if we agree that it identifies a serious problem. In this paper, I discuss different examples from the research literature where religious agency – primarily but not exclusively within the Christian tradition – functions as vehicle and source of feminist critiques aiming for reform from the inside. To judge these critiques exemplary with regard to content is then to agree with the feminist critique they offer. Second, we can judge critique to be *exemplary with regard to form* if structurally it fits with a particular conception of what constructive critique – for instance, of religion – should be like. Even someone who does not agree with the feminist agenda could still recognise that the form of critique is exemplary, just as Wellington’s soldiers at Waterloo recognised courage in pursuit of a cause they did not support.

Although personally I consider the critiques exemplary in both the above senses, the paper hinges primarily on the judgment that these critiques are exemplary with regard to *form*. I say “primarily” to underscore the heuristic nature of this distinction. A militant fundamentalist will probably consider the content of the critiques I discuss so repelling that she will conclude that there must also be something wrong with the form. I would react similarly if someone proposed that whatever we think of fundamentalist movements with regard to the *content* of their critique, the strategy to return to the sacred texts still constitutes an exemplary *form* of critique of religion. Pragmatists insist that we have to start from where we stand; and that includes the moral and existential universe we inhabit. Those who embrace a very different conception of human flourishing will not find the examples convincing; but given the contentious character of almost everything in philosophy, I do not think I would have reached a wider audience by starting with abstract principles instead of exemplars.

2. Religious Agency

Leming defines religious agency as “a personal and collective claiming and enacting of dynamic religious identity,” where the “identity is claimed and lived as one’s own with an insistence on active ownership.”⁴ Of course, religious agency can be exercised in ways that aim to conserve just as much as they aim to change.⁵ However, given the topic of this paper and the volume of which it is part, I shall focus attention on agency that either aims for change directly or leads to insights about a need for change. Leming suggests that we can fruitfully under-

⁴ Laura M. Leming, “Sociological Explorations: What is Religious Agency?,” *Sociological Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (2007), 74.

⁵ Saba Mahmood, *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, Reissue (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

stand change in terms of processes where “individual and collective religious agents exert pressure on institutional structures.”⁶

Leming’s examples of religious agency illustrate well the way in which religious agency can function as what I call a *vehicle of critique* – that is, a way to transform a religious tradition by exerting pressures on its structures at selected points. She describes the rather sophisticated strategies that her informants – women living in the US who describe themselves as woman-conscious Catholics – have developed to manifest their loyalty to the Catholic tradition in ways that avoid supporting, and at some points even oppose, patriarchal elements of Catholicism. For instance, they attend Mass more frequently when liberal priests officiate; they are highly selective about which charities they support and what kind of voluntary work they engage in; and they make sure to bring up – in meetings and casual conversations – questions about gender equality, the roles of women in worship services, and so on. In all, they work to raise awareness about and shift the focus on to questions and movements that are more conducive to gender equality *within* the Church.⁷

This is a very important form of critique that philosophers, who tend to concentrate on the intellectual dimensions of religion, neglect. I am, however, not only interested in religious agency as a space where we *apply* insights generated elsewhere; and Leming has little to say about the emergence of these critiques. So I shall move on to analyse two other examples where I take religious agency to function as a *source* of critique.

3. Religious Agency as Source of Critique: Two Examples

My first example is from The Living Wage Movement in North America. It is a movement that seeks to draw attention to and work against the growing problem that more and more people today are no longer able to support themselves and their families, even on full time jobs. Thus they are denied a living wage, forcing them to take several jobs; and that plight causes a whole range of health and social problems for them and their families. The movement is a coalition between labour organisations, various religious congregations and other NGOs – including, importantly, feminist organisations.⁸

Theologian Melissa Snarr, herself active in the movement, points out that the feminist participation has been helpful for the movement’s ability to make “gendered analyses of poverty” – that is, analyses that show the extent to which this problem is one that primarily befalls women, and particularly single moth-

⁶ Leming, “Sociological Explorations,” 74.

⁷ Leming, “Sociological Explorations,” 75 ff.

⁸ Melissa Snarr, “Women’s Working Poverty: Feminist and Religious Alliances in the Living Wage Movement,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 27, no. 1 (2011), 75–93.

ers.⁹ More interestingly for present purposes, however, is how The Living Wage Movement has also come to change its organisational structure in response to the increasing awareness about the destructive consequences that not least Christian sacrificial ideals about voluntary charity work had on the movement's own volunteers, especially the young pious women who carry out much of the work. Instead of receiving support, these women are expected to take on heavy loads of work on their scarce free time; and theological notions of sacrifice as a Christian virtue have, if anything, made the problem even worse by legitimising dysfunctional aspects of the movement's organisation.¹⁰

These insights, which I would claim emerge in religious agency, have led the movement to reform its ways of organising – for instance, by offering childcare to its volunteers and distributing workloads more equitably. It has also led Snarr (and others) to work for comprehensive revisions of the ways in which organisations take advantage of gendered expectations of women to do much of the unpaid and unglamorous work, while men tend to do more profiled tasks and take top positions.¹¹

Ultimately, these various particular critiques and their calls for change lead to a call for reconstructions of traditional, gender-blind, Christian theologies of sacrifice. Of course, such critiques are familiar from feminist theology and elsewhere; but I shall suggest, in what follows, that problems like these become *known* in a more fundamental sense, pragmatically speaking, when encountered and dealt with in practice.

First, though, my second example, which is from Keun-Joo Christine Pae's study of the protests against the plans to build a naval base on the Jeju Island in South Korea. These protests generated what the Danish theologian Lissi Rasmussen calls *diapractice* – that is, practical cooperation primarily between Christian, Buddhist and various secular grassroots organisations aiming to put a stop to the plans to build a naval base.¹²

Keun-Joo shows how the practical organisation to oppose the military largely became a cause for women. This empowered them and enabled them to exercise religious agency in more independent ways than they could within their relatively conservative congregations. At the same time, the protests benefitted greatly from the fact that the authorities exempted religious services from the ban on protests and demonstrations near the base: this led the protesters to organise the protests *as* religious services.¹³

⁹ Snarr, 'Women's Working Poverty,' 80 ff.

¹⁰ Snarr, 'Women's Working Poverty,' 89 ff.

¹¹ Snarr, 'Women's Working Poverty,' 84 ff.

¹² Lissi Rasmussen, *Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa: The Cases of Northern Nigeria and Tanzania Compared* (London: British Academic Press in association with the Danish Research Council for the Humanities, 1993).

¹³ Christine Pae Keun-Joo, "Feminist Activism as Interfaith Dialogue: A Lesson from Gangjeong Village of Jeju Island, Korea," *Journal of Korean Religions* 5, no. 1 (2014), 61 f.

In addition, Keun-Joo traces an important development in the protests where the struggle against the militarism that is still strong in Korean society (after decades of dictatorship and the constant threat of war) gradually began to take the broader form of a critique of patriarchy as one of the foundations of militarism. As Keun-Joo quotes Cynthia Cockburn: “not only is patriarchy strengthened by militarism, militarism *needs* patriarchy.”¹⁴ The cultural patterns that support militarism turn out to be central elements of the religious traditions on which subjects draw to oppose them. Thus, protests against militarism empowered women directly, but they also generated insights about the pervasiveness of problematic elements even in their own religious traditions; and this led, in turn, to new forms of critique and protest with a different target.¹⁵

Examples from Snarr and Keun-Joo show some of the ways in which critique can arise naturally in practice. Particularly interesting here are the ways in which religious agency – in this case, engagement in a movement – can be a source and not just a vehicle of critique. In pragmatic terms, religious agency can generate critical insights into how elements of one’s own religious tradition are among the obstacles to coming to terms with a problem.

Before I go on to analyse these examples, I want to point out that it is difficult clearly to distinguish here what we may call *immanent* and *external critique*. Critique presupposes some standards that the criticised party (allegedly) fails to meet; and in *Democracy and Tradition*, Jeffrey Stout proposes that the most effective forms of critique are immanent in the sense that they appeal to standards that the criticised party endorses.¹⁶ I think this is correct; but I note that in the examples from Leming, Snarr and Keun-Joo, it is in fact very hard to state clearly whether the critique qualifies as immanent or not. You could even say that this is one of the things at stake between various critics and defenders of the reigning orthodoxy. To be sure, feminist organisations provided important input at various points; but it is when such critique resonates with immanent elements in the traditions’ established habits of action, thought and judgment – such as an emphasis in word and deed on the equal value of all human beings in a divine and/or cosmic perspective – that it becomes powerful.

A pragmatic resolution of these difficulties is to resist essentialising the characterisations of traditions as monolithic entities. Such characterisations are prescriptive rather than descriptive, and function as what I, following Richard Rorty, would describe as moves in the game of “cultural politics” – an attempt to present virtually all critique of religious orthodoxy as apostasy.¹⁷ It is more

¹⁴ Cockburn quoted in Keun-Joo, ‘Feminist Activism as Interfaith Dialogue,’ 66.

¹⁵ Keun-Joo, ‘Feminist Activism as Interfaith Dialogue,’ 64 ff.

¹⁶ Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, New Forum Books (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 69 ff.

¹⁷ Richard Rorty, *Philosophical Papers. Vol. 4: Philosophy as Cultural Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5 ff.

fruitful, I would argue, to take a dynamic view of traditions – including religious traditions – as constituted of different factions and groups lacking a centre of gravity or clear boundaries, constantly struggling to reshape themselves in new circumstances.¹⁸

I have already suggested that, from a pragmatic point of view, it is fair to say that the critiques – familiar as they may be on an intellectual level – are brought home and become *known* in a more fundamental sense when they impede religious agency. To explicate that claim, I shall turn to the pragmatic tradition and its participant-oriented conception of habit and knowing.

4. Pragmatism and the Primacy of Practice

Pragmatists see human beings as constantly engaged in countless transactions with the environment in which they live, ultimately aiming to uphold a state of equilibrium between organism and environment. In the course of life, human beings acquire a huge number of habits of action, thought and judgment that regulate these transactions. As William James makes clear, a person without habits would be in “a sorry plight,” since even the simplest tasks would take lots of time.¹⁹ This means that human life to a significant extent runs its course in the tracks in which we find ourselves, rather than that we make completely free and active choices all the time.

Habits are, however, not isolated, fixed responses to specific stimuli. Instead, they are a repertoire of responses that we can withhold or actualise in a range of situations and in a number of ways.²⁰ Dewey points out that habits often function in entirely routine ways, but that *the very same* habits can, should the need arise, also be carefully attended to and modified in response to new situations. In a discussion of musical performances, Dewey writes:

If each act has to be consciously searched for at the moment and intentionally performed, execution is painful and the product is clumsy and halting. Nevertheless the difference between the artist and the mere technician is unmistakable. The artist is a masterful technician. The technique is fused with thought and feeling. The “mechanical” performer

¹⁸ This is also essentially the position that Stout takes in *Democracy and Tradition*. I have developed this account in more detail in Ulf Zackariasson, “What Is it to Be Religiously Mistaken? A Pragmatist Perspective,” *The Pluralist* 10, no. 3 (2015), 292–312; Ulf Zackariasson, “What’s Wrong With the Adequacy-Argument? A Pragmatic Diagnosis,” *Sophia* 50, no. 1 (2011), 11–23.

¹⁹ William James, *The Principles of Psychology I* (London: Macmillan, 1890), 113.

²⁰ Charles S. Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce. vol. 5: Pragmatism and Pragmaticism*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1934), §480.

permits the mechanism to dictate the performance. It is absurd to say that the latter exhibit habit, and the former not.²¹

The same habits can thus be exercised in different ways depending on situation, purpose and context; and, when wrestling with a problem, we are not doomed to let the habit mechanically “dictate the performance,” as Dewey put it. We can adjust and reconstruct habits intelligently when, perhaps because of changing circumstances, they no longer work well. Hence, it is important that we avoid any false dichotomies between habit and intelligence.

The habitual and situated character of human life suggests, with regard to religion, that most of the time people simply find themselves committed to some religious or secular life orientation in the sense that they find themselves with certain habits of action, thought and judgment that are, to a significant extent, shaped by some religious tradition or secular ideology. Therefore, we always start from somewhere – where we are set with our habits of action, thought and judgment – and must realistically expect that our inquiries will end up not too far from where we started. Effective critique is, arguably, piecemeal rather than wholesale. The critical potential lies, nevertheless, in the fact that we can discover, in practice, that some of our habits – as in the examples above – are actually part of the problem with which we struggle.

To clarify, I need to say something about the relation between religious traditions and habits. On the pragmatic approach to religion that I favour, religious traditions – through narratives, myths, symbols, sermons, rituals and so on – offer a range of what, following Douglas Davies, I would call *paradigmatic responses* to existentially important situations.²² Now, exactly *which* situations have existential importance depends to some extent on ourselves and on the respective traditions’ definition; typically, however, they involve matters of life, death, love, hate, benevolence, malevolence, conflict, reconciliation, forgiveness, success, failure, loss, birth, illness, recovery and death.²³ The responses that we make in such situations are certainly *shaped* by habits but, at the same time, they also *shape* our habits. *Religious agency can then be seen as our way of bringing the responses transmitted to us to bear on the situations in which we find ourselves through the development of habits of thought, action and judgment.* Since, despite our best intentions, we regularly fail to live up to this ambition, we also find rites of penance and reconciliation in virtually all religions.

²¹ John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt, 1922), 71.

²² Douglas Davies, *Emotion, Identity, and Religion: Hope, Reciprocity, and Otherness* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²³ I am inspired here by Eberhard Herrmann, *Religion, Reality, and a Good life: A Philosophical Approach to Religion*, Religion in Philosophy and Theology 11 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004).

However, as my examples above show, religious agency can also be a source of critique. To understand that, I suggest that we look to Dewey's account of human problem solving – that is, inquiry – in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. Here, Dewey defines inquiry as “the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole.”²⁴ Since inquiry springs from and addresses concrete problems in human practice, it is also a paradigmatic source of knowledge. Dewey writes: “that which satisfactorily terminates inquiry is, by definition, knowledge; it is knowledge because it *is* the appropriate close of inquiry.” However, he immediately adds that this “statement may be supposed, and has been supposed, to enunciate something significant instead of a tautology.”²⁵ He also frequently resisted the noun “knowledge,” preferring to speak instead of “knowing,” since that better captures the active and practical character of knowledge-acquisition.²⁶

Inquiry typically proceeds along the following stages. A rupture in our transactions with the environment leads to a state of shock and frustration. The first step in an inquiry aiming to restore the equilibrium is to institute a problem. When that problem is formulated, all the habits of action, thought and judgment that are not identified as directly part of the problem function, in the stages that follow, as a repository of resources that we can draw on, expand, or apply. (Recall the dynamic account of habit I offered above.) When we have reached a solution that resolves the problem, inquiry ceases, and we go on living with a now slightly revised set of habits. Successful inquiry thus generates knowing *and* a reconstruction of our habits. Of course, such knowing can be formulated in terms of beliefs or propositions; but it is also essentially connected to competence, and thus to habits and how to exercise habits in various situations. This is the form of knowing that will be most important in what follows.

Occasionally, inquiry is unsuccessful and the problem resists our initial attempts to resolve it. This is how I interpret the examples in this paper. Exercise of religious agency in response to the problems they address yields new and unexpected frustrations when agents realise that some of their own established habits of action, thought and judgment are obstacles to our chances to solve, in a satisfactory manner, the problem at hand. The situation is reconstructed as these habits become part of the problem and this sprouts new inquiries and a

²⁴ John Dewey, *The Later Works, 1925–1953. vol. 12: 1938 [Logic: The Theory of Inquiry]*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, IL.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), 108.

²⁵ Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, 15.

²⁶ Dewey also preferred the term “warranted assertion” to knowledge for the same reason. I will, however, stick here to the more familiar “knowing.” John Dewey and Arthur Bentley, *Knowing and the Known* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976); Dewey, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*.

need for a more thoroughgoing reconstruction of our habits of thought, action and judgment.

From a pragmatic point of view, one reason that such comprehensive critiques can arise out of particular cases is that habits function as a bridge between insights generated in particular circumstances and the more comprehensive bearing those insights have on other, broader areas of life. Take Snarr's example from The Living Wage Movement. The movement's members came to see that their work against poverty put volunteers (particularly young women) in an even worse situation than before, and this brought about a chain of responses. The concrete changes of habit resulted in new ways of working within the movement, but they also led to more comprehensive insights into the problems with the "feminisation of voluntary work" and with traditional theologies of sacrifice.²⁷ Here I would suggest that among the competences we acquire in inquiries are improved habits of discernment and judgment, through which we get better at detecting problematic features of situations in which we find ourselves. Of course, these habits can be trained via other means as well; but a large part of Dewey's pedagogical philosophy centres on the conviction that the various habits of action, thought and judgment necessary to discern, articulate and attack problems are best acquired and trained in situations where the problems are the students' own, and they engage in practical problem-solving.²⁸ In the Deweyan terms used above, this is the paradigmatic way in which new knowing is generated that we can apply in more and more spheres of human practice.

This latter point should immunise us against the intellectualist temptation to discard the examples discussed in this paper as trivial, because intellectual reasoning could in principle generate and assess similar points, independent of practice. I would instead argue that religious agency is a space where shortcomings and problematic features with one's own religious tradition become *known* in ways that are more significant and pervasive than what we can accomplish via information or "pure" reasoning (whatever that may be).²⁹ Philosophers of religion in the West have often neglected religious agency, seeing it mainly as a space where we apply insights and knowledge acquired elsewhere – although there have also been critical voices within, for instance, feminist philosophy. I think the examples discussed here urge us to get better at seeing how religious agency deserves attention as both a *vehicle* and a *source* of critique, protest and reform of religious traditions. Admittedly, such critique is always piecemeal and

²⁷ Snarr, "Women's Working Poverty".

²⁸ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1966).

²⁹ Of course, there are other ways in which these problematic features of a religious tradition such as Christianity have become known. I would suggest that we can fruitfully claim that here, too, religious agency plays a large role; but, for reasons of space, I shall not be able to argue for that here.

not as spectacular as some of the intellectual critiques that often take centre stage. Still, it has profound effects on people's lives in numerous ways, and a philosophy of religion concerned about religion's paradoxical capacity both to improve and to impede people's chances to lead flourishing lives should, in my view, pay close attention to the forms of critique, protest and reform that we can discern in religious agency.

5. Concluding Discussion: From Practice to Reflection and then Back Again?

I take the primary result of this paper to be the lesson that the philosophy of religion has much to benefit from a closer attention to practice, not least *religious agency*. I also take that to constitute a kind of pragmatic argument for why philosophers of religion should take pragmatism, or some other similarly practice-oriented philosophical approach, seriously. I mentioned at the outset that pragmatism urges us to take insights generated in reflection back into practice again; and, of course, the practice to which the philosophy of religion relates is religious practice. So are there any lessons for religious practice here?

The insights generated in this inquiry are rather general and overarching, and may not offer particularly concrete advice. I believe, however, that a first contribution lies in the conception of knowing that encourages exploration and the articulation of problems emerging from religious agency, and not least the pragmatist insistence that this is no "second-best" source. This is typically where knowing is generated, and we get better at discerning and responding adequately to ever broader ranges of concrete problems.

A second contribution, I would suggest, is that the connection to habit should encourage us – regardless of whether we are religious or secular – to pay more attention to, for instance, research into *intelligent habituation* about how one can train a critical sense that works *alongside*, not *against*, habit.³⁰ Now, this last addition is important, given the historically tense relation between religion and critique, not least with regard to the critique of religion typical of the Enlightenment tradition. Many of the spectacular contemporary critiques of religion avoid making any appeals to already established habits of action, thought and judgment within the religious traditions themselves. This is not a problem as long as we remember that, arguably, religious traditions are themselves committed to critique, protest and reform by their very imperative adequately to represent an

³⁰ E. g. Thomas Aastrup Romer, "Imagination and Judgment in John Dewey's Philosophy: Intelligent Transactions in a Democratic Context," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 44, no. 2 (2012), 133–150; Roberto Frega, "From Judgment to Rationality: Dewey's Epistemology of Practice" *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society: A Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy* 46, no. 4 (2011), 591–610.

ideal order and point to a path along which people can overcome (or at least live with) the vicissitudes of this life.³¹ Human finiteness and self-centeredness ensure that we will frequently fail in these respects; hence, I would say that, to the extent that we can make *any* general claims about religious traditions, it seems fair to hold that they share a concern for the prospects of critique, protest and reform.

The forms of critique discussed in this paper point to the way critique can emerge out of our current habits of action, thought and judgment, and work alongside them to change traditions from within by proposing new understandings of how to integrate the paradigmatic responses transmitted to us in various religious traditions and secular counterparts in our lives. For religious traditions, there is hardly anything completely new or unfamiliar about such piecemeal critique.

Drawing attention to the way pragmatism can help us glean important philosophical insights from religious agency is different from claiming that we should all become pragmatists. The philosophy of religion is, and should be, a multifaceted enterprise, with many different movements and schools communicating with and working alongside one another to improve our understanding of the multitude of human phenomena that we label religious – while not forgetting secular counterparts either. Within this pluralistic multitude, pragmatic inquiries into the ways religious agency generates critique, protest and reform should be a natural element.

³¹ See, for instance, Stuart Rosenbaum, “Must Religion Be a Conversation-Stopper?,” *Harvard Theological Review* 102, no. 4 (2009), 393–409.

The Personal in Philosophy of Religion

Timo Koistinen

In *Philosophy of Religion: Towards a More Humane Approach* (2014) John Cottingham develops a new kind of philosophy of religion which clearly differs from standard approaches in this field of study.¹ He argues that dominant approaches in analytic philosophy of religion include a misleading view of the nature and role of reason in the religious life. Cottingham notes that a large part of university introductory courses in philosophy of religion focus on “the examination of ‘pure’ rational demonstrations or probabilistic arguments about God’s existence, which are intended to appeal to any rational inquirer, irrespective of their personal commitments or religious beliefs.”² Cottingham’s observation is correct, and it is also worth noting that almost all introductory books in philosophy of religion lay much emphasis on arguments about God’s existence. For those who are unfamiliar with the field this may be somewhat surprising, for there is a strong tradition in modern philosophy and theology that calls into question the meaningfulness of efforts of philosophical rationalist theism. In modern philosophy it has commonly been thought that Hume’s and Kant’s criticisms gave fatal blows to the efforts to demonstrate God’s existence. In addition, modern theology has been influenced by Kant in this respect, and, in general, philosophical theism has not been a visible approach among modern theologians from Schleiermacher to Barth and Tillich. Furthermore, even in contemporary analytic theism some well-known authors, such as Plantinga, have called into question the assumption that religious faith needs propositional or argumentative evidence. Notwithstanding all this, the majority of analytic philosophers who are interested in religious matters assume that a central aim of philosophy of religion is to examine the rational acceptability of religious truth claims. The discussion is often based on the assumption that universal rationality exists, and the central aim of study is an impartial investigation of the truth and rationality of religious beliefs.

¹ John Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion: Towards a More Humane Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). Cottingham has worked on this “more humane approach” to philosophy of religion and to ethics in many of his publications. See, e. g., John Cottingham, *The Spiritual Dimension: Religion, Philosophy and Human Value* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

² Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion*, 9.

The ideal of impartiality and objectivity of philosophical reason has not been taken for granted outside the analytic philosophy of religion. For example, in hermeneutical and postmodern philosophy of religion the ideals of the Enlightenment have been subjected to severe criticism. Therefore, Cottingham's more humane approach is interesting from the point of view of the analytic-continental divide in contemporary philosophy.³ In this paper, I will explore ways in which Cottingham's approach is related to a current in analytic philosophy of religion that differs from the dominant rationalist theism/atheism, namely Wittgensteinian philosophy of religion.⁴

1. Philosophy and Religious Convictions

Cottingham finds the standard approach unsatisfactory for several reasons. He does not deny the value of the critical discussion and analysis of arguments for and against theism, nor is he a spokesman for fideism or radical relativism.⁵ Nevertheless, he argues that it is misleading to assume that philosophers' personal commitments are irrelevant in evaluating arguments for and against religious beliefs. According to Cottingham, the ideal of detachment, associated with the impersonal – scientific or metaphysical – perspective leaves out essential dimensions of religious beliefs. In place of this hyperintellectualist approach, Cottingham offers an approach for philosophy of religion which connects the field more closely with the spiritual, moral, psychological and aesthetic aspects that play a central role in the actual forms of religious life.

Cottingham's approach sheds light on many principal methodological questions that are related to the specific character of philosophy of religion. Philosophy of religion differs from some other areas of philosophy, as questions in this field have often directly to do with philosophers' own personal convictions. Religious questions have a significant personal involvement and personal commitments often shape the practice of philosophy of religion: personal convictions obviously motivate and guide the formulation of research questions and methods of study. As is well known, many prominent authors understand their task as arguing for their own religious or atheistic worldviews. Cottingham stresses that personal factors do not only motivate research, but they are essential elements in evaluating the truth and acceptability of religious worldviews. He

³ For a discussion on the analytic-continental divide in philosophy of religion, see Nick Trakakis, *The End of Philosophy of Religion* (London: Continuum, 2008).

⁴ Some of the issues concerning the Wittgensteinian method in philosophy of religion are taken up in my "D. Z. Phillips' Contemplative Conception of Philosophy," *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 53 (2011), 333–356; "The Vantage Point of Disinterested Inquiry. On the Neutrality of D. Z. Phillips' Philosophy of Religion," *Studia Theologica* 66 (2012), 130–148.

⁵ Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion*, 19–20.

insists that this personal and human dimension of religious thought should be taken much more seriously than philosophers usually do. Purely analytic, intellectual and reflective approaches which focus on evaluating the truth and rationality of abstract factual assertions do not get in touch with the meaning religion actually has in human life. Indeed, it is striking that the discussion of theism is nowadays often highly technical and complex. In analysing religious matters philosophers of religion use logical, epistemological and metaphysical tools and theories developed in other fields of philosophy. There is good reason to ask how well this approach serves those who are troubled by questions about the truth of religious beliefs, for the technical and abstract approach alienates philosophy of religion from personal and existential aspects of religious faith and makes the debate somewhat artificial.

Cottingham stresses that religious truth claims cannot be isolated from our life experiences – from our emotional sensibilities and moral considerations – without distorting them. It is a central teaching of many religious traditions that the genuine understanding of religious faith can be gained only through slow processes in an individual's moral and spiritual life. Religious faith is not an impersonal attitude. Instead, it most crucially has to do with people's inner life – with the question “Who am I?” In this respect, religious life is closer to art than science. In fact, religion and art have a historically close relationship, and Cottingham holds that the personal aspects of religion are internally related to imaginative, symbolic and poetic levels of understanding, which are often missing in philosophical discussions on religion in the analytic tradition.

Cottingham's views find parallels in the classics of philosophy of religion. His “humane approach” receives support from Pascal, Anselm, Aquinas, Descartes, Jean-Luc Marion and Ludwig Wittgenstein, among others. I will primarily focus my attention in this paper on the Wittgensteinian tradition in philosophy of religion. In particular, I am interested in some questions concerning the relation between the philosophical and the personal in Wittgensteinian thought, and I find these questions noteworthy in considering Cottingham's inspiring thoughts about the method of philosophy of religion. Cottingham's *Philosophy of Religion* includes some explicit references to Wittgenstein, but he has also written more extensively on Wittgenstein elsewhere.⁶

Cottingham agrees with Wittgenstein on many central issues. He considers that the view of the later Wittgenstein about “language being embedded in a ‘form of life’” offers an important insight into the philosophical study of religion.⁷ Religious belief and language cannot be understood apart from the use they have in actual religious and cultural contexts – apart from the lives

⁶ John Cottingham, “The Lessons of Life: Wittgenstein, Religion and Analytic Philosophy,” in *Wittgenstein and Analytic Philosophy*, ed. Hans-Johann Glock and John Hyman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 203–227.

⁷ Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion*, 11.

of religious believers. Cottingham also shares Wittgenstein's view that religious practices and beliefs should not be seen as forms of bad science. They both think that scientific rationalism is seriously misguided: religious beliefs should not be treated as pseudo-scientific theories, for they differ radically from hypotheses and theories in science. It is wholly misleading to treat belief in God as an empirical hypothesis. Instead, Cottingham thinks that it is accurate to say that religious beliefs are, as Wittgenstein says, "something like a passionate commitment to a system of reference."⁸ Cottingham argues that this fits well with the "epistemology of involvement" (which is contrasted with the "epistemology of detachment"). According to the "epistemology of involvement," evidence in religious matters is assessed in the light of spiritual and moral experiences that are only available as a result of certain "inner transformations" in an individual's life.⁹ These experiences are wholly unlike empirical observations: they are neither repeatable nor impartial, but are instead "lessons of life."

Despite apparent similarities between Cottingham's and Wittgenstein's approaches, there are however some tensions between Cottingham's and Wittgenstein's thought when developed by the most important contemporary Wittgensteinian philosopher of religion, the late D. Z. Phillips.

Like Cottingham, Phillips rejects the Enlightenment conception of rationality and considers that one should not reduce different aspects of human thought to a model of scientific inquiry. However, unlike Cottingham, he emphasises that a certain kind of neutrality is an essential element in philosophical investigation. In many of his works Phillips has developed the notion of philosophy as a form of "contemplation." According to the contemplative conception, the perspective of philosophical inquiry is external to a philosopher's personal religious commitments. In support of this view Phillips refers to the following remark in *Culture and Value*: "My ideal is a certain coolness. A temple providing a setting for the passions without meddling with them."¹⁰ Phillips sees this remark as an expression of the contemplative approach. He refers to it as a "cool" conception of philosophy, which is contrasted with "warm," normative and revisionary approaches in philosophy.¹¹

⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, trans. Peter Winch (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 64; Cottingham, "The Lessons of Life," 220–224.

⁹ Cottingham, "Lessons of Life," 222–223; Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion*, 22–23.

¹⁰ Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 2.

¹¹ Phillips' main work on the method of the contemplative conception of philosophy is *Philosophy's Cool Place* (London: Cornell University Press, 1999). See also D. Z. Phillips, *Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Phillips' conception of philosophy is strongly inspired by his former teacher in Swansea, Rush Rhees, who was a student and friend of Wittgenstein. See Rush Rhees, *Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse*, ed. D. Z. Phillips (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). For a discussion of Phillips' contemplative approach, see Anthony F. Sanders, ed., *D. Z. Phillips' Contemplative Philosophy of Religion: Questions and Responses* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Ingolf

The aim of the contemplative philosophy of religion is not to provide a rational foundation to our ways of living and thinking. Philosophy does not tell us whether it is rational to believe in God, nor is philosophy a guide to human conduct. Instead, the task of contemplative philosophy is to do conceptual justice to the variety of the world. Like Cottingham, Phillips thinks that the central problem with standard philosophy of religion is linked with the abstract level of discussion, and he often uses literary examples in his philosophical works with the purpose of elucidating religious matters. He thinks that the conceptual clarification of religious beliefs requires close attention to various aspects of religious life: a serious philosophical work in this field requires a sensitivity to religious issues. But his central concern is however different from what Cottingham has in mind. As a philosopher, Phillips thinks that his task is to illuminate and contemplate the different possibilities of understanding religious thought. Typically, his main concern is also critical: it is to show that philosophers are misguided by “the craving for generality”¹² in constructing abstract metaphysical theories.

Phillips contends that the task of theology and philosophy must be distinguished from each other. He holds that theology has a normative function. It determines what makes sense when talking about God. Theology is a form of religious activity. “Theologians are the guardians of the [religious] pictures.”¹³ The task of philosophy is different. Philosophy investigates sense and meaning, it does not determine the truth or rationality of religious beliefs. Philosophers contemplate religion without an intention to reform, defend or criticise religious beliefs. It leaves religious differences and disagreement as they are: it does not try to solve them, but it tries to understand them and do them justice. However, philosophy is also a critical activity. A central task of philosophy is to clarify conceptual confusions, and a philosopher may show that some theological differences are connected to conceptual confusions. Philosophy offers conceptual clarity, but conceptual clarity as such does not tell us what we should do in the face of intelligible religious alternatives.¹⁴

Cottingham, in turn, stands in the tradition of “faith seeking understanding”: he does not make a sharp distinction between theology and philosophy, nor does he think that philosophy of religion leaves everything as it is. In criticising the neutralist model Cottingham is not criticising the idea that philosophy aims at offering answers to religious questions. He says in fact that “the question of whether theism or naturalism constitutes a more coherent and compelling out-

U. Dalferth and Harmut von Sass, ed., *The Contemplative Spirit* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck), 2010; Mikel Burley, *Contemplating Religious Forms of Life* (London: Continuum, 2012).

¹² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue & Brown Books* (London: Harper Perennial, 1965), 17.

¹³ D. Z. Phillips, *Religion and Friendly Fire* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 87.

¹⁴ See e.g. D. Z. Phillips, *Wittgenstein and Religion* (London: St. Martin's Press), Chapter 1; Phillips, *Religion and Friendly Fire*, 87–88.

look is [...] central to the philosophy of religion,”¹⁵ and in his book he defends the theistic worldview against naturalism. In addition, he takes a sympathetic stance towards Pierre Hadot, who has shown in his famous studies that in antiquity philosophy was concerned with “the art of living.” For ancients, philosophy was a way of life. It was not only a theoretical matter but “a method of spiritual progress which demanded a radical conversion and transformation of the individual’s way of being.”¹⁶ In the same spirit, Cottingham thinks that abstract analysis alone is not enough for the serious practice of the philosophy of religion.¹⁷ The practice of philosophy has to do with changes in our own personal self-understanding and with various kinds of elements in the religious life which are found in literature, music and scriptures.

Phillips’ contemplative conception leads in a rather different direction. Philosophy does not tell you how to live, and in this sense it is not understood as a way of life. He claims that for Wittgenstein “[a]ny suggestion of the philosopher as the sage who points us in the right spiritual or moral direction would be anathema.”¹⁸ Phillips rejects all efforts to offer a philosophical foundation to our forms of life and world pictures. Instead, a philosopher is “content with contemplating where we already are.”¹⁹ He often quotes Wittgenstein’s famous remark in *Investigations*: “What has to be accepted, the given, is – one could say – forms of life.”²⁰

Phillips’ central point could be formulated as follows: an external foundation for our practices is a conceptual impossibility. A metaphysical perspective that comes from nowhere is an illusion based on a misleading view of the relationship between language and reality. There is no “truth as such” or “meaning as such” that exists independently of our practices. A philosopher cannot offer a general external perspective on reality which is independent of actual human practices. There is no Archimedean point, no neutral rational point of view from which a philosopher can evaluate the truth of human practices and which is independent of them. The assumption that there is a practice-independent point of view is thus not only false but nonsensical.

Phillips connects Wittgenstein’s criticism of metaphysics with the criticism of “the absolute conception of the world”. Phillips characterises metaphysics as “the attempt to give a general account of the reality of ‘all things’.” This attempt ob-

¹⁵ Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion*, 2–3.

¹⁶ Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 265.

¹⁷ Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion*, 149–150.

¹⁸ D. Z. Phillips, “Locating Philosophy’s Cool Place,” in *D. Z. Phillips’ Contemplative Philosophy of Religion: Questions and Responses*, ed. Anthony F. Sanders (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 41.

¹⁹ Phillips, *Philosophy’s Cool Place*, 163.

²⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 3rd edn. (London: Basil Blackwell, 1967), 226.

scures the variety of the world.²¹ Rather, philosophical enquiry – the grammatical investigation of the actual use of language – reveals a variety of meanings and conceptions of reality and truth that cannot be reduced to any single paradigm.

Wittgenstein says in *Zettel*: “The philosopher is not a member of any community of ideas. That is what makes him into a philosopher.”²² Phillips’ contemplative conception echoes this remark: as mentioned, he is strongly against advocacy in moral philosophy and philosophy of religion. However, one can speak about ethical demands in philosophical inquiry. The ethical demand is to do justice to moral and religious views which are at variance with philosophers’ own commitments. Phillips stresses that this makes hard ethical demands on a philosopher who has strong moral or religious commitments of his own.²³ An analogy exists between contemplative philosophy and literature. A contemplative philosopher, like a great writer, shows the variety of the world and tries to do justice to different ways of speaking, acting and thinking. The task of great literature and the task of contemplative philosophy is to show the world in all its variety and complexity. However, Phillips admits that in philosophical investigation the distinction between the philosophical and the personal is not always clear cut. For example, following Wittgenstein, Phillips thinks that James Frazer in developing his view of religion as a form of primitive pseudoscience was blind to the meaning of religious beliefs and rituals. Some possibilities were closed to Frazer on account of his own limitations: the confused account of religious practices Frazer gives is connected to his lack of imagination and religious sensibility.²⁴

2. Philosophy and Moral Values

Cottingham’s and Phillips’ approaches to moral philosophy help one to understand some profound differences between their philosophical methods. Cottingham stands in the tradition of philosophy of religion that stresses the primacy of the moral in religion. The central focus of religion is not in metaphysical theories, instead religion has to do with “the deep structural problems of human life,” which are primarily connected with “our pressing need for moral transformation.”²⁵ Cottingham contrasts theistic view of ethics with secular views, and he argues that there is a significant connection between theistic beliefs and morality.

²¹ Phillips, *Wittgenstein and Religion*, 233–234.

²² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and Georg Henrik von Wright, transl. G. E. M. Anscombe (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Basil Blackwell, 1967), §455.

²³ Phillips, *Hermeneutics*, 245; Peter Winch, “Doing Justice or Giving the Devil His Due,” in *Can Religion Be Explained Away?*, ed. D. Z. Phillips (London: Macmillan, 1996), 173.

²⁴ Phillips, “Locating,” 43. Ludwig Wittgenstein, “Remarks on Frazer’s *Golden Bough*,” in *Philosophical Occasions: 1912–1951*, ed. James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993).

²⁵ Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion*, 72.

He develops his conception by appealing to theological considerations, but at the same time he argues that common moral experiences support the theistic view of the objectivity of moral values. He argues that ordinary ethical discourse and common experience of moral demands need a transcendent source, and, in his view, a theistic framework offers an adequate ground for the authority of obligations and for the objectivity of values. He appeals to people's moral intuitions in defending the objectivity of values: most people think that ethical demands are not just matters of subjective feeling of taste: "we all *talk* of obligations, and nearly everyone has a strong *sense* of obligations as constraints on conduct."²⁶ He claims that these intuitions are echoed in contemporary discussions of secular moral philosophy. Cottingham refers here to philosophers, such as Derek Parfit, John McDowell and Christine Korsgaard, who have tried to do justice to the ordinary intuitions concerning the objectivity of moral demands and who have tried to develop models of the idea of obligation within a secular and naturalistic worldview.²⁷ Cottingham argues that none of these attempts have been successful. Objectivism about value needs a teleological framework which is an essential part of the theistic worldview: "[W]ithout some kind of teleological framework for understanding the nature and ultimate destiny of humanity, there seems no basis for regarding any of the many competing impulses and goals that provide us with reasons to act having overdriving normative force."²⁸

The teleological picture of reality associated with theism offers a serious alternative to secular ethics, and it can be defended by appealing to common features of human experiences. However, Cottingham does not see the theistic picture as the "best theory of ethics" which can be defended by the use of coercive philosophical argument.²⁹ Although the theistic vision or picture of reality "resonates with many of our deepest human sensibilities," Cottingham notes that it cannot be defended by arguments that "could convince every sceptic."³⁰ In any case, his arguments for theism are directed towards a general philosophical audience, and in this respect there is an apologetical dimension in his thought.

Phillips' approach to moral philosophy is quite different. His thought is characterised by a certain sort of pluralism, and he opposes all efforts to formulate general theories of morality. In practising moral philosophy, Phillips "intervenes" in moral philosophy by criticising philosophers' tendency to generalise

²⁶ Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion*, 88.

²⁷ Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion*, 89–94.

²⁸ Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion*, 94. "[T]he theistic worldview is of a cosmos that is fundamentally benign: a cosmos where the natural world reflects a goodness and beauty stemming from the divine source of all reality, where our human moral impulses orient us towards an eternal and objective moral order, and the deepest fulfilment of our human nature lies in responding to the imperatives of love and justice." Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion*, 98.

²⁹ Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion*, 94–95.

³⁰ Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion*, 97.

about moral issues and ignore the heterogeneity of ethics.³¹ The task of philosophers is to try to provide conceptual clarification and elucidation to the complex moral phenomena in human life. The aim of contemplative philosophers is not to provide a neutral or objective standard by which we can choose between rival or diverse moral perspectives and practices. Phillips' attacks on the deep-seated "presumption of theory" in contemporary moral philosophy, i. e. the effort to give a general theoretical account of morality. In his view, this effort is fundamentally misguided. Its basic problem "lies in assumption that there is an essence of something called Morality."³² In the light of this assumption, the variety of different ethical practices is ruled out: one ethical theory is held up as the metaphysical essence of moral values and conceptions. In contrast to that, a contemplative moral philosopher, as a philosopher, does not advocate any particular moral ethical practice, but clears away confused accounts of morality. In criticising moral philosophy, Phillips is not offering a theory of his own, instead he is trying to pay attention to a variety of actual moral points of view and do justice to different moral possibilities.³³ Philosophers should not make moral matters less complicated and tidier than they are. There is an irreducible variety of moral opinions, and this diversity is something that is a given: "They are there like our life'. It may said that if our moral perspectives and practices are different, we could not go on. To which we should reply: that is how we go on."³⁴

This means that a philosopher cannot argue in the name of philosophy that one all-embracing moral system – e. g. a secular or Christian position – is better or more reasonable than their alternatives. This may sound like relativism, but it would be a problematic way of characterising Phillips' views, for it is not clear what "relativism" in this context means. If relativism is understood as a philosophical theory in which different ethical values are equally valid, Phillips is not advocating relativism. As we have seen, he attacks the idea that philosophical investigation offers the foundation for our values, obligations and our views of good life. The idea that philosophy can offer a theoretical or intellectual justification for universally valid (context-independent) moral theory is both false and confused. Phillips is not claiming that every view is as good as any other. Instead, he denies that moral beliefs stand "in need of a further justification in terms of criteria of validity and invalidity which are supposed to be independent of them."³⁵ It is absurd to say that all moral beliefs are equally valid, for "validity" here has no sense at all. In describing the actual use of language, a philosopher

³¹ D. Z. Phillips, *Interventions in Ethics* (London: Macmillan, 1992).

³² Phillips, *Interventions*, viii.

³³ It is worth noting, however, that the concept of morality has some limits, for without these limits we could not know what is meant by morality at all. "In order for a belief to be a moral belief it must be related to a range of characteristic notions: truth, loyalty, kindness, generosity, courage, patience, etc." Phillips, *Interventions*, 106.

³⁴ Phillips, *Interventions*, xv.

³⁵ Phillips, *Interventions*, 106.

can say that “one moral belief is as much a moral belief as any other,” but this is “*not a moral judgement*.”³⁶ Thus, “[t]here is no contradiction in saying that a point of view is a moral point of view and holding at the same time that the view is morally wrong.”³⁷

The starting point of moral evaluation is given. Moral considerations start from somewhere and are constitutive of our ways thinking and acting. Moral thought does not start from radical doubt that questions every actual ethical perspectives. Neither philosophy nor anything else can offer a practice-independent yardstick for assessing different moral positions, for the assessment logically depends on our moral practices.

One problem in moral philosophy is linked with the notion of belief. Although we talk about different moral “beliefs” and “opinions,” these words have here a different use than they have in ordinary epistemic or scientific contexts. Phillips says that:

[...] moral beliefs are not hypotheses awaiting some kind of verification. Neither are they conclusions based on a system of antecedent reasons. This being so, moral beliefs do not stand in need of further proof. [...] Moral beliefs express what people find morally important. These beliefs express parameters of right and wrong. The beliefs cannot be contrasted with knowledge. The term ‘belief’ in this context is synonymous with ‘conviction’.³⁸

According to Phillips, the personal element in ethical choices is a *constitutive* part of them. It makes no sense to think that moral values are independent of what an individual thinks: ethical problems cannot be solved by someone else. There are no experts in moral matters. In this respect they differ radically from empirical questions. Moral truths do not exhibit the same kind of agreement as we find in our empirical judgements.³⁹ Phillips radically questions the idea that philosophy can offer moral theories that can offer objective answers to moral questions. A philosopher has to recognise the variety of ethical perspectives and the existence of moral truths, i. e., moral convictions that are at odds with one other.⁴⁰

³⁶ Phillips, *Interventions*, 106.

³⁷ Phillips, *Interventions*, 107.

³⁸ Phillips, *Interventions*, 105–106.

³⁹ Phillips, *Friendly Fire*, 82.

⁴⁰ Phillips insists that philosophy does not serve as a guide to right conduct, and, interestingly, he also thinks, following Peter Winch, that it is misleading to say that morality itself is such a guide. Winch has argued that this way of seeing the place of morality in human life is common in moral philosophy. Firstly, moral philosophers assume that we are agents who act on the world and effect changes by doing so. Secondly, it is assumed that morality is a guide which tells us what kind of changes we should make and how to overcome obstacles and achieve our life’s goals. According to Winch, this is a confusing picture. We cannot say that morality helps us to solve our difficulties, for without morality there would be no difficulties. Morality is a constitutive element of how we approach situations in our life. Morality itself determines for us the problems and the alternatives for action. Morality itself “puts obstacles in our path” and,

3. Final reflections

There are differences between Phillips' and Cottingham's philosophical method. In contrast to Cottingham, Phillips makes a sharp distinction between the non-normative philosophical approach and the personal confessional approach, which offers normative answers to religious questions. However, one could ask whether Phillips' philosophical accounts of religious beliefs are really theologically neutral. His actual philosophical reflections on religious possibilities are coloured by his personal sympathy for a theological tradition represented by Simone Weil and Søren Kierkegaard. For example, it is obvious that his own ethical and religious passions characterise his criticism of contemporary theodicies.⁴¹ Phillips himself is aware of the difficulty of achieving the ideal of contemplative philosophy and he openly admits that there are personal dimensions in his philosophy of religion. There are good reasons to doubt that in religious matters the personal and the philosophical can be distinguished from each other as sharply as Phillips sometimes seems to do.⁴² However, I think he is on the right track in claiming that a sense of religious beliefs can also be available to those who do not personally commit themselves to these beliefs. One does not need to be a believer in order to understand, and philosophers can clarify beliefs they do not share. Cottingham, to my mind, does not deny that, although he speaks about "accessibility conditions" in a religious context. But what is at issue in the dispute between the normative and descriptive approaches is the question of what can philosophy contribute to religious life and ethics when one rejects the foundationalist model of philosophy. If conceptual analysis and philosophical hermeneutics are at the core of philosophy, philosophical investigation only offers a modest amount of wisdom in debates over religion. Religious and moral practices also "come first" in the sense that people often take religious and ethical issues very seriously and they do not wait for what experts in philosophy have to say about them. I guess that only a few of us would think that the religious disagreements of humankind can be solved by philosophical discussion.

Needless to say, in the context of modern culture the practice of philosophy is not tied to philosophical schools of thought in the same way as they were in antiquity. At universities, philosophy of religion, at the organisational and institutional level, should not be committed to some specific religious, confessional and ideological programme. They should also recognise the plurality of world-views in democratic liberal societies.

therefore, it is "a strange sort of guide." Peter Winch, *Ethics and Action* (London: Routledge), 171–172; quoted in Phillips, *Philosophy's Cool Place*, 125. See also Phillips, *Interventions*, 65–66.

⁴¹ D. Z. Phillips, *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God* (London: SCM Press, 2014).

⁴² For a recent discussion on this theme, see Genia Schönbaumsfeld, *A Confusion of the Spheres: Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein on Philosophy and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Chapter 2.

Cottingham is not, of course, suggesting anything that contradicts these views. Like Wittgenstein, Cottingham holds that philosophy is not a theory or a doctrine, but rather an activity. Although he partly shares Hadot's classical view of philosophy, he considers that philosophy does not offer knowledge but instead organises what is known.⁴³ On the last page of the book he says that philosophy does not settle religious matters definitively, but helps us see more clearly what is at stake.⁴⁴ These formulations are not far from Phillips' own position. Although Cottingham stands in the tradition of philosophical theism, he, unlike many contemporary analytical theists, does not think that a genuine understanding of Christianity needs much metaphysical speculation. Cottingham's approach, which is strongly influenced by Thomistic classical theism, is much closer to Phillips' insights than the contemporary form of theistic personalism.⁴⁵

The debate over worldviews is, of course, only one theme in philosophy of religion. It is possible to analyse religious phenomena without assuming that the research has any personal religious significance or that the research has anything to do with the truth of religious doctrines. For example, those who are interested in the history of philosophy often deal with theological questions, as theology has been an influential part of the history of Western thought. In this case, the interests of study may be purely philosophical when, for example, philosophers explore how philosophical ideas developed in medieval theology.⁴⁶ At least in this sense philosophical analysis may offer a religiously neutral understanding of theological doctrines.⁴⁷

⁴³ Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion*, 9.

⁴⁴ Cottingham, *Philosophy of Religion*, 176.

⁴⁵ See D. Z. Phillips, ed., *Whose God? Which Tradition?* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

⁴⁶ Simo Knuuttila, "Philosophers Dealing with Religious Matters," in *Perspectives in Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Timo Koistinen and Tommi Lehtonen (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 2000), 201–219.

⁴⁷ This article is partly based on my talks presented at the Literature in Philosophy of Religion Seminar at the University of Helsinki in May 2017 and in Nordic Society of Philosophy for Religion Conference at the University of Oslo August 2017. I thank various participants in these meetings for their helpful comments.

Are the Lutheran Confessions Inconsistent in What They Say on Free Will?

Atle O. Søvik

1. Introduction

In this article, I discuss three apparent inconsistencies in the Augsburg Confession (AC) and the Formula of Concord (FC) and argue that they are not inconsistent.¹ The three apparent inconsistencies are on the topic of free will and will be discussed in light of recent philosophical discussions on free will and responsibility.

These are the three problems I will discuss:

- 1) The AC says in article five that God alone creates faith. This seems to be contradicted by the Solid Declaration (SD) of the FC, which says that people who do not have faith are themselves to be blamed for it (SD 2.57–61). If God alone can be the cause of faith, it means that humans cannot be the cause of faith. But if humans cannot by themselves come to faith, it seems inconsistent to blame them for not doing something they cannot do.
- 2) The AC says in Article 18 that humans have some free will in inter-human relations but not in relation to God. This seems inconsistent if we assume that people either have free will or not; how can one have free will in relation to humans but not in relation to God?
- 3) The Solid Declaration says that God has only elected people for salvation (SD 11.5), and not for damnation. But if God has elected some for salvation, it seems to imply that the rest have been elected for damnation, which is inconsistent with the claim that God has *only* elected people for salvation.

I will start this article by presenting a theory of free will and then argue that it can solve most of these problems. I then add a theory of responsibility to solve even further problems before I conclude. Methodologically, it should be said that the topics of free will and responsibility are huge, which means that very many topics

¹ References to the Augsburg Confession and the Solid Declaration are to Robert Kolb, Timothy J. Wengert, and Charles P. Arand, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000).

do not get the discussion they deserve. This article does not defend all the claims made about free will and responsibility, but does refer to books where they are defended. The goal of the article is to see how apparent inconsistencies in the Lutheran confessions can be shown to be merely apparent, *given* certain theories of free will and responsibility.

2. A Theory of Free Will: Event-Causal Libertarianism

There are many different theories of free will. They each define “free will” differently, but a coarse definition that most agree on (even if they interpret it differently) is that free will means that (1) it is “up to us” what we choose between several alternatives, and (2) the source of the choice is in us, not outside of us or in something else that we cannot control.²

The different theories can be sorted on a scale depending on how strong a form of free will they defend. At one end are those who reject free will at all, since they find it either incompatible with determinism (and they affirm determinism), or incompatible with indeterminism (and they affirm indeterminism), or incompatible with both.³

Next, there are different forms of compatibilism, which defends a weak form of free will compatible with determinism. *Determinism* here means that there is only one possible content of the future given the state of the universe from the start. Compatibilists accept that the content of our lives was determined before we were born, but argue that we still have free will in their understanding of the term.⁴

Libertarians think that a kind of free will compatible with determinism is too weak to deserve the name of free will, so they argue instead that we have free will, but that this is only compatible with indeterminism. Among libertarians there is a division between those who think of the human mind as a causal process like other causal processes in nature (event-causal libertarianism) and those who reject this (either agent-causal or non-causal libertarianism).

Agent-causal and non-causal libertarianism defends the strongest version of free will, where free choices are unique and irreducible events in the world.⁵ Such

² Robert Kane, *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 5.

³ See for example the hard incompatibilism of Derk Pereboom: Derk Pereboom, *Free Will, Agency, and Meaning in Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁴ See for example the compatibilism of Daniel Dennett: Daniel C. Dennett, *Freedom Evolves* (New York: Viking, 2003).

⁵ For examples, see Timothy O'Connor, *Persons and Causes: The Metaphysics of Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Helen Steward, *A Metaphysics for Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); and Carl Ginet, *On Action*, Cambridge Studies in Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

theories are criticized for including mysterious concepts which do not explain anything, but rather are superfluous compared to alternative theories.

Event-causal libertarianism agrees with compatibilists that the human mind is a causal process, but disagrees with compatibilists in arguing that free will requires indeterminism.⁶ In a recent book, I have defended a version of event-causal libertarianism where a person is free when her self is the cause of her actions in a way which is described in great detail in the book.⁷ There is no space to present or defend this theory in full here, so instead I shall just present some implications which are relevant for the following discussion.

According to event-causal libertarianism, actions can have different causes, but free will only requires that some important choices are caused by the person, not determined before the person was born. What is important for free will is not that one can always choose between different alternatives, but that the person is sometimes the ultimate source of his or her choice. This means that humans can have free will even if there are many things that persons cannot choose to do. The important thing is that humans are able to form their character over time through important choices.⁸

An example to illustrate such a view is to refer to Luther and suppose that he said, “Here I stand, I can do no other,” and that it was true that he could do no other. The point is that if he had formed his character to be a person who had to follow his conscience in ethically important matters, he would still be free and responsible even if he could “do no other.”

In my own theory of free will, I argue that free will and responsibility come in degrees. A person can be involved in her choices to varying degrees from when a desire immediately causes an action to when an independent self causes an action. I use Antonio Damasio’s theory of the self to argue that the self can gradually cause its own content over time and thus be the cause of itself and the cause of a person’s actions, therefore the person is free in the sense of being the ultimate source of her choices. This presupposes a specific understanding of causation as contrastive and that the world is indeterminated at the macro level of human interaction.⁹ In the following, I shall consider how this theory of free will can solve the problems presented in the introduction. I will start with apparent inconsistency No. 1.

⁶ See for example Robert Kane, *The Significance of Free Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁷ Atle O. Søvik, *Free Will, Causality and the Self*, Philosophical Analysis (Berlin: DeGruyter, 2016).

⁸ For an example of this theory, see Kane, *The Significance of Free Will*.

⁹ Søvik, *Free Will, Causality and the Self*.

3. Solution to Apparent Inconsistency No. 1

I start by discussing what it means to say that it is true that God alone creates faith. When it comes to truths, there are fine-grained and coarse-grained truths. For example, if I say that there are some birds in the forest, this may be true, but it is a coarse-grained truth compared to a fine-grained truth specifying number and types of birds in the forest. To say that God alone creates faith should be taken as a coarse-grained truth. At a fine-grained level, there are many causes of why any individual has faith or not, which the FC also seems to affirm when it says that we have free will to choose to go to church and listen to the sermons or not (SD 2.52).

Faith itself has many aspects, but here the term is used with emphasis on the components of knowledge, trust and desire for relationship with God. The claim that God alone creates faith should be interpreted as saying that God is the one who deserves the praise when people have faith, since their beliefs, trust and desire are not a result of their choice but rather a result of something occurring, like a reaction to hearing the gospel and living in a context with other believers. While humans do influence how it comes to be that others find the gospel trustworthy and desirable, God deserves the fundamental praise for providing a trustworthy and desirable gospel at all, which we can react to with knowledge, trust and desire, which are the components of faith. It is not a choice humans make to believe that the gospel is true, or to trust it or desire it – it merely happens in them – and so coming to faith is not an action you deserve praise for.

With this interpretation of what it means that God creates faith, I move on to the claim that seems to contradict it, namely that humans are responsible for not believing in God. There are complex causes for why any individual does not have faith, but can something be said in general about normal people and responsibility for not believing? To do so, one must distinguish between different types of non-believers. Humans are not responsible and should not be blamed for not believing in God if there are non-chosen reasons for why they cannot believe. But they may have self-chosen reasons for not believing that the gospel is true, trustworthy or desirable. For example, they can turn themselves into persons who desire other things more strongly than relationship with God in a way that makes them resistant to the message of the gospel. When hearing the gospel, this can block the natural reaction of trust.

There is no contradiction between believing that God can be the cause of faith in all believers and, at the same time, that some non-believers can be the cause of their own non-belief. That is just to say that different events have different causes. Given event-causal libertarianism, the mind is a causal process, but there can be different causes of our actions, and freedom only requires some self-caused actions. Within such a theory, God may well be the cause of faith and humans can be the cause of not having faith, as in the example above. The FC even says that God is the efficient cause of faith (SD 2.70), which fits well with event-causal

libertarianism, while agent-causal and non-causal libertarianism reject that the category of efficient causation applies to the mind.

However, it is not correct to say that *all* non-believers are responsible for not having faith, as long as we talk about responsibility in the traditional sense. For example, some have never heard the gospel through no fault of their own. And in any case, it still seems wrong to blame them for not coming to faith if they cannot on their own come to faith. Is it then possible to say without contradiction that *all* normal non-believers are responsible for not believing?

There are different understandings of responsibility. The traditional view says that people deserve to be blamed or praised for their actions, and that a wrongful action in itself justifies blame, regardless of what the consequences of that blame are. Even if a person suddenly became the last person alive on earth, he would still deserve to sit in prison for years if he had committed a serious crime the day before. This is called the basic-desert view. On the other hand, there are revisionary views saying that the practice of praise and blame is justified in virtue of its consequences, for example, that it is a general strategy for cultivating moral agency.¹⁰

If we use a revisionary understanding of responsibility, which emphasizes the result of holding others responsible, one can hold all normal non-believers responsible and blame them for not having faith. Then we understand blame as something we do to influence people's behavior, and then it makes sense to blame all non-believers in order to influence them to accept Christian faith. Then you can say that God alone creates faith through the spreading of the gospel and, at the same time, all non-believers can be blamed for not believing in order to influence them to accept faith. This has obviously often been the case: people have been blamed as sinners and encouraged to believe that they should have faith, and it has had the desired result.

To this, one could make the following objection: Even if one accepts an understanding of blame that focuses on consequences, it may seem strange to say that one can blame people for not having faith if God alone creates faith. What is the point of blaming someone for not believing in order to achieve the consequence that they start to believe if it is, in any case, God who must create faith? Is one not trying then to make people do something they cannot do?

The key to solving this problem is to remember what the Confessions say about how God creates faith. It is through the preaching of the gospel (CA V, SD 2.52). Saying that people are sinners who should convert and presenting the grace of the gospel can be understood as a way that God creates faith. At least, such a scenario is often described in the Lutheran tradition, even if there are, of course, many different ways to faith. Thus blaming people for not having faith

¹⁰ Manuel Vargas, *Building Better Beings: A Theory of Moral Responsibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

and God creating faith are two sides of the same event. They are not two contradictory events, but the same event. This solution presupposes that we should distinguish between the rationality of blaming non-believers here on earth and what will happen to non-believers in the final judgment.

4. Solutions to Apparent Inconsistencies Nos. 2 and 3

The second apparent inconsistency was that it seems inconsistent to say that we have free will in relation to humans but not to God. It is a common assumption that we either have free will or not, thus it seems inconsistent to say that we can have free will in some cases but not in others. However, this fits well with a theory saying that we have free will and responsibility in different degrees in different areas in our life, as defended in my version of event-causal libertarianism. Experience confirms that we have changeable and non-changeable thoughts, feelings and desires, and they are changeable to a different degree. Some things I can easily change at will, while others I cannot.

Free will and responsibility come in degrees. Seeing that solves many problems in the free will debate, such as the questions of how freedom could evolve at all and why children are not responsible but adults generally are. When it comes to faith in God, this is not something we can choose at will, although we can influence it over time. There is thus no contradiction in saying that we have free will in inter-human affairs, even if we are not free to choose faith.

I now move on to the third apparent inconsistency, which was the claim that God has only elected people for salvation. The FC defends simple predestination and not double predestination, and it says that the right understanding of predestination is to read it as statements meant as comfort for those who believe. That statements about election are meant as comfort is important for how to interpret the biblical texts on election, like for example Rom 8:28–30. It says that Christians are elected by God, and that seems to imply that non-Christians are elected not to be saved. In a context of presenting systematic theology, it would be a natural inference to make: if Christians are elected to have faith, non-Christians are elected not to have faith. But in a context of offering comfort, the reason for talking about election is to comfort the believers that they can trust that their own faith will hold, since it is caused by God's election. But the person offering comfort has no intention of saying anything about non-believers, and we cannot infer with certainty that they are elected not to believe. Maybe they are elected to believe later, or maybe they are elected but have rejected the election, or maybe there is another alternative. The point is that speaking of election in a context of comfort cannot be used as evidence for double predestination.

But does not Paul speak about election for damnation as well in Rom 9:6–23? Wolfhart Pannenberg argues well that the examples of election that are offered

here are examples of election having to do with concrete events in history and should not be taken to defend an election for salvation and damnation before the beginning of time.¹¹ This interpretation of Rom 8 and 9, which rejects eternal predestination, is supported by the many Bible verses that go against such predestination, for example Rom 11:22, Matt 23:37 or Heb 6:4–6. Given this interpretation, to comfort by saying that God has elected them in history, just means that God has met individuals and done everything that has to be done in order for them to be saved. They have not earned their salvation themselves; rather God has chosen to give them all for free.

The Solid Declaration explicitly says it is not the case that God has considered individuals and decided that *this one* and *that one* should be saved, but not these other two (SD 11.9). Even if the Bible says that many are called but few are chosen, the Solid Declaration rejects that that should be used against the belief that God wants all to be saved. That would be to attribute a contradictory will to God, which we should not do, and it would also contradict the belief that God wants to create faith through the spreading of the gospel (SD 11.34; 11.39).

However, things get more complicated when the Solid Declaration states that God knows the future. It specifies that even if God foresees something, it does not mean that he causes it (SD 11.6–7). But it gets confusing because the SD then says that God knew exactly who would be called and who would accept and even who would lose faith before the world was created, and it goes on to say that God *determined* [German: *hat bestimmt*] who would be called and who would be converted (SD 11.54–56). The SD here concludes that this is incomprehensible and that we must not try to understand it (SD 11.63–64).

Everything the SD says about election is coherent except for the part about God's foreknowledge and God determining who will be saved. That takes away the comfort, since God foreknows who will lose faith and has even *determined* who will be called and converted. This statement must be rejected – and the claim that God alone creates faith must be understood as a coarse-grained truth – for the rest of the FC to be coherent.

¹¹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 442–44.

Community of Conflict

Towards an Agonistic Theology with Chantal
Mouffe and Kathryn Tanner¹

Sven Thore Kloster

1. Introduction

Within Protestant theology there is a long tradition of conflict-driven dialogue. When Luther attacks Erasmus in *De servo arbitrio* (1525), Erasmus's argumentative form is one of Luther's objections against him. Contrary to Luther, Erasmus in his text, *De libero arbitrio diatribe sive collatio* (1524), did not make a claim to solve the problem of grace and freedom. Instead, he set the various views of the problem side by side, indicating which ones he thought were most probable, leaving it to his readers to make up their own minds. That is why he called his book a diatribe or discourse, in deliberate contrast to Luther's dogmatic *Assertio* (1520). Luther claims that "Christianity involves assertions; Christians are no skeptics."² In *De servo arbitrio*, Luther accuses Erasmus of being distanced and academically balanced by offering conditioned arguments without conclusions and by refusing to take a stance on certain issues. Erasmus is therefore unable to touch the hearts of people and grasp the truth, says Luther. To Luther, there is a necessary connection between form and content in theological knowledge. If theology is teaching about God, it has to be expressed as *assertiones* – that is, through unconditional, proclamatory statements. In this way, truth is revealed through claims and assertions in the context of dissent and conflict, not through deliberative discussions or consensus.

This brief reminder of Luther's emphasis on conflictual, passionate and polemic assertions serves as a point of entrance to the main question being considered in this article: what is a plausible conceptualisation of conflicts of interpretation within a Christian community, given recent theories of power,

¹ This article summarises some of the work in my dissertation, *Towards an Agonistic Theology. A Political Reading of the Concepts of Tradition in the Christian Theologies of Gerhard Ebeling and Kathryn Tanner* (Ph.D. Dissertation in Systematic Theology, University of Oslo, 2019).

² Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*, ed. Philip S. Watson and Helmut T. Lehman, trans. Philip S. Watson and Benjamin Drewery, vol. 33, Luther's Work (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977 [1525]), 19.

hegemony and democracy? Kathryn Tanner (1957–), a North-American constructive theologian, has contributed substantially to answering this question. In *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (1997), she conceptualises the Christian community as a *community of argument*,³ and builds on a premise of hegemony, contingency and contestation drawn from, among other texts, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (1985).⁴ The book is written by the political philosophers Chantal Mouffe (1943–) and Ernesto Laclau (1935–2014), and will be referred to as *HSS*. In this article, I will assess Kathryn Tanner’s concept of community of argument in light of the radical democracy of *HSS* and Mouffe’s later development of an account of agonistic pluralism. I ask whether Tanner takes the conflicting nature of Christian community seriously enough, given the communicative standards she requests. From there, I suggest some theological benefits of, and necessary preconditions for, a theology informed by agonistic pluralism.

2. Antagonism, Hegemony and Pluralism according to *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*

In *HSS*, Laclau and Mouffe start to develop a theory of radical democracy based on a particular account of hegemony. The concept of hegemony articulated in *HSS* concerns the contingent formation of power relations, their fundamental relationality, and, consequently, their openness to contestation. Antonio Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, in which he insisted on the primacy of political and ideological relations over economic structures, serves as a point of departure to Laclau and Mouffe. However, in developing their own concept of hegemony, they add post-structural analyses of the relational and unstable character of all social identities, especially influenced by Derridean deconstruction, Foucault’s ideas of power and discourse and Lacan’s interpretations of psychoanalysis. Consequently, their theoretical position in *HSS* has been labelled “post-Marxist” by themselves, as well as by others.⁵ On the one side, Laclau and Mouffe retain a focus on power, conflict and domination. On the other side, they break with central aspects of the conceptual framework of Marxism, both Hegelian and later naturalistic versions of it. For example, they reject its conception of subjectivity and classes, its view of historical development, and the economic logic that configured society as a coherent and transparent object: a positive totality with a stable essence.

³ Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 154.

⁴ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2014 [1985]).

⁵ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, ix, xxiv.

The main premise of the theorising in *HSS* is that society is not an intelligible totality – that is, a single self-identical and transparent whole. Laclau and Mouffe apply a poststructuralist understanding of discursivity that is grounded in an idea of radical negativity.⁶ The absent totality of the social both reveals and constitutes limits, splits and frontiers not only in society at large (i. e. between different social actors or fields), but also within any social field, subject and identity.⁷ Central to the conception of this non-totally and its splits is the concept of antagonism. Laclau and Mouffe understand antagonism to be the discursive presence of “the experience of the limit of all objectivity.”⁸ As such, antagonism is also the relation on which all social identities are discursively constituted. This means that social identities are constituted relationally through acts of exclusion: the creation of a “we” can exist only by the demarcation of a “they.” At the same time, full identity is never possible: the limit of the social is given within the social itself, and the complete realisation of any identity is therefore impeded.⁹ In other words, identity is always disturbed by difference. Efforts of establishing or defining identity are thus contested.

While antagonism was interpreted as conflict of class in traditional Marxism and seen as the driving force in a teleological view of history that eventually would reach its utopian end in a socialist society, Laclau and Mouffe pluralise antagonism and give it a constitutive or “ontological” function, to use their own terminology.¹⁰ On the one hand, antagonism is not something one can overcome, but something ineradicable. On the other hand, by having discursive presence, antagonisms are not totally fixed. Frontiers can change and constitute new social identities. There is always the possibility of other frontiers and other hegemonic relations. This not only means that the articulation of any social identity

⁶ Laclau and Mouffe hold that the social exists as discursive presence. This is not to be understood as linguistic idealism but reflects a stance that “every object is constituted as an object of discourse, insofar as no object is given outside every discursive condition of emergence,” *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 93. In this way, Laclau and Mouffe situate their concept of discursive formation close to that of Foucault in his *Archaeology of Knowledge*, as well as to Derrida and Wittgenstein, see Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 91–98. However, unlike Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe do not distinguish between discursive and non-discursive practices and reject Foucault’s few attempts at this.

⁷ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 1, 113.

⁸ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 108.

⁹ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 113. In her post-*HSS* texts, Mouffe maintains this argument by referring to Henry Staten’s interpretation of Derrida’s concept of “constitutive outside”. Staten applies Derrida’s grammatical concept in theorising social identity, claiming there is always an unstable “outside” that impedes the full realisation of the “inside” and thus of any identity, see Henry Staten, *Wittgenstein and Derrida* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985). For Mouffe’s use of Staten and Derrida, see, for example, Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Routledge, 2005), 15, and *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (London: Verso, 2013), 44–45.

¹⁰ Laclau and Mouffe refer to antagonism as an “ontology of the social”, Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, xiv.

is ultimately a political enterprise, as it depends on exclusion and power; it also means that pluralism is a conceptual necessity, given the constitutive character of antagonism.

Although ultimate fixation of meaning is impossible, there, nevertheless, has to be some sort of partial discursive fixation of the flow of differences. Otherwise, communication and meaning would not be possible at all. According to Laclau and Mouffe, attempts at partial fixation happen through hegemonic articulatory practices. The very condition of a hegemonic relation in *HSS* “is that a *particular* social force assumes the representation of a *totality* that is radically incommensurable with it.”¹¹ In simpler terms, this means that a part of a social group starts to function as a privileged signifier, a nodal point, assumedly representing the totality of the group. As such, the group can challenge other and competing collective hegemonies. However, hegemonic representation and fixations are always partial and subject to repeated contestation and re-articulation as there is always a potential for other arrangements in the social field.

This implies that there is a tension between pluralism and hegemony in *HSS*. On the one hand, the authors underline the necessary logic of hegemony and fixation of social particularities. This enables politics to be realised. On the other hand, they stress the logic of difference and autonomy, in which it is impossible to fully organise different particularities in hegemonic orders. Conceptualised as “logics” and not totalising “foundations” or “systems,” the authors let these categories coexist, in tension, and unsettled. According to Mouffe and Laclau, the tension between the opposing logics of hegemonic “representation” and autonomy of particularities is what generates radical and plural democracy. In this way, their account of hegemony is contaminated. It is a “weak” hegemony that not only allows for the coexistence of other hegemonic articulations but also depends on these. Hegemony and pluralism are not conceived as contradictory but as mutually dependent categories in *HSS*.¹² Consequently, the authors of *HSS* explicitly part company with Gramsci’s “strong” concept of hegemony, in which social formation is structured around one single centre and seeks domination of the *totality* of the social.¹³ Gramsci’s attempt at totalising the social and reducing diverse hegemonic practices to a singularity is conceptually incommensurable with Laclau’s and Mouffe’s postulated inevitable plurality of the social.

Nevertheless, in the reception of *HSS*, the tension between hegemony and pluralism has been widely discussed, both as a conceptual question of whether or not they are incompatible categories, and as a question of textual interpre-

¹¹ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, x.

¹² Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 166–72.

¹³ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 124–28. In Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, a part “propagate itself over the whole social area,” see D. Forgacs, ed. *A Gramsci Reader. Selected Writings 1916–1935* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1988), 205.

tation of *HSS* – what kind of hegemony does it actually advocate?¹⁴ Although the authors of *HSS* want to challenge existing political hegemonies and articulate competing ones, the aim of radical democracy is not to produce a hegemony that dominates the totality of the social, as Gramsci sought, but to empower constructions of partial hegemonies in “one political space among others” and, ultimately, to keep the social space open.¹⁵

3. Mouffe’s Agonistic Pluralism within a Shared Symbolic Space

After *HSS*, Mouffe has continued to elaborate on radical democracy and developed an account of agonistic pluralism.¹⁶ To a certain extent, she has left the context of post-Marxism and moved in the direction of liberal-democratic discourse, in which Habermas, Rawls and other liberal theorists – not primarily Gramsci – act as her main interlocutors. Accordingly, her account of agonistic pluralism takes place within a broader framework of liberal democracy, although constantly articulated in opposition to well-established liberal-democratic traditions.

Central to Mouffe’s reasoning is the distinction between politics and the political. Unlike advocates of political liberalism, such as Hanna Arendt or Jürgen Habermas, who in different ways envisage the political as a space of freedom or public deliberation, Mouffe sees the political as a space of hegemony, conflict and antagonism. There is continuity to *HSS* in that Mouffe holds that the political, which she defines as the “antagonistic dimension,” constitutes society.¹⁷ The main mistake with the different forms of political liberalism, according to Mouffe, is that they fail to realise the antagonistic aspect of society, and so perceive society as transparent and rational. Mouffe accuses them of reducing politics to a set of technical moves and neutral procedures, instead of approaching it as practices and institutions that should organise human coexistence in the context of conflict.¹⁸ Unlike various accounts of liberalism, which

¹⁴ For example, see Mark Anthony Wenman, “Laclau or Mouffe? Splitting the difference,” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 29, no. 5 (2003) and Stefan Rummens, “Democracy as a Non-Hegemonic Struggle? Disambiguating Chantal Mouffe’s Agonistic Model of Politics,” *Constellations* 16, no. 3 (2009).

¹⁵ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 169–70. See also: “This moment of tension, of openness, which gives the social its essentially incomplete and precarious character, is what every project for radical democracy should set out to institutionalize” (174).

¹⁶ Most comprehensively done in Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000), 80–107. There exists different models of agonistic democracy or agonistic pluralism, carried out by other political theorists such as William Connolly, Bonnie Honig, and James Tully, among others. By referring to “agonistic pluralism” or “agonistic democracy” in this text, I refer to Mouffe’s conception.

¹⁷ Mouffe, *On the Political*, 5.

¹⁸ Mouffe, *On the Political*, 9, 34.

regard antagonisms as something that can be reconciled, rejected, repressed, or neutralised, Mouffe's agonistic pluralism acknowledges the permanence of the antagonistic dimension, and, at the same time, seeks to give it a democratic outlet by taming or sublimating it.¹⁹

In criticising liberalism and theorising antagonism, Carl Schmitt, although critically scrutinised, becomes a theoretical interlocutor in Mouffe's post-HSS texts.²⁰ In his famous book *The Concept of the Political* (1932), his criterion of the political deals with collective forms of identification, in which the formation of a "we" as opposed to a "they" takes the form as a friend/enemy discrimination.²¹ Like Schmitt, Mouffe also emphasises collective identities and believes they are fundamental to politics. However, Schmitt conceptualises antagonism as a friend/enemy discrimination, in which the relation of enmity is concretely – not metaphorically – understood.²² Unlike Schmitt, Mouffe does not believe that collective forms of identification necessarily take the form of a friend/enemy discrimination. She parts company with Schmitt as she wants to develop the we/they binary in a direction which is compatible with democratic pluralism – that is, in a way which embraces pluralism *inside* a democratic political community.²³ Mouffe's alternative is an *agonistic* politics, in which conflicts exist between *adversaries* rather than enemies.²⁴ Unlike Schmitt's enemies who have an aim of destroying each other, Mouffe's adversaries recognise the legitimacy of their opponents although they acknowledge that there is no rational solution to their conflict.

While Schmitt's enemies do not share a common ground, Mouffe's adversaries do. They inscribe their confrontation within a democratic framework. This framework is not seen as something static or absolute, however. It is subject to redefinition through hegemonic struggles.²⁵ This means that adversaries, while in conflict, "see themselves as belonging to the same political association, as sharing a common symbolic space within which the conflict takes place."²⁶

This common symbolic space is the recognition of the ethico-political principles of liberty and equality, which are two of the main principles that Western

¹⁹ In HSS, Laclau and Mouffe use the psychoanalytical term "sublimate". In her post-HSS texts, Mouffe more frequently uses terms like "tame" or "defuse".

²⁰ Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 2005 [1993]), 105–34; *The Democratic Paradox*, 36–59, 98–105; *On the Political*, 10–21; *Agonistics*, 5.

²¹ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996 [1932]), 35.

²² Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 25–37.

²³ Contrary to Schmitt who stated that "[d]emocracy requires, therefore, first homogeneity and second – if the need arises – elimination or eradication of heterogeneity." Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, trans. Ellen Kennedy (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1985 [1923]), 9.

²⁴ Mouffe develops the idea of agonistic politics in Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, chapter 4, and repeats or nuances it in *On the Political* and *Agonistics*.

²⁵ Mouffe, *On the Political*, 32–34.

²⁶ Mouffe, *On the Political*, 20.

democracies have been structured around since the French revolution. According to Mouffe, both principles are necessary in order to guarantee an open and pluralistic democratic community, and part of creating such a democracy relies on the principles being mutually incompatible.²⁷ In contrast to Habermas and Rawls, who, according to Mouffe, try to harmonise the principles by granting priority to one of them, Mouffe argues that the tension between them is irreconcilable. And, contrary to Schmitt, Mouffe claims that this tension constitutes and fuels a vibrant democracy, rather than tearing it apart. Without the conflict between these two principles, a pluralist democracy would disintegrate, Mouffe argues. Adversaries fight against each other because they want their interpretation and implementations of the principles to become hegemonic. This political rivaling is “what constitutes the ‘agonistic struggle’ that is the very condition of a vibrant democracy.”²⁸

4. Mouffe’s Critique of Communicative Rationality and Individualism

According to Mouffe, political liberalism is incapable of grasping the pluralistic nature of the social world and its conflicts partly because of its rationalistic logics and partly because of its individualistic logics.

Concerning rationality, Mouffe directs her criticism against Habermas, among others.²⁹ In his conception of communicative action and discourse ethics, the political is seen as a space where morality is applied so that it is possible to create a rational moral consensus by means of free discussion.³⁰ Habermas’s concept of “ideal discourse” advocates impartiality and openness in such a way that a better argument is thought of as being capable of generating generalisable interests that can be accepted by all who are relevantly affected. Although Habermas, in later works, admits the unlikelihood of the full realisation of this ideal, Mouffe stresses that he still holds it to be a “regulative ideal” as there are primarily empirical and practical reasons that hinder its realisation.³¹ To Mouffe, on the other hand,

²⁷ In *HSS*, the logics of equivalence (hegemony) and autonomy were respectively located to the sociopolitical values of liberty and equality. However, in her post-*HSS* texts, Mouffe describes the tension between the two principles as mutually incompatible, while in *HSS* the tension is described in terms of complementarity. This slide might be a result of her reading of Schmitt, who stressed the incompatibility of the principles. Compare, for example, *The Democratic Paradox* (4–5, 42–45) with Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (138–39, 68).

²⁸ Mouffe, *Agonistics*, 7.

²⁹ Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, 46–49, 84–94; *On the Political*, 84–89; *Agonistics*, 45–46, 55, 137–38.

³⁰ See, for example, Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: 1: Reason and the rationalization of society* (Boston: Beacon Press 1984 [1981]); *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

³¹ Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, 88. For Habermas’s revising comments on previous

consensus, ideal discourse, and a fully inclusive “we” are impossible categories – not because of empirical or historical reasons, but conceptually because of the antagonistic dimension that constitutes the social. A consensus is always an expression of a particular hegemony and is constituted on exclusion.³² Unlike the pluralism of deliberative liberalism, Mouffe envisages an agonistic pluralism in which a final reconciliation of all views is impossible. She considers any regulative ideal of consensus to be self-refuting, as the very moment of its realisation would coincide with its disintegration.³³

Mouffe’s second fundamental critique of liberalism is its individualistic logic, through which it fails in grasping the mode of creation of political identities. Contrary to liberalism, Mouffe emphasises the need for collective identification: it is the us/them distinction that is constitutive of politics. Collective forms of identification will never disappear, she claims, not even in societies which have become very individualistic, since collective forms are “constitutive of the mode of existence of human beings.”³⁴ Mouffe advocates a theory of agonistic politics that acknowledges the affective side of the human and the social. Since affective bonds play a decisive role in collective identification and its process of symbolic differentiation, affective bonds and not rational arguments are key components to political mobilisation. Legitimate agonistic confrontations should therefore “provide collective forms of identification strong enough to mobilize political passions. If this adversarial configuration is missing, passions cannot be given a democratic outlet and the agonistic dynamics of pluralism are hindered.”³⁵ In other words, Mouffe is concerned that if human passion is not channelled into a democratic framework, it can easily take non-democratic and violent forms.

In Mouffe’s critique of the rationality and individualism of liberalism, there is, then, a concern for inclusion. She accuses liberal democracy of not being able to include its citizens in political participation. People are excluded from political participation due to rationalistic or moral reasoning. Instead, Mouffe argues, exclusions should be envisaged in political and not in moral, non-negotiable terms.

5. Kathryn Tanner’s Community of Argument

Now, I move on to Kathryn Tanner. In her book *Theories of Culture* (1997), she adopts what she labels “postmodern cultural criticism” as she situates her-

work, see, for example, Jürgen Habermas, “Further Reflections on the Public Sphere,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992) and *Between Facts and Norms. Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 302–14.

³² Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, 45–49.

³³ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, xviii.

³⁴ Mouffe, *On the Political*, 28.

³⁵ Mouffe, *On the Political*, 30.

self in the North-American “Christ vs. Culture debate” and advocates a theological methodology beyond postliberal and revisionist stances.³⁶ To Tanner, Christianity is not a fixed whole, like a *modern* anthropological view of culture would indicate, but a complex and amorphous symbol system in which meaning is constituted relationally due to cultural dynamics of hegemony and contestation.

Like Mouffe, Tanner also sees history as a struggle. Tanner grounds this struggle theologically, underpinning it by pointing to historical observations, as well as explaining it as a conceptual necessity of Christianity being a cultural phenomenon. Her main line of argument is that, in the capacity of cultural phenomenon, Christianity prompts diversity in theological interpretations. The reason for this is that the cultural materials of Christianity are too multivalent and too vague to direct a specific interpretation. As there is nothing internal to the Christian materials themselves that determine their application, Tanner argues, “[h]uman actors are struggling over cultural elements precisely in order to imbue them with established meanings and fixed interrelations and to bring them to bear in definite ways so as to support certain forms of social organization.”³⁷ There are, however, fissures and tensions internal to the Christian materials and interpretative constructions: “[E]stablished productions have internal fissures or fault lines that make them vulnerable to revision.”³⁸ Theological constructions are therefore kept together through active efforts of articulation and “the exertion of pressure.”³⁹ In this way, and similar to the logics of antagonism in *HSS*, the internal fissures keep the theological space open, as they imply an ever-present possibility of other arrangements and other interpretations of the cultural materials. Tanner explicitly refers to *HSS* in her texts when she describes this cultural dynamic of hegemony, contingency and contestation.⁴⁰

³⁶ Tanner’s notion of “postmodern cultural criticism” is very broad. It relates to anthropology and cultural studies but is a label that includes a large spectrum of theoretical positions, such as poststructuralist cultural critics, post-Geertzian anthropologists (such as James Clifford), political thinkers such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, and cultural theorists such as Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, and Michel de Certeau, among others. Her notion of postmodernism is heavily influenced by the British Birmingham School of cultural studies, known for its interdisciplinary approach to the study of culture, incorporating diverse elements such as Marxism, post structuralism, feminism, critical race theory and studies of popular culture. Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 38–58.

³⁷ Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 56.

³⁸ Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 164.

³⁹ Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 164.

⁴⁰ Tanner refers explicitly to *HSS* in *Theories of Culture*, 47, 53, 56, 165; “Postmodern Challenges to ‘Tradition,’” *Louvain Studies* 28 (2003): 189; “Tradition and Theological Judgment in Light of Postmodern Cultural Criticism,” in *Tradition and Tradition Theories. An International Discussion*, ed. Torsten Wiedenhofer and Siegfried Larbig (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2006), 242; “Theology and Popular Culture,” in *Changing Conversations: Religious Reflection and Cultural Analysis*, ed. Dwight N. Hopkins and Sheila Greeve Davaney (New York: Routledge, 1996), 106, 108; and several times in “Social Theory concerning the ‘New Social Movements’ and the

Despite there being no common understanding of what the Christian materials are, of what they mean, or of how they should be arranged, Tanner argues that the materials are always, in one way or another, referred to and used as a starting point when Christians try to figure out what it means to be a Christian. They are “materials of constant concerns.”⁴¹ In fact, this continuous task of figuring out what it means to be a Christian is a task all Christians share, and is thus what unites them, Tanner claims. Because of this belief, Tanner ends up universalising “a common concern,” “a shared sense,” “a task,” “a willingness of figuring it out” as the unifying and constitutive factor of Christian identity,⁴² while also recognising that it is a unity of task and not necessarily of accomplishment.

Tanner stresses that extended arguments of how to interpret any material are always required, since there is no obvious way of how any “materials of constant concern” should be appropriated. Given the situation of disagreement among Christians, there are no other options than critical assessment in the evaluation of a theological judgement. Disputes are not solved by rules (like postliberals claim), by appeals to tradition alone (like traditionalists claim), to Scripture alone (like Biblicists claim), nor to context alone (like some contextual theologians claim). Instead, one “must explain why traditional materials should be interpreted and arranged, and interfaced with particular aspects of context, in the ways that support one’s own judgment of proper practice rather than some other.”⁴³

On this background, and opposed to theological conceptions in which Christian unity is constituted on some form of consensus, Tanner conceptualises Christian identity – synchronic as well as diachronic – as a “community of argument.”⁴⁴ Legitimising one’s theological judgements and everyday decisions by argument is *the* characteristic of Christian identity. To Tanner, Christian tradition amounts to a process of argument among upholders of different Christian viewpoints.⁴⁵

6. Community of Argument Grounded on Deliberative Rationality and Morality

In light of Mouffe’s criticism of political liberalism, I think it is reasonable to question whether Tanner’s community of argument builds on a deliberative communicative rationality.

Practice of Feminist Theology,” in *Horizons in Feminist Theology. Identity, Tradition, and Norms*, ed. Rebecca S. Chopp and Sheila Greeve Davaney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

⁴¹ Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 153.

⁴² Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 136–37, 52–53.

⁴³ Tanner, “Editorial Symposium: Roman Catholic Theology of Tradition (II),” *Horizons* 29 (2002): 309.

⁴⁴ Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 154.

⁴⁵ Tanner, “Postmodern Challenges to ‘Tradition,’” 192; “Editorial Symposium,” 309.

Tanner's conceptualisation of the community of argument carries both connotations of the term "argument," understood as quarrel and dispute, as well as reasoning and explanation. On the one hand, Tanner conceptualises the community of argument in accordance with a logic of conflict and dispute. This is most evident in those contexts where she emphasises the abovementioned cultural dynamics of hegemony.

On the other hand, there also seems to be a strong argumentative rationality at stake in Tanner's community of argument. She trusts the better argument, although she does not believe in consensus or want this to be a goal. Indeed, this argumentative rationality is certainly more prevalent in Tanner's work than it is in Mouffé's. Unlike the latter, Tanner does not, for example, emphasise the role of emotions and affect in order to mobilise and include different groups in the conflicting argument; on the contrary, she stresses the responsibility of the individual in assessing each argument when executing judgements. In this way, Tanner is also more individualistic oriented than Mouffé. Besides, there is not only a logic of argumentative reasoning in the community of argument but also a confidence in a communicative transparency.

Nevertheless, the logic of argumentative and communicative rationality moves even beyond this part of assessment as Tanner also prescribes how the argument within the community of argument should be performed:

Despite continuing diversity and conflict, community of argument about the meaning of true discipleship is nevertheless assured to the extent competing judgements about it claim to be based on plausible interpretations of materials in which all parties put some stock. What all parties are fighting over form normative reference points for the argument, even if their interpretation is part of what is subject to debate.⁴⁶

A consequence of this communicative normativity is that there are some "common standards" for the assessment of theological judgements and for the practice of argument, "even if those standards are vague and subject to review as the argument continues."⁴⁷ One such standard, according to Tanner, is that everyone should offer their argument for the consideration and judgement of other disagreeing participants. Another is that one is obligated to take seriously any argument based on plausible interpretations of the materials of constant concern. Partly, this seems to be a moral concern to Tanner: "One owes all others the initial respect of consideration, and the respect of argumentative engagement where disagreement exists."⁴⁸ However, Tanner also justifies and explains the necessity of these standards theologically by pointing to the human condition of fallibility. For Tanner, awareness of one's own sin should result in realising one's own shortcomings too, as well as those of others, fuelling a humble and more

⁴⁶ Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 154.

⁴⁷ Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 154.

⁴⁸ Tanner, "Postmodern Challenges to 'Tradition,'" 192.

dialogical attitude.⁴⁹ Human judgement is fallible, so correction by others who disagree is fruitful:

The seriousness, moreover, of sin on all sides makes the prospect of mutual correction a salutary one; one's own contribution is never likely to stand just as it is. Even without agreement in results, unity among Christian practices is therefore sustained by a continuity of fellowship, by a willingness, displayed across differences of time and space, to admonish, learn from and be corrected by all persons similarly concerned about the true meaning of Christian discipleship.⁵⁰

Although admitting that such common standards are not easy to accomplish due to the messy course of history, Tanner nevertheless describes them as ideals. Common deliberative standards of dialogical accountability and argumentative transparency – not adversarial and passionate conflict, as in Mouffe's agonistic pluralism – become a regulative ideal in Tanner's community of argument. Given Tanner's conceptualisation of the hegemonic logic involved in any theological meaning making, one can ask whether a regulative ideal of common dialogical standards in the community of argument becomes a self-refuting ideal, because the very moment of its realisation would coincide with its disintegration (c. f. Mouffe's abovementioned critique of Habermas).

To acknowledge one's own as well as others' fallibility is truly a noble idea. I share Tanner's reasoning that awareness of fallibility is an argument for an attitude of openness – an acknowledgement that nobody owns the truth. However, I think it is worth asking whether this openness is best secured by requesting a regulative ideal characterised by a willingness to listen and envisaging a future common understanding, although not a materialised one. Is that not, after all, more excluding than acknowledging the weak hegemonic dynamics of agonistic pluralism?

It is hard to see how Tanner's request for dialogical standards is compatible with her reasoning concerning the hegemonic dynamics of cultural productions and theological meaning making. If one accepts the logic of hegemony presented in *HSS* (which is something I argue that Tanner, to a large extent, does), agonistic struggle seems to be a more plausible conceptualisation of communal cohesion and meaning production than a regulative ideal of dialogical standards. In order to be further accorded with her conception of hegemony, then, Tanner would *conceptually* have benefitted from a stronger emphasis on the conflictual and hegemonic dimension of her community of argument. The question I will elaborate on in the last part of this article is whether this would also have been more *theologically* adequate.

⁴⁹ Tanner does not seem to distinguish between the terms 'sin' and 'fallibility'.

⁵⁰ Tanner, *Theories of Culture*, 155.

7. Community of Conflict – Towards an Agonistic Theology

I do not necessarily agree to Mouffe's post-HSS, and Schmitt-inspired, understanding of social antagonism. Critics like Arash Abizadeh have argued that "there are no metaphysical grounds for thinking that a relation of difference is necessarily a relation of antagonism (i. e., for thinking that the possibility of war is always effective and structuring)."⁵¹ According to Abizadeh, this is to confuse Derrida's understanding of difference with Schmitt's understanding of alterity. Mouffe's political philosophy is permeated by binaries in such a way that singular explanations of identity formation dominate her texts. When understood as an exhaustive and all-defining theory of anthropology and collective identity formation, I believe radical democracy and Mouffe's agonistic pluralism face some critical challenges. Understood as criticism, however, and as alternative ideas on collective identity and political diversity and conflict, I believe Mouffe's thoughts are interesting. In my view, Mouffe primarily contributes by criticising an established political system, rather than constructing a new one. She criticises different models of liberalism which have gained hegemonic position not in order to abolish liberal democracy, but to improve it. It is in the capacity of this critique that I believe Mouffe's reasoning is most fruitful, and for theology too.

I believe it is plausible and fruitful to explore the nexus between weak hegemony and plurality in theological meaning making. One does not need to hold that there is an ever-present possibility of antagonism and violence structuring the theological interpretative work and Christian identity formation. Rather, one can simply acknowledge that theological concepts and interpretations are sites of contestation and struggle. They are sites of contestation for the rhetorical mobilisations of hegemonic struggles, in which new interpretations come into being through differentiation from other imagined or materialised interpretations. If one accepts these cultural theoretical premises of the hegemonic logic of meaning production, how can theology plausibly respond to such a condition? What will a theology informed by agonistic pluralism look like, and what are the theological advantages of such an account?

My suggestion is that there are three theological advantages to a practice of agonistic theology, in which adversaries, in a common symbolic space, struggle against each other in articulating different hegemonic interpretations and legitimising different practices: extension of the theological space, clarification of differences and a spurring involvement.

First, conflicting interpretations can contribute to expanding the interpretative leeway in theology. Different weak hegemonic articulations have the capacity to expand the theological space, and keep it from settling. To unite does

⁵¹ Arash Abizadeh, "Does Collective Identity Presuppose an Other? On the Alleged Incoherence of Global Solidarity," *The American Political Science Review* 99, no. 1 (2005): 57.

not necessarily mean to aim towards a consensus-based centre. On the contrary, agonistic pluralism can help theology by acknowledging that different and competing articulations have the capacity to stretch out and enlarge the theological space and enable it to accommodate a greater variety of interpretations and theological claims.

Second, I believe conflicts can have a clarifying function. By juxtaposing and contrasting different interpretations, differences and distinctions become visible and hopefully clearer. Instead of encouraging convergence and compromise, different interpretations can remain, side by side, so that they shed light on each other and display contrasts and nuances. Difference is a teacher.

Third, I believe agonistic pluralism demonstrates that conflicts and disagreements can be a driving force for participation, involvement and inclusion. Theological conflicts and claims are not always reducible to rational language or subject to argumentative assessment.⁵² Accordingly, I believe Tanner's argumentative dynamic in the community of argument closes the door for creativity and participation rather than opening it. Although arguments and assessments are necessary parts of theology, they are not the only communicative conditions. The appeal of theological practices and interpretations is not always rational or argumentative. People embrace theologies for a number of reasons.

However, appeals to reason are still important in a theology informed by agonistic pluralism. Such appeals play a role when one struggles with getting support for an interpretation. Whether something is seen as rational, plausible, coherent – or otherwise – hopefully influences whether or not an interpretation is supported and approved by people. The decisive point is that a theology informed by agonistic pluralism recognises that an appeal to reason is only one of many ways in which theological interpretations appeal.

8. The Art of Conflict within a Common Symbolic Space

However, there are some important preconditions to my reasoning. Neither Tanner nor Mouffe advocate a conceptually unlimited plurality. Certain regulations of diversity are necessary also in communities of disagreement and conflict. However, I think the regulation should be conceptualised differently than Tanner's common standards for argument. The normative requirement of agonistic pluralism also puts some constraints on the struggles, and I believe Mouffe's conflictual consensus within a common symbolic space is a more adequate concept of regulation of diversity than what Tanner offers. As a final point

⁵² See, for example, Ole Jakob Løland, "Biskoper mellom agonisme og deliberasjon – Om to modeller for politisk teologi," *Teologisk tidsskrift* 5, no. 4 (2016), in which he advocates an agonistic and political theology that does not translate its passion and message into a rational and secular language.

of this article, I will argue below that the necessary limitations consist of, first, a strong hegemonic establishing of a common symbolic space, and second, an approval of weak hegemonic agonistic pluralism within that space. This implies a recognition of the legitimacy of theological opponents and the temporary nature of the exercise of power and interpretation.

Stefan Rummens, in his criticism of Mouffe, argues that there are qualitative differences between the hegemony that constitutes the common symbolic space and the hegemonic struggles that take place among the adversaries within that space.⁵³ His argument goes like this: the hegemonic construction of the common symbolic space *excludes* those who do not agree to the thin consensus about equality and liberty, while *recognising* the legitimacy of the political adversaries within the common space by not excluding them in the same way. Therefore, according to Rummens, the political struggles within the common space should not be conceptualised as hegemonic but as non-hegemonic struggles that allow for coexistence and plurality. It seems likely to me that, conceptually, there has to be a qualitative difference between the hegemony constituting the common symbolic space and the different hegemonic struggles that take place within it. However, whether the adversarial struggles within this space should then be regarded as truly hegemonic depends on how one defines hegemony. Whether Rummens's criticism is adequate, then, depends on the interpretation of the rather ambivalent description of the concept of hegemony in *HSS*, as well as in Mouffe's later texts. Contrary to Rummens, I believe hegemony can be conceptualised in different ways. Consequently, I prefer to advocate a distinction between a strong logic of hegemony that establishes a common symbolic space, and a weak logic of hegemony that allows for coexistence and pluralism within that space.

Also contrary to Rummens, I believe it is decisive to conceptualise the adversarial struggles within the common space as hegemonic in order to accentuate the productive character of meaning fixation in a context of contingency. The productive side of weak hegemonic articulations is what makes diversity blossom and prevents the space from implosion. It is also this productive side that makes it motivating and stimulating to identify with the common symbolic space. In other words, it is this which makes it an interesting space. To put it in Stephen Sykes's words: "A formal definition is both banal and boring. Christianity only becomes interesting as a concept when someone has the courage to spell out in greater or lesser detail one or other of the contestable possibilities which the definition permits."⁵⁴

This logic presupposes that, within the common symbolic space, a weak logic of hegemony takes place. The theological adversaries must recognise the legiti-

⁵³ Rummens, "Democracy as a Non-Hegemonic Struggle?," 383–86.

⁵⁴ Stephen Sykes, *The Identity of Christianity: Theologians and the Essence of Christianity from Schleiermacher to Barth* (London: SPCK, 1984), 256.

macy of each other and, by that, recognise that their respective assertions are just some among many. In this way, the diversity inside the defined community is regulated by the acceptance of the weak hegemonic logic, and the external boundary of the community itself is regulated by a strong hegemonic logic that excludes those who do not share the common principles. In theology, these principles are not equality and liberty. However, it is not within the scope of this article to make suggestions of what it is that constitutes a theological common space. Such principles are objects of ecclesiological discourse and subject to agonistic struggles.

Rummens's criticism of Mouffe raises a question of how a common symbolic space can be strong enough to accommodate conflicting hegemonic struggles. According to Rummens, in order for the adversaries to understand the symbolic space as a *common* space, they need to be situated in a continuous discursive field, not a ruptured one.⁵⁵ The latter was emphasized in *HSS*.⁵⁶ I acknowledge the challenge of defining the common space in such a way that it is symbolically strong enough to unite and commit people, and flexible enough to allow for diversity and bear conflict. I believe Mouffe has not answered sufficiently the question of how it is possible that very different adversarial participants in liberal-democratic societies understand the symbolic space as a common and committing reference. My suggestion is that it might be easier to imagine and experience a common space in theology than in political theory. The churches have resources like collective rituals, worshipping practices, language and articulation of faith that constantly insist, and remind its members, that Christian identity (also) exceeds the social Christian community and its internal conflicts. To once more put it in the words of Stephen Sykes, Christian identity can be "conceived as a body with unavoidable and restless internal conflicts."⁵⁷

Finally, it is therefore imperative to underscore that my focus in this article has been *internal* interpretative conflicts and struggles within defined groups. I believe a theological account of agonistic struggle is fruitful only to the extent that it is not a conflict between strong group identities defined by strong hegemones, for example between Christians, Muslims and Jews, or Protestants and Catholics, or blacks and whites, etc. Constructions of such identity differences and "external" adversaries are sources to populism and destructive identity politics, as they do not recognise internal heterogeneity and the undecidability of decisions. Contrary to this, when understood as conflicts between ideas and interpretations *within* a defined community or group (for example, within Christianity or within a particular denomination or church, depending on how

⁵⁵ Rummens, "Democracy as a Non-Hegemonic Struggle?," 383.

⁵⁶ Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 175.

⁵⁷ Sykes, *The Identity of Christianity*, 8.

broadly one defines the common symbolic space), the interpretative conflict is an internal struggle of defining what the particular community or group is.

This also involves a criticism of Luther's "agonistic" theology that was briefly referred to in the introduction of this article. Luther was not only included in order to serve as an example of one particular "agonistic" entrepreneur who managed to construct new hegemonic positions. He also serves as an example and reminder of the risks of certain types of polemics and of what to avoid in a theology informed by agonistic pluralism. The critical engagement with the political consequences of Luther's polemics over the last few decades, for example against the Jews, displays some deeply problematic aspects of this polemical tradition.⁵⁸ Contrary to Luther, then, a theology informed by agonistic pluralism has to recognise and value heterogeneity within the Christian community, and must strive to nurture the plurality of the theological space by acknowledging articulations of weak hegemonic and competing interpretations.

⁵⁸ See, for example, Thomas Kaufmann, *Luthers Juden* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2015), or my own critique of the danger of the polemic side of Christian theology at large, in Sven Thore Kloster, "Hvor kommer vi fra og hvor skal vi hen? Om kristent hat mot jøder og muslimer," in *Dialogteologi på norsk*, ed. Beate Fagerli et al. (Oslo: Verbum Akademisk, 2016).

Critique of Religion, Critique of Reason

Criticising religion in the classroom

Øystein Brekke

1. Introduction

Religious education (RE) in Norwegian schools today is of a so-called integrative kind, meaning that the subject gathers all students, is multi-faith oriented, and its context is non-confessional.¹ Christianity still holds an important place in the curriculum and teaching of the subject, argued for by way of Norway's historical-cultural heritage, but much has changed since this was the all dominant focus of religious education in Norwegian schools.

Current guidelines for the school subject, which also includes ethics and philosophy, underline that the same pedagogical principles are to be employed for all topics. Furthermore, it is stated that all religions and world views shall be presented in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner.² In recent didactical discussions the question of what *critical* teaching about religions and world views is and should be has gained particular attention. To what extent and in what way should this compulsory school subject also involve a critique of religion in a more focused sense and thematise as *problematic* various beliefs or practises of religions and other world views?

My own work involves teaching religion, ethics and philosophy to students who are going to teach RE in school. What I should like to do here – with this question in mind – is to make an excursion into the field of philosophy of religion to see how this may help us in our reflections upon the relationship between critical teaching and the critique of religion in a more focused sense in the context of primary education. My aim will be to sort some perspectives that may prove helpful for a later, concrete working out in didactical terms.

¹ Cf. Wanda Alberts, "The academic study of religions and integrative religious education in Europe," *British Journal of Religious Education* 32 (2010).

² Opplæringslova [the Norwegian Education Act], § 2.4.

2. What is Enlightenment?

2.1 *The Critique of Religion as An Anthropological Concern*

Before delving into our material proper, a highlighting of important perspectives from Hegel and Kant, I should like to bring in two considerations which have served as hermeneutical keys for my own orientation in the problematic at hand, hoping thereby to provide a relevant context also for further discussion. The first of these comes from Lutheran theologian Gerhard Ebeling who in 1960 presented a series of theses on the “necessity of theology” for an introductory course to the study of theology. One of these theses runs as follows: “Theology is necessary because man is by nature a fanatic.”³

The viewpoint is interesting because it establishes a connection between the critical reflection upon religion (in theology) and a necessary reflection upon the human being, as she or he is “by nature.” It seems fair to see the starting point suggested by Ebeling as a rather elegant formulation of what is also at the heart of Martin Luther’s and the German Reformation’s concerns. With Luther’s determined critique of religion by way of the Pauline dismantling of the Law – as a defect in humans’ basic orientation –, criticism of religion is at the same time cast as also a critique of human reasoning. This latter concern provides an important touchstone for the following discussion. It will be of interest to us here to see how far we can get on the question of the relation between the critique of religion and the critique of reason, and to what effect.

A second introductory consideration, not unrelated to the Lutheran one, is an observation of how in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant the critique of reason and the critique of religion always appear together and integrally linked. A part and parcel of Kant’s critical investigations of the various aspects of the orientation of human beings in the world is a continuous reflection upon and critical assessments of religion and religious beliefs. A critique of religion appears in all three of his critiques of human reason. Thus if the question “What is a human being?” may be seen as the point of convergence between Kant’s three other guiding questions, “What can I know?”, “What should I do?” and “What may I hope?”⁴ then one must concede that a critique of religion figures as an integral and constitutive part of Kant’s anthropological considerations as a whole and not just as an external preparation for them.

2.2 *Enlightenment as Emergence From Unmündigkeit*

And it is indeed with Kant that I should like to start off our discussion, not only because of Kant’s interest in religion but also because he is a philosopher who

³ Gerhard Ebeling, *Word and Faith*, trans. James W. Leitch (London: SCM Press, 1963), 424.

⁴ Cf. Jean Greisch, *Le buisson ardent et les lumières de la raison. L’invention de la philosophie de la religion*. Vol. 1. (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2002), 307.

has given us much to think about when it comes to the term critique. However, instead of going directly to his most famous critical endeavour, the *Critique of Pure Reason*, I should like to take my starting point in another of his deservedly famous texts, his “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?” from 1784. In this shorter text, Kant gives to the readers of *Berlinische Monatsschrift* his own definition of what enlightenment is all about, and in doing so also makes religious matters a privileged arena for illustration.

In the classical opening lines of the text, Kant significantly defines enlightenment not as some new and liberating enhancement in knowledge, but rather as the freeing of one’s own self-imposed bondage in a state of ignorance:

*Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one’s own understanding without the guidance of another. The immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another.*⁵

The reason for our state of ignorance and irresponsibility is according to Kant not at the outset a lack of understanding. It is rather due to a twofold vice of laziness and cowardice. Critical and independent thinking takes effort and at times also courage. More often than not it is easier and more comfortable to hand oneself over to external guidance rather than to shoulder the burden of self-governance.

Now, enlightenment should not be blind to the various other interests that keep people stuck in their *Unmündigkeit*. But in this age of reason we must acknowledge also our own complicity in keeping ourselves in the dark. The cure for this state of immaturity lies in encouraging people to in fact make use of their own understanding and abilities of critical reasoning and exchange. The most important thing to facilitate such maturation is not to provide a constant supply of correct principles or beliefs, but to secure that freedom of thought and encouragement that aid people in their own self-enlightenment. The obvious didactic implications of this view will be addressed in my conclusion below.

Enlightenment is in this manner not something that may be quickly imparted an individual from without. It points rather to a meticulous process of self-tutelage and practice in the use of one’s own critical faculties. Enlightenment is, further, more a function of collective than individual processes, and it is not arrived at in one blow: “[A] public can only achieve enlightenment slowly.”⁶

Now, in spite of Kant’s otherwise relative enthusiasm for the American revolution and also for the later French one, Kant is sceptical as to the real potential

⁵ Kant, What is Enlightenment?, 54. “*Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit. Unmündigkeit ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen. Selbstverschuldet ist diese Unmündigkeit, wenn die Ursache derselben nicht am Mangel des Verstandes, sondern der EntschlieÙung und des Muthes liegt, sich seiner ohne Leitung eines andern zu bedienen.*”

⁶ Kant, What is Enlightenment?, 55.

for enlightenment of a merely political revolution. He remains at this point unconvinced about such a revolution's ability to really get down to the business of reorienting people's understanding of themselves and the world around sufficiently:

A revolution may bring about the end of personal despotism or of avaricious tyrannical oppression, but never a true reform of modes of thought. New prejudices will serve, in place of the old, as guidelines for the unthinking masses.⁷

3. Hegel and Two Forms of Enlightenment

3.1 Reformation and Revolution

In his reticence here, Kant comes to articulate a stance later taken by numerous other German philosophers and intellectuals such as Heine, Schlegel, Fichte and Hegel, in their view of the French Revolution some five years on. Looking westwards, the German idealists are horrified by the chaotic violence of political upheaval and the revolution's deterioration into the Reign of Terror of Robespierre of the 1790's. A narrative takes shape, developing the thought that Germany has already, long time since, undergone its own revolution – a revolution of the mind – that makes superfluous and indeed counterproductive any destructive upheaval of the French kind. Rebecca Comay writes intriguingly about this in her study of Hegel's reaction to the French Revolution, in *Mourning Sickness. Hegel and the French Revolution*.

For our part, the story interestingly also ties in with the theme of the Reformation and its philosophical aftermath. For already with the Reformation of the 16th Century, so the story goes, a reform of modes of thought is initiated but not complete, in the form of Lutheran freedom of thought and emphasis on the individual conscience and self-appropriation in matters of faith. As a natural continuation and in keeping with this, German idealistic philosophy of the day is to be considered a revolution of the mind far outweighing the French attempt both in import and effect. The axe of reason and the practical *Vernunft's* moral revolution are seen to achieve a reorientation of modes of thought that the French version of enlightenment may only hold as a faraway dream. Something the French Revolution's slide into despotism and wild paranoia of the 1790's indeed bears witness to.⁸

⁷ Kant, What is Enlightenment? [adjusted]. "Durch eine Revolution wird vielleicht wohl ein Abfall von persönlichem Despotism und gewinnsüchtiger oder herrschsüchtiger Bedrückung, aber niemals wahre Reform der Denkungsart zu Stande kommen; sondern neue Vorurtheile werden, eben sowohl als die alten, zum Leitbände des gedankenlosen großen Haufens dienen."

⁸ Rebecca Comay, "Dead Right: Hegel and the Terror," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 103 (2004): 377.

On this point, Hegel will expound considerably, at first in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* from 1807, then later on in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. For our purposes, it is interesting to note how Hegel stylises his analysis of two forms of enlightenment with particular attention to the way religion is critiqued, in a broadly defined standoff between German *Aufklärung* and the French *lumières*.

3.2 Self-Enlightenment and Other-Enlightenment

The main difference between the two lies in the way the *light* of Enlightenment is conceived to fall. German *Aufklärung* is, in the words of Comay, understood as primarily self-illumination in the manner of “reason’s own self-clarification or explication.”⁹ Conversely, and still according to Hegel’s analysis, French *lumières* mistakenly understands itself as “reason’s illumination of a blind, superstitious other.”¹⁰ The two opposing forms of enlightenment are thus broadly conceived as the difference between self-critique and a critique which is first and foremost directed towards the unenlightened *other*.

3.3 Enlightenment and the Critique of Religion

In the German tradition, following Luther and his philosophical heirs Kant and Hegel himself, religion is seen to both inform and be informed by reason to such an extent that the two in actual fact accommodate each other. For Hegel this implies a more or less a total absorption of the Christian truths in the philosophical march forward of the Spirit. In French-style Enlightenment, however, religion is seen not as kith and kin to reason, but rather as something in alien opposition to it. The way religion is critically dealt with inside the two opposing paradigms is consequently at odds.

In her reading of Hegel at this point, Comay rather convincingly brings to light how strongly Hegel takes on a Freudian tone in his analysis of French Enlightenment’s inquisitorial attempts to rid itself of unmodern religion. Even in terminology Hegel seems to anticipate Freud’s analyses of defensive pathologies, in describing Enlightenment’s struggle with religion in terms of “disavowal,” “perversion,” “splitting,” “isolation” and stubborn “forgetting.”¹¹ As a result, the two forms of enlightenment in Hegel’s analysis reveal themselves as classical case studies in the difference between *melancholy* and *mourning* in a Freudian sense.

The self-illumination of German reason identifies the critique of religion as a critique also of reason itself, and by this also permits an important process of mourning the lost object of otherworldly transcendence. The French revolu-

⁹ Comay “Dead Right,” 381.

¹⁰ Comay “Dead Right,” 381.

¹¹ Rebecca Comay, *Mourning Sickness. Hegel and the French Revolution* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 64.

tionary disownment of religion as a foreign body and an alien attachment, on the other hand, takes the form of a melancholy failure to see that the critique of religion also amounts to a critique of reason itself. In the words of Comay: “Enlightenment fails to register faith’s losses as its own.”¹²

3.4 *The Return of the Repressed*

Misguided enlightenment, in Hegel’s analysis, employs ‘pure insight’ in a critique of religion that, as we have seen, understands itself as a critique of some foreign body, alien to reason. However, by not recognizing religion’s problems as indeed also reason’s own problems, such a critique only serves to prolong and perpetuate the problems of religion in a classically melancholy fashion. An example of this would be the superstitious dynamic of guilt-by-suspicion and all-but-religious fervour of the Terror in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Instead of a critique that successfully deconstructs the ails of religion, an unholy collusion is entered into between pure insight and an undigested religiosity that sustains itself only as a return of the repressed. This is indeed the topic “Self-alienated Spirit” in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

The critical point for our purposes is that what is argued for by German-style Enlightenment is not at all an exoneration of religion or an attempt to say that religion’s problems are only on the surface to be considered real problems. Quite the contrary, religion can and should be criticised. But such a critique – as part of an enhancement in self-consciousness – must be understood as also a critique of reason itself and not just a critique of something which ails the ‘irrational other’.

4. Kant and the Problem of Transcendental Illusion

After this sketch of German and French enlightenment as typologies of self-enlightenment and other-enlightenment, respectively, in their critique of religion, I should like to return to Immanuel Kant and his critical project. For the striving after “a true reform of modes of thought” that we read about in the *Aufklärung*-text is no doubt more than a clever slogan for Kant. There are reasons to take such an ambition to be at the core of the philosopher’s professional ideal, encompassing his philosophical enterprise as a whole and providing its central *raison d’être*. In his *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant provides a more *systematic* philosophical interpretation of humans’ “self-imposed occlusion” which is of interest to us. For in the dialectic part of his critique, Kant deconstructs the fallacies of reason in a manner that well illustrates the interconnected character of the critique of religion and a critique of reason in his thinking.

¹² Comay, *Mourning Sickness*, 65.

4.1 *The Transcendental Dialectic of Pure Reason*

A central aspect of the *Critique* is the critical enterprise of sorting out from one another, on the one hand, sound knowledge according to reason's own standards and what, on the other, has, by habit or lack of analytical clarity, come to be reckoned as such, but which in actual fact fails to meet the criteria of objective knowledge of the world. Kant achieves this by distinguishing between *Denken*, which is thought unrestricted by the limits of our experience of the world and *Erkennen*, which is our understanding of the world in terms of objective knowledge in the spatio-temporal realm. Now, neither of the two modes of thought should be considered better than the other, nor more authentically human. The important point, however, is that, in identifying what constitutes our factual knowledge of the world, the two should not be confused.

And this is one of the important tasks that the *Critique of Pure Reason* sets before itself. After the transcendental aesthetic and the analytic part of the *Critique*, treating the faculty of sensibility and understanding in turn, the transcendental dialectic represents a third, deconstructive phase of the enterprise. Its aim is to expose the category mistakes made by classical metaphysics and rational theology in trying to establish their areas of investigation as sound objects of knowledge on a par with the understanding's judgements in the experiential realm.

4.2 *Transcendental Illusion*

As part and parcel of the drive of reason [*Vernunft*] to bring coherence and full consistency to the knowledge established by the understanding [*Verstehen*] there is a propensity of reason to extend such consistency and coherence all the way to the supreme unity of our conceptual knowledge. This problematic extension should not as such be considered a logical fallacy nor a wilful deception by reason, but rather as an inclination stemming from the nature of our search for knowledge in itself. Classical metaphysics is in this manner, according to Kant, the philosophical result of reason's yearning to gain not only far-reaching knowledge of the world, but also its desire to follow through to the unconditioned premises of this knowledge.

Reason, in its own misunderstood way, by this comes to discover firstly, in the area of rational psychology, the absolute unity of the thinking subject. Secondly, in the area of transcendental cosmology, reason oversees the totality of conditions in space and time and claims to arrive at a non-contradictory concept of free causality. And thirdly, in the area of natural theology, reason claims to establish God as a supreme being and condition of all objects of thought. These absolute objects of thought are nonetheless only established – and this is the aim of the transcendental dialectic to show – by a faulty *overextension* of the understanding outside its rightful domain in the world of conditioned objects.

Or, conversely, by reason's direct and speculative engagement with objects of the world without the necessary mediating activity of the understanding.¹³

The illusion that lies in this must be exposed, but may – and this is the interesting point – not be eliminated by such exposure. As inherent to the natural functioning of reason, as transcendental vs. empirical illusions in the terminology of Kant, these misguided inclinations of thought must be understood but may not once-and-for all be eradicated. And it is therefore a perennial task of the transcendental dialectic to deconstruct reason's propensity to establish these notions as absolute objects of thought. The aim of such deconstruction is not to ban the notion of the subject, freedom or God from the domain of thought or reality itself. Rather, by their retrieval from the domain of spatio-temporal objects, these are now reinstated as something else, as possible meaning-bearing horizons of human existence.

4.3 *Philosophy's Self-Restraint*

For Paul Ricoeur, this Kantian insight implies decisive self-restraint on the ambitions of philosophy to know it all. Kant's critique of the transcendental illusion consequently opens up a room which needs to be kept open

[...] at the very place where I am deceived by the so-called absolute objects: "I" as a substance – "freedom" as an object in the world – and "God" as a supreme being, as the cause of all causes, as the whole of all partial reality. In that sense reason must first despair, despair of the absolute, despair of itself as claiming to reach the absolute under the form of an object of knowledge.¹⁴

However, such "despair, within the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is not a feeling, an emotion; it is a process, an operation, the positive act of opposing a limit [...],"¹⁵ in other words, it is a necessary act of self-moderation on behalf of what we may and may not state as objectively secured knowledge of the world. And not only is this important in order to avoid entangling our capacities of sound thinking in untenable antinomies. Just as much, Ricoeur underlines, is this important in order for thought to receive phenomena such as the subject, freedom and God in an adequate manner, as horizons of thinking and not objects of thought.

The philosophical deconstruction of transcendental illusions of the unconditioned also gives back to religion a more adequate horizon for receiving the unconditioned as meaningful points of orientation. And as a critique that expresses a genuine anthropological concern, and not just distortions of an

¹³ Claus Bratt Østergaard, *Kants kritik af den rene fornøft* (København: Informations Forlag, 2009), 47.

¹⁴ Paul Ricoeur, "Hope and the Structure of Philosophical Systems," in *Figuring the Sacred. Religion, Narrative, and Imagination / Paul Ricoeur*, ed. Mark I. Wallace (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 212.

¹⁵ Ricoeur, "Hope and the Structure," 212.

authentic anthropology, Kant's critique of the mistaken reification of the unconditioned addresses all humans, religious and irreligious alike. On Ricoeur's reading, the Kantian critique of transcendental illusion affects not only religious positions, but *critiques* of religion alike. In line with the Kantian deconstruction of the subject, freedom or God as absolute objects,

[...] even atheism can be reinterpreted as an aspect of the same critique of transcendental illusion in a philosophy of the limits; through this reinterpretation, atheism may be cured from another illusion, from its own illusion, the illusion that puts humankind at the centre and transforms it into a new absolute. The thought of the unconditioned prevents us from this last illusion, which we would call the anthropological illusion.¹⁶

Kant himself states that since the objects of transcendental illusion can neither be decisively proven nor disproven, the transcendental dialectic will deconstruct any hope of securing some uncontested, objective foundation for a materialism, fatalism, atheism, superstition, enthusiasm or scepticism by way of reason.¹⁷

4.4 Critique As Active Vacancy

The critique is reminiscent of Claude Lefort's efforts to reveal the unavowed theologico-political attachments of modernity's political space and democratic institutions. Lefort criticises modern democracy's all too direct substitution of the king by the people as symbolic guarantor and legitimate foundation for the order of things. With Ricoeur, and borrowing the tactics of Lefort, one could argue that the aim of also Kantian deconstructions of transcendental illusions is not to fill the vacancy with some more authentic content, but to keep the empty place of transcendence "as an active vacancy rather than as the usual vacuum into which anything and everything might flow."¹⁸

The point of dispelling the transcendental illusions from our faculties of reasoning would in this line of thought (and cf. Kant's argument) not be to replace them with some more authentic content or other, but to continuously keep their "absolute" position open and unsettled, "as an unending activity of defetishization."¹⁹ Regarding questions of personhood, freedom or God, this would mean guarding the open-endedness and principal unsettledness of these notions from hasty attempts at foreclosure.

With reference to the teaching of religion, ethics and philosophy in Norwegian classrooms today, the starting point of this essay, this latter point seems well

¹⁶ Ricoeur, "Hope and the Structure," 213.

¹⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Vol. 1. (1781/1787) (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), 35 (Bxxxxv).

¹⁸ Here in the words of Comay: *Mourning Sickness*, 79. Comay refers to Lefort's article, "Permanence of the Theological-Political?" from 1988.

¹⁹ Comay, *Mourning Sickness*, 79.

suit to meet the demands of a pluralistic, objective and critically informed subject.

5. Teaching Critically About Religion in Norwegian Classrooms

The aim of the preceding considerations has been to see if there is something in German philosophy of religion and the tradition of the Reformation that may be of assistance in considering the question of critical teaching and the critique of religion in Norwegian classrooms today. My aim here is not to arrive at some ready cut didactic plan for such an endeavour. What I should like to do, however, is to draw attention to three points in the discussion above that may suggest a starting point for such a later working out in concrete terms.

1. First of all, a point of embarkation that the thinkers we have looked at all share, is that some kind of critical discourse pertaining to humankind's religious imagination is called for. And it is called for from a *philosophical* and *anthropological* point of view, and not just because religions and religious concerns make their appearance in the world today in challenging ways.

If we take as an acceptable guiding principle – also for primary school education – Kant's enlightenment ideal to assist human beings' emergence from their own "self-imposed immaturity" and Hegel's underscoring of the need to see critique and the destruction of idols as always pertaining also to our *own* habits of thought, what does this mean for teaching and discussions of religions and world views in the classroom?

2. This Kantian principle of self-enlightenment may be helpful in orientating activity in the classroom. On the question of the critique of religion, in the sense of also drawing attention to religion's problematic aspects, this would then most fundamentally be geared towards a process of self-enlightenment involving the whole classroom. More than the teacher considering if she or he "should dare to criticize this or that religion in itself," and to what degree, focus should be on providing the individual pupil and the class – teacher included –, with *tools* necessary to critically evaluate one's own possible and probable "self-imposed immaturity."

I am not going to be didactically more specific at this point,²⁰ but would merely like to suggest that a sound introduction to the severe and deep-delving criticisms of religion found in e. g. Marx, Nietzsche and Freud should

²⁰ Cf. Øystein Brekke, "Religionskritikk i klasserommet. Fag, kritikk og ontologi i norsk skule" [Critique of Religion in the Classroom. School Subject, Critique, and Ontology in the Norwegian School System], *Prismet* 69, no. 2–3 (2018), 107–131. Online: <https://www.journals.uio.no/index.php/prismet/article/view/6260/5286>.

all give ample room for extending the individual pupil's analytical tools in meeting one's own tradition and that of others.

3. A third point we may take as an extension of the preceding discussion, is how both Kant and Hegel's critiques of religious and non-religious certitudes, may challenge the very standpoint one finds oneself at in engaging in such critique in the classroom.

It is e. g. not uncommon in Norwegian schools – as reflected in the objects clause of the Education Act – to regard human rights as some kind of last resort and more or less objective position to measure other positions and stances up against. Teachers and politicians may well be aware of their history and tensions within the human rights (between religious freedom and equality of the sexes, individual vs. cultural rights etc.), but this will most often not affect the employment of human rights in this manner.

To my mind, human rights is not at all a bad place to try to establish some common ground upon which we meet and also discuss religion in the classroom. But it must be understood that not even these may be taken as some kind of irrefutable absolute and universal objects, but must be argued for and interpreted in accordance with a reason that is historical and so also hermeneutical.

List of Contributors

Safet Bektovic is Associate Professor of Islamic Studies at the Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo.

Øystein Brekke is Professor of Religion, Philosophy and Ethics at Oslo Metropolitan University.

Svein Aage Christoffersen is Professor emeritus of Systematic Theology at the Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo.

Jörg Disse is Professor for Philosophy of Religion and Fundamental Theology at the Fulda Faculty of Theology.

Patrick Ebert is Research Assistant at the Faculty of Theology, University of Heidelberg.

Burkhard Nonnenmacher is Substitute Professor of Systematic Theology and Researcher at a DFG-project on Hegel and Schelling at the Faculty of Protestant Theology, University of Tübingen.

Stian S. Grøgaard is Professor of Art Theory at the Academy of Fine Art, Oslo.

Jan-Olav Henriksen is Professor for Philosophy of Religion at MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society in Oslo.

Dorthe Jørgensen is Professor of Philosophy and History of Ideas at Aarhus University.

Sven Thore Kloster holds a PhD in Systematic Theology from the Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo.

Timo Koistinen is University Lecturer in Philosophy of Religion at the University of Helsinki.

Marius Timmann Mjaaland is Professor for Philosophy of Religion at the Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo.

Rasmus Nagel is Research Assistant at the Faculty of Theology, University of Heidelberg.

Philipp Stoellger is Professor of Systematic Theology at the Faculty of Theology, University of Heidelberg.

Jayne Svenungsson is Professor of Systematic Theology at Lund University.

Atle Ottesen Søvik is Professor of Systematic Theology at MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society in Oslo.

Taylor Weaver holds a PhD from the School of Religious Studies at the University of Kent, Canterbury.

Ulf Zackariasson is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy of Religion at the Department of Theology, Uppsala University.

Index of Authors

- Adorno, Theodor W. 90
Agamben, Giorgio 3, 11, 47, 163–74
Almond, Ian 57
Aquinas, Thomas 22, 31, 135, 223
Aristotle 2–3, 23–4, 33, 69, 80
Augustine, Aurelius 28, 71, 123, 163, 167
Aurenque, Diana 185–6
- Badiou, Alain 3, 10, 47, 134–6, 141–3, 166
Baecker, Dirk 19, 26
Barclay, John 171, 173
Barth, Karl 4, 10–11, 28, 86, 146–52, 175, 221
Baumgarten, Alexander Gottlieb 13,
193–4, 196–200, 203–5
Belting, Hans 20–21
Berger, Peter 12, 189–90
Biel, Gabriel 3, 63
Bird, Greg 168
Blanton, Ward 165
Bluhm, Heinz 124
Boehm, Gottfried 19–20
Böhme, Gernot 199
Bonhoeffer, Dietrich 28, 133–4, 139–40
Bredekamp, Horst 20–21
Brumlik, Micha 103, 105
Bultmann, Rudolf 62, 175
- Calvin, Jean 3
Cassirer, Ernst 20
Chittick, William 56, 59
Chrétien, Jean-Louis 199–200
Cohen, Hermann 20
Comay, Rebecca 262–4
Contarini 126
Cosmus, Oliver 153
Cottingham, John 14, 221–8, 231–2
Crossan, James Dominic 171
- Damasio, Antonio 235
de Man, Paul 20
Democritus 23
- Derrida, Jacques 3, 6, 11, 20, 57–8, 65,
148, 153–5, 157–9, 253
Descartes, René 5, 7, 9, 25, 66–7, 111, 223
Dewey, John 209, 215–18
Dionysius Areopagita 64
- Ebeling, Gerhard 175, 260
Eckhart, Meister 6, 52
Engell, Lorenz 19
Erasmus, Desiderius 2, 5, 15, 63, 65, 72,
77, 86, 145, 241
Esposito, Roberto 167
Eusebius 99
- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb 3, 61–2, 72, 89, 262
Fischer, Johannes 32
Foucault, Michel 204, 242
Fuchs, Thomas 20
Frank, Manfred 94
Frazer, James 227
Freud, Sigmund 91, 263, 268
Freydberg, Bernhard 87
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg 193, 202, 204
Galilei, Galileo 67
Gogarten, Friedrich 12, 177
Goldmann, Lucien 66, 70
Gramsci, Antonio 242, 244–5
Grünewald, Matthias 29
Guyon, Madame Jeanne de 123
- Habermas, Jürgen 87, 96, 245, 247, 252
Hadot, Pierre 226, 232
Hagen, Wolfgang 23–4
Hamm, Berndt 41
Harnack, Adolf von 163
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich 3, 7–9,
13, 15–16, 20, 24, 61–2, 72, 77–88,
94–95, 97–8, 100–103, 105–6, 135, 153,
195–6, 204, 260, 262–4, 268–9
Heider, Fritz 19, 25–6

- Heidegger, Martin 1, 3, 6, 11–13, 61–3,
 65–6, 147, 150, 153–5, 163, 167–8, 171,
 175, 177–86, 191, 193–4, 198–9, 204
 Henry, Michel 11, 155–6
 Hermann, Wilhelm 175
 Hermann, Friedrich 84
 Hensbergen, Gijs von 187, 189
 Hölderlin, Friedrich 184
 Hörisch, Jochen 29
 Husserl, Edmund 67, 74, 153, 158, 179

 Ibn Arabi 5–6, 51–9

 Joest, Wilfried 7
 Jüngel, Eberhard 10–11, 146–52

 Kant, Immanuel 3, 6–8, 13, 15–16, 35,
 61–2, 65–74, 78, 81, 85, 87–92, 94–96,
 100–103, 117, 126, 179, 181, 186, 193,
 198, 200, 221, 260–69
 Kaufmann, Thomas 133, 138–40
 Keun-Joo, Christine Pae 213–4
 Kierkegaard, Søren V, 3, 7–10, 13, 88,
 109, 112–5, 118, 137, 143, 163, 195–7,
 200–201, 203–5, 231
 Kittler, Friedrich 20
 Kotsko, Adam 174
 Krois, John M. 20
 Krug, Wilhelm T. 77

 Laclau, Ernesto 242–5
 Lefort, Claude 267
 Leibniz, G. W. 69, 84, 93
 Leming, Laura 210–12, 214
 Leppin, Volker 133, 140, 143, 145
 Levinas, Emmanuel 3, 11, 20, 150, 153–5,
 157–9
 Lilla, Mark 71
 Lipps, Hans 12, 177, 179, 187
 Løgstrup, Knud E. 12–13, 175–81, 185–7,
 191, 200–201
 Luhmann, Niklas 19–21, 26, 30
 Lukács, György 91
 Luther, Martin V–VI, 1–12, 14–16, 21–2,
 27–38, 40–42, 46–7, 61–7, 71–2, 77,
 83–6, 97, 99, 109–15, 118–28, 133–4,
 138–143, 145–8, 151–2, 163, 167, 234,
 241, 257, 260, 263

 Mack, Michael 99
 Malter, Rudolf 7
 Marcion 163
 Marion, Jean-Luc 146, 148, 223
 Marx, Karl 268
 McCormack, Bruce 148, 150
 Meier, Georg Friedrich 194
 Meinecke, Friedrich 106
 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice 20, 153
 Melanchthon 3
 Mitchell, William 20
 Moltmann, Jürgen 28, 97
 Mouffe, Chantal 3, 15, 241–56

 Nancy, Jean-Luc 167
 Nietzsche, Friedrich V, 3, 7, 9, 62, 91,
 119–29, 153, 163, 182, 188, 268
 Novalis 24

 Ockham, William 3, 63

 Pannenberg, Wolfhart 238
 Parmenides 62, 66
 Pascal, Blaise 7, 66–68, 223
 Phillips, D. Z. 14, 224–32
 Plato 92, 110, 124, 182
 Prozorov, Sergei 168

 Rancière, Jacques 135
 Ratzinger, Joseph 137
 Redeker, Mirjam-Christina 202
 Ricoeur, Paul 16, 266–7
 Rilke, Rainer Maria 24
 Ritschl, Albrecht 175
 Robespierre 125, 262
 Rosenzweig, Franz 3, 8–9, 20, 97–8, 104–7

 Saint-Simon, Henri de 125
 Savonarola, Giralamo 125
 Scheler, Max 177, 179, 181, 185, 187
 Schelling, F. W. J. 3, 8–9, 61–2, 83, 87–96,
 98, 100, 102–7
 Schmitt, Carl 246–7, 253
 Schröter, Manfred 87
 Schürmann, Reiner 1, 3, 7, 10, 65–7
 Scotus, Duns 3, 31
 Snarr, Melissa 212–4, 218
 Socrates 124

- Sölle, Dorothee 97
Stanovich, Keith E. 115–8
Stendahl, Krister 97
Stjernfelt, Frederik 2
Suso, Henry 31–2, 34
- Tanner, Kathryn 15, 241–2, 248–54
Tauler, Johannes 31, 34
Taylor, Charles 120
Tholuck, August 83
Tillich, Paul 28, 86, 221
Trawny, Peter 182, 184
- Vallega, Alejandro 165
- Varela, Francisco 20
- Waldenfels, Bernhard 3, 11, 73, 146, 150,
154, 157–9
Weber, Max 21, 88, 92, 96
Wiedmann, August 176–7, 182
Wittgenstein, Ludwig 9, 13–14, 21, 112,
222–4, 226–7, 232
Whyte, Jessica 170, 172
Wright, N. T. 171
- Yovel, Yirmiyahu 101
- Žižek, Slavoj 166

Index of Subjects

- Absolute, God as 7, 53–4, 65, 77–86, 102, 105, 113–4, 148, 153, 156, 265–7, 269
- Aesthetics V, 10, 12–3, 193–202, 204
- Alienness 145–6, 153, 157–60
- Alterity 10–11, 66, 145–9, 151–3, 155–7, 160–61, 253
- Analogia fidei 86
- Antagonism 242–6, 249, 253
- Anti-Semitism 97, 184, 186
- Anti-Jewish rhetoric 98–9, 101, 107–8
- Augsburg Confession 13–4, 233
- Certainty, uncertainty 5, 9, 25, 31, 40, 44, 62, 66, 109–15, 118, 153, 190, 238
- Choice 9, 15, 110, 112–5, 118, 215, 230, 234–6
- Christ, Jesus 19, 24–5, 27–39, 40–45, 63, 82, 100, 110, 136–8, 140, 149, 189
- Church 1–2, 10, 15, 25–8, 39, 71, 97–9, 110, 126–7, 133–5, 137–42, 196, 212, 236, 256
- Cognitive 9, 89–91, 94, 109–10, 115–18, 204
- Consciousness, self-consciousness V, 1, 3, 7, 25, 27, 49, 52, 66–8, 73–4, 80–81, 85, 90, 95, 102, 155, 177, 179, 203, 264
- Contemplative 120, 224–7, 229, 231
- Conversion 133, 137–42, 226
- Critique V–VI, 2–4, 7–8, 11–16, 41, 57, 62, 65, 68–9, 78, 90–91, 94–5, 98, 106–8, 134, 143, 145, 154, 163, 166, 175–7, 180, 163–4, 186, 209–20, 247–8, 252–3, 259–61, 263–9
- Cross, theology of the 6, 28–9, 44, 63–5, 80, 86, 142, 149, 152, 160
- Democracy, radical 97, 214, 242–5, 267
- Destruction, deconstruction 6–7, 12, 20, 61–6, 70, 72–3, 87–8, 126, 242, 266–8
- Determinism 14–15, 234–5
- Deus absconditus 10, 64, 83, 145–9, 151
- Enlightenment 4, 8, 15–16, 65, 70–71, 88, 95, 98–101, 119, 127–8, 219, 222, 224, 260–64, 268
- Epistemology 1, 5, 65–6, 89, 178–9, 181, 224
- Ethics 12, 68, 70, 141, 164, 178, 185–6, 204, 227–9, 231, 247, 259, 267
- Event V, 1, 10, 15, 19, 21–2, 25, 29, 32, 35, 37, 42, 44, 91, 95–6, 127, 135–7, 140–43, 146, 148, 150, 154–5, 158–9, 166, 169–70, 176, 205, 234–6, 238
- Experience 8, 11–4, 19, 46, 50, 53–4, 58–9, 62–3, 68–9, 72–4, 96, 106, 109–10, 112, 117, 124–5, 143, 147–8, 153–4, 157–8, 160, 179, 182, 190, 193–4, 197–205, 223–4, 228, 238, 243, 256, 265
- Extraordinary 11, 128, 136, 147, 150, 157, 160
- Faith 3–4, 7, 9–11, 13–16, 19, 29–39, 42–6, 59, 63, 67, 70–71, 85, 99, 110–12, 115, 118, 123–5, 134, 137–8, 141–2, 145–6, 149–52, 160–61, 177, 196–7, 200, 202–4, 221, 223, 225, 233, 236–9, 256, 259, 262, 264
- Fantasy 13, 58, 71, 200
- Fidelity 136–7, 141, 143, 166,
- Formula of Concord 14, 233
- Free will 14–15, 72, 77, 233–8
- French Revolution 15, 21, 247, 262–4
- God's manifestations 5, 50, 52–6, 59
- Good and Evil 9, 109, 111–5, 117, 135, 185–6, 191
- Grace 1, 3, 9, 27–9, 31, 33–4, 41–2, 65, 71, 91, 99, 115, 124, 126, 139, 142, 145, 160, 237, 241,
- Guernica 12, 187–9, 191
- Hegemony 1, 20, 66–7, 242–5, 248–9, 251–3, 255

- Hermeneutics 6, 13, 16, 20, 29, 43, 61, 98,
 193–4, 202, 231
 Hiddenness, of God 5–7, 63–5, 70–71, 83,
 145–9, 151–3, 160
 History of Being 181–5
 History of religion 80–83
 Honesty 122–3
 Human Rights 97, 104, 189–90, 269

 Idealism (idealist) V, 4, 6–8, 61–2, 65, 87,
 97–9, 104–7
 Imagination 6, 13, 58–9, 71, 83, 92, 124,
 197–8, 200, 227, 268
 Immanence 7, 30, 52, 57, 62, 72–3, 91, 95,
 145–8, 153, 155–6, 158
 Immediacy 5, 9, 23, 25, 28, 33, 38–42, 44,
 109–12, 146, 150, 156–7, 197
 Infinity 56, 58, 78–80
 Inoperativity 11, 164–8, 170, 172–4

 Judaism 5, 8, 30, 98–103, 107

 Medium 4, 9, 19–27, 29–31, 33, 35, 40–46,
 143
 Messianism (messianic) 8, 11, 104–6, 158,
 164, 166, 168, 170–73
 Metaphysics V, 2–3, 10–14, 24, 41, 53,
 58, 61–5, 78, 80, 148, 153–4, 157, 165,
 175–6, 178–82, 185–8, 190–91, 193–4,
 198, 226, 265
 Modernity 8, 10, 12, 65, 88, 177, 183–4,
 196, 267
 Morality, moral values 8–9, 49, 70–72, 90–
 92, 96, 109, 111, 114, 126–7, 180–81,
 185, 190, 195–6, 204, 210–11, 222–4,
 226–31, 247–8, 251, 262
 Mysticism 6, 28, 31–2, 37, 44, 52, 64, 133,
 141–3, 168

 Nature 3, 37–8, 65–6, 81, 89–90, 95,
 176–7, 197, 234
 Necessity (causal, logical) 7, 63, 72, 84,
 90–92, 100, 190, 244, 249

 Omnipotence 7, 27, 77, 84–5
 Ontology 2, 5, 32, 62, 89, 96, 165, 171, 174
 Order (of things, of creation) 3, 11, 28, 32,
 41, 67, 71, 95–6, 100, 124, 135–6, 147,
 150, 157, 159–60, 164, 176–7, 190, 220,
 244, 267

 Paradox 3, 6, 32, 40, 55–6, 63–4, 66, 137, 219
 Particularity 134–9, 141–3
 Passivity 3, 11, 27, 29, 31–3, 74, 156, 160,
 163–4, 166, 168, 173
 Perception 3–5, 9, 13, 19, 21, 23–33, 45–7,
 58, 65, 68–70, 72–3, 119, 150, 152, 156,
 193, 199, 202
 Phenomena, phenomenology V, 2–3, 7,
 10–12, 20, 41, 44, 46–7, 54, 61, 66–71,
 74, 79, 85, 134, 146–8, 153–7, 160, 167,
 177–81, 187, 193–6, 198–9, 209, 220,
 229, 232, 263–4, 266
 Pluralism 228, 242–8, 252–5, 257
 Power 3, 6, 9, 15, 20–21, 26, 29–31, 41–2,
 45–6, 58, 63–5, 82, 91, 101, 115, 121–2,
 126, 128, 169, 171–3, 176, 183, 213–4,
 241–2, 244–5, 255
 Pragmatism V, 4, 13, 20, 72, 209–10, 215,
 219–20
 Presence 5–7, 28–32, 38–40, 42–4, 50–52,
 55, 58, 64, 66, 92, 95, 116, 148, 154,
 156–7, 160, 163, 203, 243
 Primalism, primalistic 176–7, 182
 Protest V, 1, 11, 14, 98, 107, 122, 128, 163,
 170, 189, 193, 209, 213–4, 218–20
 Protestantism 4, 7–8, 13, 22, 29, 40, 46–7,
 71, 88, 98, 107, 193–4, 196–7

 Re-formation, reformatting V, 2–5, 7,
 10–11, 13–14, 19, 27–9, 45–7, 141
 Reform, Reformation 1–5, 9–10, 12–14,
 16, 19–22, 25, 27, 29–30, 47, 61, 97–9,
 119–29, 133–4, 137–42, 193, 260, 262,
 268
 Religious convictions 222–7, 230
 Religious Education 15–16, 259, 268–9
 Renaissance 20, 119, 127–8
 Response 11, 34, 41, 87, 154, 157–60,
 172–4, 190, 197, 200, 215–20
 Responsibility 3, 11, 34–5, 72, 84–5, 158,
 196, 201, 233–8, 251, 261
 Revelation 5, 6, 8, 11, 13, 19, 26, 46,
 50–51, 58, 63, 65, 71, 80, 82, 87–8, 90,
 93–6, 102–3, 106, 138, 145–53, 160,
 175, 201, 205

- Romanticism (Romantic) 98, 107, 137, 196
- Secularization 73, 99, 134, 139
- Sensitive cognition 194–5, 198–200, 202, 204
- Signs, of God 54–5, 58
- Singularity 10, 96, 134–9, 143, 159–60, 244
- Sola gratia 85–6, 99, 145, 160
- Spirit 7–9, 13, 24–5, 37–8, 41–2, 44–5, 52, 58, 61, 80–81, 85, 88, 100–103, 110–11, 123, 125–6, 140, 147, 149, 197, 222–6, 263–4
- Sufi, Sufism 5, 50–52, 55–7, 59
- Supersessionism 103, 107
- Symbol, symbolic language 12, 20–21, 41, 55, 58, 86, 96, 107, 187, 196, 216, 223, 245–9, 253–7, 267
- Topos, topology 3, 33, 64, 69–70, 83
- Tradition 133, 140, 143
- Transcendence, transcending 6–7, 10–11, 50, 52, 57, 61, 67–9, 72–4, 142, 145–9, 152–7, 160–61, 190, 194, 203, 263, 267
- Transcendental 8, 35, 51, 68–70, 72–3, 85, 89–91, 94, 148, 155–6, 198, 264–7
- Truth 3, 9–10, 13, 15, 24, 31, 35, 57–8, 61, 67, 71, 81–2, 86, 94, 96, 122–3, 125, 135–6, 138, 140–42, 153–4, 176, 185–6, 190, 196, 198–9, 221–7, 230, 232, 236, 239, 241, 252, 263
- Unity of God 49–50, 53–5, 64
- Universality 104, 134–40, 198
- Withdrawal 11, 42, 147, 154–5, 160, 164, 166–7, 170, 172–4