

**GIANNI VATTIMO AND JOHN READER -
THE MEANING OF THE 'RETURN TO RELIGION' IN
A POSTMODERN SETTING**

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INTRODUCTION

Gianni Vattimo, Italian thinker and Christian convert, opens his work, *The Transparent Society*, by noting the prevalence of allusions to post modernity in current discourse. He claims that this is a consequence of the general feeling that modernity is over.¹ Perhaps it is best, at the outset, to elaborate briefly on the meaning of modernity, the target of much criticism presently, in order to understand better what post modernity means.

Modernity refers to a distinct stage in the history of human society, and is sometimes referred to as the period of the Enlightenment. It was ushered by the Industrial Revolution and it prompted a host of radical changes. These include the mechanization of the production of commodities, the movement of population from the rural to the urban centers, transformation in economic and social life, and the expansion of opportunities for education and interaction among peoples. As to be expected these changes somehow undermined cultural traditions and belief systems.

At the root of all these changes, and the focus of our consideration here, is the intellectual basis that grounded this revolution, according to which reason and rationality became practically the criterion and the measure of everything. Georges de Schrijver puts it thus: "The 'strong thinking' of modernity assumed that it could grasp the essences of things in their logical connections, and based on this essential knowledge it predicted and worked for the steady progress of human development, thus trusting in the rectilinear advance and finality of history."²

John Reader, American cleric and Christian apologist, enumerates some of the central themes that dominated the outlook of modernity: "an emphasis upon the primacy of reason as the correct

way of organizing knowledge, a concentration upon empirical data accessible to all and a belief that human progress was to be achieved by the application of science and reason."³ Reason thus superseded all other tribunals which previously decided the direction of knowledge and the shape of belief. Tradition in turn, religious or otherwise, became suspect.

Reader offers a further description below of how reason came to occupy the central place in the modern period:

Reason now becomes the sole reliable means of access to the world. It is through the power of clear and logical thought and the human capacity to observe, analyze and then construct hypotheses and theories that greater control is assumed over the external environment... Every aspect of reality is deemed to be susceptible to this reasoning process to the point where experiences that cannot be fitted into this framework are treated with suspicion or incredulity... Truth is no longer the prerogative of existing traditions and institutions but rather that which is to be shaped from the cauldron of philosophical and scientific exploration.⁴

Modernity then became the scene for the development of what the French philosopher, Jean-François Lyotard, labeled as metanarratives. These are universal *Welstanschauungen* or "interpretive frameworks or ways of understanding the world that are claimed to have truth or validity that crosses all spatial and temporal boundaries... true for all people, at all times and in all places."⁵

POST MODERNITY VS METANARRATIVES

With the advent of post modernity, however, the idea of metanarratives came under attack as too oppressive, because they became exclusive and intolerant of other views that cannot be subsumed under their universal categories. Such dominant perspectives had been exposed, moreover, as actually nothing but particular narratives, rather than incontrovertible theories that can stand as the overarching and ultimate pronouncements over human history.⁶ The dissolution of these metanarratives, therefore, became the main thrust of the postmodern period.

Vattimo offers his own account of how modernity ended and paved the way for the advent of post modernity. He thinks that

the rejection of a unilinear conception of history is what occasioned such an end.⁷ From a rigorous critique of such a view, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the inevitable conclusion that followed had been thus: “There is no single history, only images of the past projected from different points of view. It is illusory to think that there exists a supreme or comprehensive viewpoint capable of unifying all others.”⁸

One factor that Vattimo identifies to have contributed significantly to the rethinking of history – and with it the idea of progress together with the ideal of man around which this idea revolved – is the rapid development and expansion of the means of communication. “These means – newspapers, radio, television, what is now called telematics – have been decisive in bringing about the dissolution of centralized perspectives.”⁹

Contrary then to predictions that such proliferation of mass media would result in the general homogenization of society, what has occurred instead is the surfacing and spread of worldviews. Such has been the accompaniment – “the liberation of differences and dialects” – of post modernity. Vattimo therefore concludes with this realization:

If, in a world of dialects, I speak my own dialect, I shall be conscious that it is not the only ‘language’, but that it is precisely one among many. If, in this multicultural world, I set out my system of religious, aesthetic, political and ethnic values, I shall be conscious of the historicity, contingency and finiteness of these systems, starting with my own.¹⁰

This is how the postmodern scene has unraveled. It has become “populated with many different voices, having all their own perspectives”¹¹ which, besides the general disorientation that they brought in their wake, have emancipated us from the narrow horizons of our own ways of life because they opened our eyes to other possibilities of existence. It has not only brought about the dissolution of centralized perspectives but also in fact placed us in contact with a multiplicity of ‘local’ rationalities.¹²

OVERCOMING OF RELIGION

Among the many objections raised against modernity, specifically against the metanarratives that it marshaled, is its insistent demand that everything measure up to its accounts of reality. As

Reader puts it: “The problem with the Enlightenment view is that it claims too much. If what makes us all human or establishes our common identity is our power of reasoning as defined in a particular way, then anybody who does not think or reason in that way is labeled irrational and excluded from power and participation.”¹³

Such had been the fate of religion in modernity: disenfranchised in a world that considered a supernatural mooring utterly superfluous. Religion came to be branded as irrational and therefore rendered outmoded in a world where reason has superseded everything. Indeed, as Vattimo concurs, the announcement of the death of God, principally by Nietzsche, is actually the recognition that God is no longer necessary.¹⁴

Reader gives his own description of this dramatic turnaround of religion in modernity as follows:

As people began to exercise their own judgment so the authority of religious traditions began to decline. Science and reason replaced religion as the way of understanding and interpreting both the natural world and human existence. The development of capitalism and the move towards more democratic political structures also challenged the social position of the religious hierarchies. The sacred is pushed back into the farthest recesses of human life and increasingly equated with myth and superstition while the non-religious or secular spreads across politics, the economy, intellectual and artistic pursuits and even the sphere of morality. As scientific explanations of the world take over we enter a disenchanted world, where religious views have less purchase upon reality. Explanations dependent upon reference to an external power or metaphysical principle – God – are relegated to a previous stage of human development when people still believed in some form of magic.¹⁵

The modern period thus became the burial ground for religion, as it was reckoned no longer necessary or adequate enough to provide answers to the most piercing questions about human existence.

RETURN OF RELIGION

The situation however has considerably altered in post modernity. The revolt against grand rational schemas, which led to the liberation and recognition of a plurality and multiplicity of narratives

and discourses, prompted a reversal of the destiny of religion. Vattimo expounds on this theme in a landmark essay, “The Trace of the Trace,” where he celebrates religion and “the very fact of its return, its representation, its calling to us with a voice that we are sure we have heard before.”¹⁶ Reader likewise remarks on this return of religion as he mused: “Religion is back on the agenda.”¹⁷

Indeed, religion is enjoying some kind of resurgence, so that while it may be true, to borrow the observation of Emile Durkheim, that the realm of the profane had greatly reduced the realm of the sacred, nonetheless, the revival of interest in religion is evident even in Europe which is considered to have entered a post Christian phase.¹⁸

Vattimo suggests that, on the one hand, this return to religion – manifested in “the new vitality of churches and sects, and in the search for different doctrines and practices,¹⁹ the ‘fashion’ for Eastern religions” – is propelled by a gnawing fear caused by such threats as nuclear holocaust, the previously unexperienced ecological disasters, and other dangers besides foisted by unrestrained technological advances. There is also the growing disenchantment with a consumerist lifestyle that has nothing but ultimately boredom and absurdity to offer.

On the other hand, Vattimo cites ‘the dissolution of the great systems that accompanied the development of science,²⁰ technology and modern social organization’ as having led to ‘the breakdown of the philosophical prohibition of religion’ which then created the opening for its return. There is urgency in this return, which explains the new vitality in religion. Vattimo thinks that this could only be because “philosophy and critical thought in general, having abandoned the very idea of foundation, are not (or no longer) able to give existence that meaning which it therefore seeks in religion.”²¹

MEANING OF THE RETURN

At this juncture it may be asked whether or not the return to religion may in fact constitute a return to a modernist framework. If it were so then it betrays the very postmodernist inspiration that had allowed the return to happen in the first place. This certainly cannot be the intention of Vattimo. For as de Schrijver explains: “the breakdown of the fundamentalism of reason cannot possibly be replaced by a religious fundamentalism,”²² otherwise, it will just be some kind of a dialectical musical chair – one absolute overcome by another absolute.

Vattimo responds to this dilemma by clarifying that this return to religion will have to be approached via a kind of ‘weak thinking,’ *pensiero debole*, that stands in stark contrast to the ‘strong thinking’ characteristic of modernity. For he argues: “If critical reflection wishes to present itself as the authentic interpretation of the religious need of common consciousness, it must show that this need is not adequately satisfied by a straightforward recovery of ‘metaphysical’ religiousness, that is, by fleeing the confusions of modernization as the Babel of secularized society towards a renewed fundamentalism.”²³

To explain this kind of thinking, Vattimo adopts the Heideggerian viewpoint. It will be recalled that Martin Heidegger classifies thinking into two. The first is calculative thinking which is directed at beings, employs representations, and operates by the laws of logic. The domination by technology of human thinking has succeeded in establishing this as the only legitimate kind of thinking. There is, however, another kind, a dimension of thinking which goes beyond the calculus of inferences. Heidegger considers it possible, and in fact imperative, for man to ask questions about the meaning of existence. Such questions require a different kind of thinking, other than the scientific practice of observing objects in a detached way. This second kind of thinking is *meditative* thinking. It necessitates a greater attunement to how the world speaks to us *in all the various ways in which one exists*.

In his “Memorial Address,” Heidegger exudes confidence that every one can engage in this thinking:

...Anyone can follow the path of meditative thinking in his own manner and within his own limits. Why? Because man is a thinking, that is, a meditating being. Thus meditative thinking need by no means be “high-flown.” It is enough if we dwell on what lies close and meditate on what is closest; upon that which concerns us, each one of us, here and now; here, on this patch of home ground; now, in the present hour of history.²⁴

It must be stressed however that for Heidegger, while the privileged position of man or *Dasein* is such that he is a ‘standing within the approach of presence’, nonetheless, he is so only “in such a way that he receives as a gift the presencing that It gives by perceiving what appears in letting-presence.”²⁵ This means that “man does not have control over unconcealment itself, in which at any given time the real shows itself or withdraws.”²⁶ The event of

the *Ereignis* is wholly dependent on the unilateral initiative of Being. It is not for *Dasein* to bring about; if it should transpire at all, only Being can make it happen. John Caputo elaborates on this below:

There is no determining “why” the Event comes to pass as it does, why it has thrown us into the darkness of the technological world, why, or how it will “turn” away from the “Gestell” towards a new world. If to live “without why” for Meister Eckhart means to live with a disinterested and loving trust in God’s fatherly call, in Heidegger it means to acknowledge the inscrutability of the play of Being.²⁷

This is the reason why in the “Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking,” Heidegger enjoins: “We are to do nothing but wait.”²⁸ And then he exhorts about the need to lay aside metaphysics and to undertake thinking, to give way to another possible locus for the revelation of *Sein*, the thinking which obeys the voice of being. Being needs this thinking for, if it reveals itself at all, it is in and through this thinking.

Caputo explains that this thinking requires the attunement of man with the world, understood as “the matrix of meaning within which a man lives his life.” It is the world from which “issue meanings in which a man experiences his mortality and his humanity, his grandeur and his misery, his powers and impotencies.”²⁹ Through this thinking which is “more sober-minded than the incessant frenzy of rationalization and the intoxicating quality of cybernetics... a thinking outside the distinction of rational and irrational, more sober-minded still than scientific technology,”³⁰ man can struggle out of the technological world which had divested him of his human worth.

Vattimo follows the same direction and he makes the further step of drawing a parallel between the *Ereignis* and the return of religion:

Philosophy might do better to think of itself as a critical listening – and thus as recollecting the *Ge-Schick* of Being, its *Schickungen* – to the call that only becomes audible in the condition of inauthenticity itself, which for its part is no longer conceived as structural, but as linked to the event of Being, and in this case to the giving of Being in the final moment of metaphysics. All this may be said far more simply by emphasizing that it is not by accident that religious experience is for us given as return.³¹

It is furthermore important for Vattimo to consider that the temporal situs within which this return to religion transpires is precisely the world of late-modern technoscience. The return therefore cannot be undertaken by way of a flight into some transcendent and indifferent sphere, although such may be possible through the rent created by the breakdown of the Enlightenment critique. Instead, this return is to be identified with the encounter of factuality or event-likeness; hence, it can only be a grappling with and never a fleeing from such encounter:

Indeed, in general, the philosophic re-thinking of religion seems to be essentially dependent on the connection between the two senses of positivity... First, that for which the very content of religious experience in its recovered form is determined by the fact of its returning in the specific historical conditions of our late-modern existence, and whose relation to this existence is therefore not characterized simply by a leap outside it. And, secondly, that the bare fact of returning denotes positivity as a constitutive feature of religion, in as much as religion depends on an originary factuality that happens to be legible as createdness and dependence...³²

This encounter with factuality or the radical contingency of existence emerges most distinctly, according to Vattimo, from basic religious experiences like “the need for forgiveness... how one confronts the enigma of death... pain... and the experience of prayer.”³³ They allow us to ascend to yet another level of encounter, namely, with a belonging that is also a provenance. These experiences, moreover, are “already given in a determinate language, which, in more or less literal terms, is the language of the Hebraic-Christian tradition, of the Bible.”³⁴ And yet the return is not at all to be conducted as though we are simply going back to a ‘forgotten object, the Holy Scripture, that has remained intact somewhere waiting for us.’ That would be exactly equivalent, for Vattimo, to the ‘flight and polemic alternatives’ he warned against. Far from it, Vattimo insists that this return can only be embarked on by following a hermeneutics or the philosophy of interpretation which was in fact given rise to by this Hebraic Christian tradition.

De Schrijver explains the central place that Vattimo assigns to hermeneutics in this return to religion: “After the break-down of a rationality which forbids one to be religious, one ought no longer be ashamed to recognize one’s ‘belonging’ to the transmission

process of the Biblical tradition. But while admitting that he stands within this tradition, he is quick to add that the verities of this tradition which reach us through the mediation of hermeneutics, are also ‘deeply influenced’ and ‘modified’ by it.”³⁵

Vattimo recognizes the value of hermeneutics and he believes that it “presents itself as a thinking that is well disposed towards religion, in that its critique of the idea of truth as verifiable conformity between proposition and thing undermines the rationalist, empiricist, positivist and even idealist and Marxist negations of the possibility of religious experience”; moreover, “having dissolved the metaphysical ideal of truth as conformity... hermeneutics lends fresh plausibility to religion and even myth, quite independently of any Hegelian-style historicist justification.”³⁶

What is central to hermeneutics according to Hans-Georg Gadamer is the *thesis of historicity*. Philosophical hermeneutics maintains that historicity grounds all our rational activities and that “the very meaning and validity of any knowledge-claim is inextricably intertwined with the historical situation of both its formulators and evaluators.”³⁷ Another term given to this essential aspect of Gadamerian hermeneutics is *function of tradition*. James Hans noted that in his discussion of hermeneutics Gadamer points out that man understands because he has a tradition. “To admit that we have a tradition is simply to admit the obvious: that we are all situated towards the world in a particular way, with particular familial and societal horizons, and with a given body of language at hand which has a long history behind it, which always precedes our coming into the world.”³⁸

In explaining the same point, Gadamer alludes to the concept of prejudice, whose significance he sought to rehabilitate because, accordingly, prejudice sets down the very condition of possibility for understanding:

It is not so much our judgment as it is our prejudices that constitute our being. This is a provocative formulation, for I am using it to restore to its rightful place a positive concept of prejudice that was driven out of our linguistic usage by the French and the English enlightenment... Prejudices are not necessarily unjustified and erroneous, so that they inevitably distort the truth. In fact, the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are biases of our openness to the world. They are simply conditions whereby we experience

something - whereby what we encounter says something to us.³⁹

The relevance of hermeneutics in this return can, consequently, never be gainsaid for as Vattimo asserts: "... We experience the return of the religious in a world in which one cannot ignore the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of every text, and of the biblical text above all... the fact that the sacred texts which mark our religious experience are handed down to us by tradition... that its mediation does not allow them to survive as unmodifiable objects."⁴⁰ Furthermore, the hermeneutic engagement that accompanies this return must be understood to be not just an imperative that arises from the 'eventual temporality of late-modern existence' but, as a matter of fact, rooted in the Christian theology that begins from the Trinity and is highlighted by the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And so Vattimo declares that Christian theology is inevitably hermeneutic theology: "The interpretative structure, transmission, mediation and, perhaps, the fallenness do not concern only the enunciation, the communication of God with man; they characterize the intimate life of God itself, which therefore cannot be conceived in terms of an immutable metaphysical plenitude (in relation to which, precisely, the revelation would merely be a 'subsequent' episode and an accident, a *quoad nos*)."⁴¹

In a subsequent statement, Vattimo amplifies this view by asserting that the Trinitarian God is not one who calls us to return to the foundation in the metaphysical sense of the word, but, in the New Testament expression, calls us rather to read the signs of the times. Now, his insistence on the priority of the New Testament and the centrality of the mystery of the Incarnation in Christian theology, must certainly be appreciated in terms of its almost perfect coincidence with the event-like character of Being that is encountered in the post-metaphysical thinking of Heidegger and for which the latter offered an appropriate response, that is, meditative thinking and attunement of man with the world. Let us then conclude this section with this long quote from Vattimo:

Only in the light of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God does it seem possible for philosophy to think of itself as a reading of the signs of the times without this being reduced to a purely passive record of the times... God is incarnated, *and thus* is first revealed in the biblical pronouncement that ultimately 'gives rise' to the post-metaphysical conception of the event-like character of Being. It is only in so far as it rediscovers

its own provenance in the New Testament that this post-metaphysical thinking can take the form of a thinking of the event-like character of Being that is not simply reducible to a bare acceptance of the existent or to pure historical and cultural relativism. If you will: it is the fact of the Incarnation that confers on history the sense of a redemptive revelation, as opposed to a confused accumulation of happenings that unsettle the pure structural quality of true Being. That there is a redemptive (or in philosophical terms, emancipatory) sense to history, in spite, or precisely because, of its being a history of pronouncements and responses, of interpretations and not 'discoveries' or the ascendancy of 'true' presences, is only possible in the light of the doctrine of Incarnation.⁴³

MAJOR NARRATIVE VS META NARRATIVE

For his part, Reader perceives a serious problem with certain misconceptions regarding this return to religion, especially so in the case of Christianity. He observes, for instance, that "most theologians who welcome the undermining of the Enlightenment do so because they want to replace it with the Christian story, which in itself is a grand narrative according to the accepted description."⁴⁴ Reader thinks that this thinking can no longer be upheld in the light of post modernity wherein the monolithic understanding of reason has been substituted with a variety of different discourses and that the claims of one to ground or serve as a norm for all the others have been greatly undermined. Indeed, he strongly argues that claims of religious groups to possess a universal way of living or meaning to life applicable to all are simply incongruous in the context of plural rationalities. He sees the challenge then for the theologian in terms of how to position Christianity in a situation of plural rationalities where no one discourse can claim dominance over the rest.

Reader tackles this problem by proposing the idea of a major narrative which he defines as stories that are midway between the metanarrative and local narratives. These are narratives that while, transcending the ambit of a local narrative, however, do not assume the place of an interpretative framework that foists itself as a metanarrative. Through this added category, Reader believes that "the tension between the variety of local and contextual interpretations of the Christian faith and a Christian metanarrative that claims to tell, if not the whole, then certainly the essential story"⁴⁵ can be resolved. He further remarks:

...If instead of metanarrative plus local narratives, we interpret Christianity as Major Narrative including and composed of many sub-narratives, the tension does not have to be resolved. It becomes more possible to retain the integrity of both the local and translocal stories and to continue to require them to negotiate through critical discussion. This seems to me a better way of describing the way Christianity operates in practice. Such an understanding is particularly important in the light of the varieties of Christianity that are developing in different parts of the world....' The christological enterprise is an ongoing task. Cultures and contexts are not static entities; they constantly change and throw up warp and woof of political, social, and religious strands in an ever-new fabric. As cultures evolve, as new contexts and experiences emerge, as new questions surface, so features and aspects of Jesus will continue to be discovered.⁴⁶

Only through this approach can the local and specific differences as well as the relationships between universal and local narratives be bridged. For the concept of a major narrative is such that it is at once local and translocal. Reader is therefore confident that it is able to meet the postmodern criticism that Christianity is a totalizing or metanarrative that makes claims at the expense of both other people and other traditions; for, as a *major* narrative, Christianity would be able to take simultaneously into account both the local and the particular and avoids their dissolution into 'a plethora of self-contained and incommensurable language games.'⁴⁷

CONCLUSION

The post modern world and its renunciation of centralized perspectives has brought into the open, and allowed us to get an insight into and partake in fact of, other rich traditions and systems of thought. It has truly engendered what Vattimo calls the liberation of differences, of local elements, of dialect:

With the demise of the idea of a central rationality of history, the world of generalized communication explodes like a multiplicity of 'local rationalities... that finally speak up for themselves. They are no longer repressed and cowed into silence by the idea of a single true form of humanity that must be realized irrespective of particular and individual

finitude, transience, and contingency.⁴⁸

The return to religion, in particular, has led us to reflect upon the ways that various local narratives have enriched this return. It has developed in us a hermeneutic sensibility so that, even as we grant that every assimilation of tradition is historically different, we also realize that this does not mean that every one represents only an imperfect understanding of it; we are then able to appreciate with Gadamer that in fact “every one is the experience of a view of the object itself.”⁴⁹

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NOTES

¹Gianni Vattimo, *The Transparent Society*, trans. David Webb (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 1.

²Georges de Schrijver, S.J., “The Use of Mediations in Theology,” (Lecture Conducted at the Ateneo de Manila University, August-September 2001), p. 10.

³John Reader, *Beyond All Reason: The Limits of Post-Modern Theology* (Cardiff: Aureus Publishing, 1997), p. 4.

⁴Ibid., pp. 19-20.

⁵Ibid., p. 21.

⁶Ibid., p. 36.

⁷Vattimo, p. 2.

⁸Ibid., p. 3.

⁹Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 9.

¹¹de Schrijver, p. 22.

¹²Vattimo, *ibid.*

¹³Reader, p. 31.

¹⁴Gianni Vattimo, *Beyond Interpretation: The Meaning of Hermeneutics for Philosophy*, trans. David Webb (Oxford: Polity Press, 1997), p. 7.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁶Vattimo, “The Trace of the Trace,” in *Religion*, Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo, eds. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 80.

¹⁷Reader, p. 1.

¹⁸A recent article, “Lost in Silent Prayer, by Carla Power, shares this finding: “Reports of God’s death have been exaggerated; and in any

event, the decline of organized religion in Europe has been gathering pace for a century... Yet an abiding respect for faith endures... According to the Turin-based Center for the Study of New Religions, 90 percent of Europeans think there's a God – up 20 percent in the last decade. Europeans may not be trundling off to Sunday mass, but at least some of them spend their vacations on pilgrimages or spiritual retreats. They may not be poring over the Scriptures, but they're avidly reading up on religion. *Newsweek* (12 July 1999), p. 47.

¹⁹An interesting commentary in the above article pertains to the youth: "Young Europeans, in particular, are creating mix-and-match faiths, forging moralities where they can find them." (Ibid.) A good illustration of this trend is the example of Xoana Pintos Castro, daughter of an ex-priest who says she believes in God – but not her father's; instead, she has drawn from various sources – "Buddhism, the rituals of Roman Catholicism and the community spirit of Islam" – in order to build "a faith of my own." (Ibid., p. 48.)

²⁰It may be apropos to mention here the rousing article, "Science, God and Man," by Robert Wright, which reads, in part: "... One hallmark of 20th century science, as it draws to a close, is how much fertile ground it has provided for bona fide theological speculation... One of the great scientific minds of our era believes that the ultimate questions remain unanswered, that science may be unable to answer them, and yet that science does help us mull them over, by illuminating the epic trajectory of cosmic and biological evolution on whose end we sit. 'The theological possibility,' (William D.) Hamilton says, [Oxford University professor and considered to be the most important evolutionary biologist of the second half of this century] "is still certainly alive.'" *Time* (December 28, 1992), pp. 40-44. For a fuller discussion of this thematic in current scientific circles, see *Cosmos, Bios, Theos: Scientists Reflect on Science, God, and the Origins of the Universe, Life, and Homo Sapiens*, Henry Margenau and Roy Abraham Varghese, eds. (Chicago: Open Court, 1992).

²¹Vattimo, p. 81.

²²de Schrijver, 12

²³Vattimo, 82.

²⁴Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and Hans Freund (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 47.

²⁵Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 12.

²⁶Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, David Farrell Krell, ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 299.

²⁷John D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press), pp. 247-8.

- ²⁸Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, p. 62.
- ²⁹Caputo, p. 263.
- ³⁰Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, p. 391.
- ³¹Vattimo, p. 84.
- ³²Ibid.
- ³³Ibid., p. 87.
- ³⁴Vattimo, p. 88.
- ³⁵De Schrijver, p. 14.
- ³⁶Vattimo, *Beyond Interpretation*, pp. 44-5.
- ³⁷Brise Wachterhauser R., ed. *Hermeneutics and Modern Philosophy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986), p. 7.
- ³⁸James S. Hans, "Hans-Georg Gadamer and Hermeneutic Phenomenology," *Philosophy Today*, 22 (1978), p. 10.
- ³⁹Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, trans. David E. Linge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 9.
- ⁴⁰Vattimo, "The Trace of the Trace," p. 88.
- ⁴¹Ibid., pp. 88-9.
- ⁴²Ibid., p. 90.
- ⁴³Ibid., p. 92.
- ⁴⁴Reader, p. 28.
- ⁴⁵Ibid., p. 75.
- ⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 75-6.
- ⁴⁷Ibid., p. 77.
- ⁴⁸Vattimo, *The Transparent Society*, pp. 8-9.
- ⁴⁹Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 356.