

Philosophy, Culture, and Traditions

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EDITORIAL

Philosophy, Culture, and Traditions (PCT) is a publication of the World Union of Catholic Philosophical Societies. A multi-lingual philosophical journal, it appears annually in print format. Selected papers, along with a supplementary volume, are published in an electronic format.

Philosophy, Culture, and Traditions draws on the important contribution of Catholic Christianity to philosophy. Since it aims at the fruitful exchange of ideas among philosophy and religious and cultural traditions, it also includes studies outside the Catholic Christian traditions.

The journal publishes manuscripts in all areas of philosophy, although each issue will contain a number of articles devoted to a specific theme of particular philosophical interest. To encourage dialogue and exchange, the journal will include scholars from Africa, America, Asia, and Europe, and will represent a range of philosophical traditions.

Of course, some may ask ‘Why another philosophy journal?’

The aim of the *World Union* is to bring scholars from the Catholic Christian traditions into contact and exchange with one another, but equally with philosophers from other religious and cultural traditions. More broadly, its aims are

- (i) to initiate and develop contacts with individuals and associations who are engaged philosophical research and study in, or in areas related to, Catholic Christian traditions – and particularly with those who, for social or political reasons or on account of geographical location, have not been able to do enter into close relationship with philosophers elsewhere;
- (ii) to serve as a conduit of information about meetings, conferences, and other matters of common interest;
- (iii) to help, when asked, and as far as possible, in organizing and sponsoring lectures and educational exchanges, particularly in those regions where there is an interest in the Catholic Christian philosophical traditions;
- (iv) to help, when asked and as far as possible, in the publicity and organisation of conferences on themes consistent with the work of the World Union and, especially, with world congresses of Christian philosophers

Most philosophy journals have little interest in drawing explicitly on religious and cultural traditions, or in pursuing exchanges of ideas between philosophy and these traditions – and some might even

be said to be opposed to this. Again, while some philosophy journals are published by Christian philosophical organisations or through religiously-affiliated universities, *Philosophy, Culture, and Traditions* aims explicitly to promote exchanges between religious traditions and cultures, and philosophy. Finally, to encourage the principle of exchange, *Philosophy, Culture, and Traditions* will be thematic.

This orientation reflects the intentions of the encyclical *Fides et ratio*, and the view that such exchange is of mutual benefit to philosophy and religious and cultural traditions, without interfering with the proper autonomy of the philosophical enterprise itself.

Articles appearing in the journal will be of a serious scholarly character and more than just commentaries on issues of contemporary concern. Nevertheless, *PCT* is open with regard to methodology and approach.

The supplementary volume, published on the Internet, will include more general articles, discussion notes, interventions, as well as a selection of articles from the printed volume. The aim of this supplementary volume is to provide additional opportunities for the exchange of ideas.

The World Union hopes that *PCT* will provide a useful means of bringing scholars from across the globe into closer contact with one another – in a way that draws on insights and values to be found in the Catholic Christian and other religious and cultural traditions.

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ON BEING INVISIBLE: SOCRATIC ASCETICISM AND THE PHILOSOPHICAL LIFE

D.C. Schindler

Is there any compelling reason to live ascetically? To what end would a person willingly renounce goods perfective of human nature that he or she may otherwise lawfully possess? In a Christian context, it would not be difficult in principle to justify such practices of self-discipline by virtue of the superiority of grace over nature, or more specifically as part of one's obeying a call to a special form of discipleship. But within a pre-Christian Western context, in which the *natural* order is subordinate to no other, ascetical practices present a fairly direct problem. We associate these practices historically with the attempt to live a "higher" life, the sort of life that would spontaneously have been called "philosophical," whether we think in this case of the general disregard of bodily pleasures as an ingredient in what Plato called the "practice of death,"¹ or the extreme acts of deliberate self-denial in the Stoic pursuit of *autarchy*.² But if such acts of renunciation represent indeed a *higher* life, then what does this imply for the so-called "lower"? If the transcending – not to say, violent suppression – of the passions and apparently natural desires is taken to represent a kind of human excellence, then it would seem to follow that the body and all that belongs to it cannot be said to belong truly to our nature. In this respect, the practice of asceticism would seem to stand as a straightforward expression of contempt for the world.

In the following essay, I would like to sketch out in broad strokes an alternative interpretation of the "philosophical" life, inspired by a reflection on the person of Socrates as he appears in Plato's dialogues (in particular, the *Republic*). Rather than investigate the question of the historical accuracy of Plato's presentation, or consider the nature and kinds of ascetical practices associated with the life of the philosopher in Socrates' and Plato's time, I am pursuing here a more directly theoretical aim. I will propose, on the basis of principles articulated in Plato's dialogues, how the ascetic life can be quite the contrary of a "flight from the world" or an expression of hatred for the body – even outside of the context of, say, the Christian call to personal consecration. Without claiming to offer a full textual justification of this particular reading of Plato's view of Socrates' philosophical life, I hope at least to present a coherent and intrinsically compelling account of how the ascetic renunciation of pleasures and other bodily goods can in fact be, contrary to immediate appearances, an affirmation of their goodness and desirability.

At the start of Book IV of the *Republic*, Adeimantus interrupts Socrates' presentation of the life of the philosophers-in-training with a

concern that brings us directly to our question. He worries that Socrates is denying this class of happiness from

those to whom the city in truth belongs but who enjoy nothing good from the city as do others, who possess lands, and build fine big houses, and possess all the accessories that go along with these things, and make private sacrifices to gods, and entertain foreigners, and, of course, also acquire what you were just talking about, gold and silver and all that's conventionally held to belong to men who are going to be blessed.³

It is significant that he specifically asks *Socrates* for a defense of this life, for an “apology” (9. ∴ Φ⇒< . . . □B≅8≅(ZΦ,4, 419a1-2), because it is well-known that Socrates generally believes in it. That Socrates is in some basic sense an “ascetic” is hardly a controversial claim. Though it is true that he was married (twice) and had children, Socrates’ general indifference to the sorts of things one would normally identify as goods that promote the fullness of human life is notorious. Alcibiades (with evident frustration) describes in the *Symposium* Socrates’ complete lack of concern for the pleasures of sex and the embrace of physical beauty and his disregard for honors of any sort.⁴ Socrates’ lack of money is perhaps the most evident sign of his detachment from material goods; in the *Apology*, he points directly to the universally acknowledged fact of his poverty as proof that he is not a sophist, i.e., that he does not get paid for doing what he does.⁵ Indeed, the fundamental motive he indicates at his trial for his practice of philosophy is *obedience* – specifically, obedience to the god.⁶ We could see in this the most radical dimension of Socrates’ asceticism, insofar as it implies that he has consented to allow the fundamental order of his life to be determined in some respect by something outside of himself.⁷ In this sense, obedience would mean not just the giving up of a bodily good, but a giving up of one’s life in a much more comprehensive sense: it represents the surrender, not merely of something one possesses, but of that by which one possesses whatever one possesses – namely, of one’s “will” or what one would call one’s self. This implication of obedience becomes quite concrete when Socrates ends up, in an almost absurd fashion, being led by his uncompromising allegiance to the god to suffer an execution that the city of Athens seemed at least *somewhat* reluctant to impose. Nietzsche looked upon this event as the beginning of Western nihilism because of what he saw as its implicit condemnation of the goodness of life, and it is not difficult to see why he should interpret it thus.⁸

But I wish to suggest that Socrates’ death carries, as it were, a different message. For Plato, ethical questions are naturally bound up with metaphysical questions; judgments regarding the proper order of life

depend on judgments regarding the order of being.⁹ When he investigates the meaning of eros in the *Phaedrus*, for example, he insists that one must first inquire into “the truth of the nature of the soul,”¹⁰ and that this inquiry in turn makes sense itself only in relation to that from which the soul arises and to which it returns, namely, the “really real reality” ($\cong \Leftrightarrow \Phi \forall \angle < \Theta \text{TH} \cong \Rightarrow \Phi \forall$).¹¹ Likewise, when Socrates seeks to justify the strange activities of the philosopher in the *Phaedo*, and when he wishes to lay out the particular formation required for the practice of true philosophy in the *Republic*, he begins by discussing the nature of reality.¹² Arguably, what lies behind Socrates’ notorious identification of knowledge and virtue, which Plato defends in the dialogues from a variety of perspectives,¹³ is the conviction that good praxis is the proper response to “what really is,” or in other words, the practical correlate of the theoretical grasp of the real. If we are to understand Plato’s view of Socrates’ praxis, his asceticism, we do best by asking after the nature of reality in Platonic philosophy. Such an inquiry cannot, of course, be adequately carried out within the limitations of the present essay, but we may at least attend to what one scholar calls the “center of gravity” in Plato’s thought,¹⁴ to the extent that it bears specifically on the motivation for renunciation. That center of gravity is the idea of the good.

Plato introduces the idea of the good at the climax of the *Republic* during a discussion in which Socrates is called on to elaborate his proposal that governance be given to philosophers. Among the various claims Socrates makes about the good, one concerns us most directly here. He affirms that the good is the ultimate object of desire and in this respect provides the final reason for anything anyone ever does.¹⁵ To desire something or to take action with some end in view is to perceive that thing or end to be good (i.e., desirable). In other words, it is to desire that thing or end specifically with respect to its goodness. But, according to the usual Platonic logic, if there are many things that are good (which is evidently the case), then goodness itself must be a principle that is distinct from those many things.¹⁶ Indeed, goodness cannot be one thing among the many things that are good, but necessarily transcends them by *being* the goodness in which they all share as goods. It would not be true, that is, to say that the Idea of the Good is simply “different” from the various things that are good, in the sense of being merely relatively opposed to them within the same order. Instead, goodness itself has to transcend altogether not only their particularity, but also their very mode of existence.¹⁷ In a word, in order for there to be many good things, there has to be absolute Goodness, goodness that is not relative to anything at all other than itself. Transcendence, thus, presents the ontological condition for widespread immanence;¹⁸ if Plato seems to ascribe an ultimate transcendence to the good by referring to it, famously, as “beyond being in dignity and power,” and “more beautiful than knowledge and truth as their cause,”¹⁹ it is not to

remove goodness from the world, but rather because such transcendence is precisely the precondition for its omnipresence: goodness is superior to these things, in other words, because they are all good.²⁰

Now, it follows from this understanding that, whenever we pursue things we take to be good, we are in reality pursuing much more than we realize. These things are *good*, but they are not *goodness itself*, even though it has to be the case that, whatever goodness they may possess, they possess in fact only in virtue of that absolute goodness. But this means that if we take a thing as good merely *qua* this particular thing, we are setting our desire on something that is not in truth adequate to that desire. Goodness itself, as Plato affirms in the *Symposium*, is ultimately the cause of every desire; but we generally set our desire on good *things*.²¹ It is this basic fact that, for Plato, gives rise to the dramatic character of human existence. It is the reason that every attraction implicitly raises the question of the meaning of life more generally.²² In a number of dialogues, Plato categorizes human beings according to the basic nature of our love, i.e., that which we most desire, and thus that object around which we most clearly order our lives: there is the love of gain (wealth, money, etc.), the love of prestige or honor, and the love of wisdom.²³ These various objects toward which we might direct our love clearly do not “reflect” goodness to equal degrees: knowledge, for example, does not suffer decay like physical acquisitions necessarily do, and in this sense knowledge more obviously resembles the transcendence of the good.²⁴ Furthermore, knowledge more directly reflects the universality of goodness, since infinitely many people can possess the same idea at the same time, while the consumption of physical things is almost always “private” in a basic respect. And so forth: goods, for Plato, can be ranked in a certain hierarchy.²⁵

As Socrates presents them in the *Republic*, philosophers represent those who prefer wisdom to the goods of the body and the pleasures of a good reputation. They “strive as intensely as possible for every kind of truth,” he says, and for that very reason are willing to “forsake those pleasures that come through the body.”²⁶ Moreover, those who pursue philosophic wisdom will generally have to face slander from the most powerful in the city for what cannot fail to appear generally as, at best, an altogether useless endeavor.²⁷ In relation to our topic, we are led to ask whether these sacrifices imply a condemnation of the goods renounced. In other words, if philosophers “forsake those pleasures that come through the body,” does this imply that those pleasures are bad? We will have more to say on this further on, but we are already in a position to make an initial observation. The forsaking of the love of physical pleasures would be an expression of contempt for the body if and only if such love were the highest love possible. A person who had no other love but this, could understand the renunciation of these goods only as a kind of hatred (i.e., in

wholly *negative* terms). But, according to Plato's view of the order of desire, such a person would be identifying goodness itself with a very particular kind of good, and thus, as he puts it, mistaking the likeness for the reality.²⁸ By contrast, those who pursue honor, for example, and therefore avoid certain kinds of pleasure, are not so much rejecting the physical goods as they are affirming a higher good, with which those goods happen to be incompatible in a certain respect, determined by the particularity of the circumstances. Similarly, it is only because there is a kind of good that surpasses even honor that there can be reason to suffer ignominy. What might therefore look like a rejection can be the fruit of a higher affirmation. In this respect, rather than being the adoption of a negative stance toward the particular goods, the surrender can be a positive determination of one's relation to them on the basis of a more complete sense of goodness. We find a striking illustration of this positive determination in the *Phaedrus*: it is *precisely* the beauty reflected in the boy's face that leads the lover to forego the "pleasures of sex" – in other words, what inspires the surrender is the very same thing that inspires the desire.²⁹ We will return to this issue at the end.

The idea of asceticism being the preference of a higher good to a lower is not particularly new or insightful. But there are two inferences to draw from the way Plato presents the idea that are perhaps not so obvious. In the first place, we must attend to the implications of Plato's metaphysics, specifically, of his affirmation of a unifying reality in which the "many" severally participate. We typically think of the possible objects of desire simply "horizontally," i.e., in their particularity as relatively opposed individual "things." In this case, we *exchange* one desire for another in our choices; our 'yes' to one is simply a 'no' to another. But here we see the significance of the way Plato characterizes the nature of goodness and the intelligibility it brings to desires. If it is the case that there can be a variety of goods only by virtue of a single transcendent principle of goodness,³⁰ then, though it remains true that the differences in good *things* are real, the *goodness* in them cannot finally be said to be unrelated. It follows that there is some sense in which the possession of a higher good satisfies the love of the lower – not, of course, in relation to its particularity, but nevertheless in relation to the goodness of the good sought *in* that particular thing. For example, while the experience of honor will not fill my stomach, if I genuinely *love* honor, I will not have the desire that would have been necessarily directed to the pursuit of any sort of food at any time indiscriminately; the desire would naturally fall away and not need to be suppressed from the outside, as it were. And we have all had the experience of a meal being especially satisfying – even at the "physical" level – for having been eaten in the company of friends in the proper festive spirit and form. One of the implications of the unity of goodness in all goods sought, then, is that the

sort of renunciation Socrates recommends is not, in the first place, the imposition of external control or the suppression of desire, but rather its *expansion*, the informing of desire from within. It is not an accident that Plato presents the philosophical life in specifically erotic terms, as the intensification of the very love that Plato calls a “tyrant” in the context of disorder:³¹ this is not simply metaphor.

The second inference concerns what we might call the “martyric” character of desire (ζῆλος, ἰσχυρία, ἰσχυρία, ἰσχυρία: “witness”). The difference in loves depends on the different natures of their objects. As we saw above, the “forsaking of those pleasures that come through the body” would be senseless unless it were the result of embracing a good that transcends this particular good in some respect. This implies that a life that is devoted, say, to honor, will bear witness to (i.e., will publicly manifest) the *reality* of the good of honor – and we can see that such a life will make that reality all the more manifest, the more that devotion requires the forsaking of certain physical goods. There is, we might say, a “political” dimension to all desire, though it remains true that this dimension is a result of the metaphysical dimension, and therefore cannot be substituted for it. (Incidentally, there would be some warrant, on several different levels at once, for saying that the *Republic* or the *Symposium* itself is ultimately the political expression of desire.) We can push this reflection even further. If, hypothetically, the love of gain (i.e., the acquisition of physical goods) were the only extant love – if, in other words, one *refused* in principle to renounce any physical goods – then the sole type of goodness that would be generally visible is that which served the satisfaction of a specifically physical desire. The horizon of such a love, in other words, would allow goods of any sort to appear as good *only insofar as they come under this particular form*. As Thrasymachus makes clear, for example, justice would be able to show its goodness only insofar as it showed how it could benefit the project of acquisition. It is for this reason that he is willing to switch his “allegiance” in argument so quickly from justice to injustice, when the latter is better able to show its capacity to serve pleonexia.³² In the light of the love of gain, only bodily goods can be seen. Along these same lines, a love of honor sets into relief the honorable dimension of all goods in the world, and a love of wisdom makes manifest their truth. From a Platonic perspective, a person’s life, and the order of desire it expresses, is itself a kind of argument about the nature of reality.

So far, we have been treating the love of wisdom as though it were the highest form of love. But the argument to this point has been premised on the notion that goodness itself is distinct from the many things that are good, and therefore a pull toward transcendence results from the disjunction between *what* we desire and the different things *in which* we desire it. So the question naturally arises: is knowledge not, for all its transcendence in Plato’s philosophy, a good *thing* rather than

goodness itself, and so is it not, too, ultimately inadequate to our desire? The answer is a decided “yes,” and the implications of this answer are surprisingly vast – there are many more than we can address here. Though Plato claims consistently in the various dialogues that knowledge is indeed the *highest good*, it remains the case that, as we saw above, goodness must transcend any and all of the things that are good.³³ As we also saw, this implies that goodness “itself by itself” is absolute in the sense that it is not good simply relative to anything else. But the absoluteness of the Good presents us with a new problem. We can possess money, we can possess honor, and we can possess knowledge; but in what sense is it possible to speak of possessing something that is not a “thing” – some “thing”, in other words, that lies “beyond being,” “beyond truth,” and “beyond knowledge”?

To understand what this could mean, it is helpful, I think, to look at the person of Socrates himself, who reveals that the best way to “possess” the good lies in a kind of “non-possession” of all other things; it lies in the unconditional preference for goodness above everything else. There are a number of aspects about the enigmatic character of Socrates and the nature of his “asceticism” that come to light once we consider them from this vantage point. As we saw at the outset, Socrates brings his poverty before the jury as evidence that the love of gain cannot be said to be the justification for how he lives. The “character study” of Socrates that the drunken Alcibiades presents at the end of the *Symposium* contains one anecdote after another bearing witness to the happy willingness with which Socrates undergoes physical deprivation as well as to his utter indifference to the lure of prestige. Such a willingness would not be possible – indeed, in Platonic terms it would be an outright contradiction – if there were nothing genuinely good in all this.³⁴ Moreover, though Socrates will always insist on his desire to know, he of course always *also* insists that he *does not* know. In other words, what we call “Socratic ignorance” is in fact a kind of “non-possession” even of knowledge.³⁵ The only thing Socrates ever claims to be an *expert* on is ἡ ἐρώτις, “erotics.”³⁶ And this is quite significant: *eros* is not only compatible with “non-possession,” but in fact *requires* it. By possessing no particular thing, we might say, Socrates possesses nothing but the good itself. Fittingly, it is precisely the universality, or the supra-individual character, of the good that compels the philosopher to relinquish a “possession” of the vision of the forms and return to the cave.³⁷

The most dramatic expression of Socrates’ devotion to the good is no doubt his trial and execution. At this moment, we see not only that goodness is desirable, but that it is *absolutely* desirable. There is, as for example Heidegger has shown, something absolute about death; we could say that it represents the letting go of all things all at once.³⁸ When Socrates demonstrates a willingness even to die “for goodness’ sake,” he

makes unmistakably clear that what he prefers to the Good is *absolutely nothing*. It is necessary to remind ourselves that this acceptance of death is not a sacrifice made with a view to a future reward. Such an interpretation would temporalize and therefore deny the genuine transcendence of goodness, reducing it to one particular good *thing* in contrast to other things. Rather, as a careful reading of the *Apology* (and, for that matter, also the *Phaedo* and the *Crito*) will reveal, Socrates receives his sentence as he does specifically because it is the *best* thing to do in the situation; in other words, it is the way to adhere unconditionally to the Good – the way to “possess” the absoluteness of goodness, in these particular circumstances:

This is the truth of the matter, gentlemen of the jury: wherever a man has taken a position that he believes to be best, or has been placed by his commander, there he must I think remain and face danger, without a thought for death or anything else, rather than disgrace. It would have been a dreadful way to behave, gentlemen of the jury, if, at Potidaea, Amphipolis and Delium, I had, at the risk of death, like anyone else, remained at my post where those you had elected to command had ordered me, and then, when the god ordered me, as I thought and believed, to live the life of a philosopher, to examine myself and others, I had abandoned my post for fear of death or anything else.³⁹

And as the unreserved embrace of what is best, it is, for Socrates, the realization of desire.

There is something disconcerting about Socrates' behavior in the *Apology*, and the astonishment does not wane as one's familiarity with the dialogue grows. Nevertheless, the stand he takes, the post he says was assigned to him by the god, follows a particular logic. His willingness to accept death is a recapitulation of the consistent unconditional desire for the Good that Plato presents more generally in the character of Socrates. I hope it has become evident, at least in principle, how “Socratic asceticism,” which represents for Plato the essence of the philosophical life, may be read as a wholly positive affair in that it embodies the most complete affirmation of goodness possible, at least as Socrates sees it.

I would like now, in closing, to consider the “martyric” dimension of this particular love. In the *Republic*, Plato affirms that one invariably becomes like what one loves.⁴⁰ In the same dialogue, he imagines the Idea of the Good as the sun, which, though everywhere, is extremely difficult to catch direct sight of.⁴¹ On the other hand, in the *Sophist*, Plato remarks that the philosopher is essentially “hard to see” because of his overpowering brightness;⁴² in the *Symposium*, he playfully portrays Socrates as elusive, disappearing from view at one moment, and turning

up unexpectedly at the next.⁴³ But in all of the dialogues, Socrates' presence seems to bring out the truth of things, even if that means first of all provoking those around him to reveal their ignorance, i.e., to surrender their "possession" of knowledge.⁴⁴ Some – certainly not all – have their *eros* stirred by him, and find themselves becoming wholly taken by a passion for philosophy.⁴⁵ An absolute fidelity, to the extent that it is possible, would make one "invisible" in the sense that every aspect of one's life would be a sign in which that for which one lives would become immediately visible; one's entire existence would be transparent. And in this respect, we could read the philosophical life in its Platonic or Socratic ideal form as the "presencing" of the transcendent good, as the making immanently visible of that which all human beings desire and that by which all good things are good.

Let us conclude with the problem we started with. Radical asceticism, the renunciation of worldly goods, seems to contain, at least implicitly, a certain contempt for the world. This impression could very well be true if what motivates that renunciation is the desire for some good "after" this world, some world juxtaposed to this one. But Socratic asceticism, at least as we have interpreted it here, is the direct embrace of goodness itself. The $B, \Delta \forall (T/Z)$ – the *conversio* or "turning around" – to face the Good, which Plato describes in the *Republic*,⁴⁶ cannot be a "turning away" from the many goods that constitute a human life, because that would imply the good was itself simply one good thing among many. But the good is the ultimate reason *why* things are desirable, and so the immediate and unconditional "embrace" of goodness, becomes a particular way of relating, not to one "thing," but to all things, in a particular way, namely, in relation to their being good. In this respect, Socratic asceticism is not a flight *from* the world, but a flight *into* the world: the philosopher, after all, insofar as he loves goodness even more than knowledge itself, must in the end return to the cave. And here we come upon a paradox: if the willingness to renounce all things is an expression of an unconditional love of goodness; if that love is "martyric," and thus bears witness to the reality of goodness itself; and if goodness itself is that by which all good things are good; then giving things up can be the best way of *showing* that they are good. It is, in a sense, a celebration of them; it sets into relief their intrinsic worth, their "absolute" value, the fact that their goodness stands in some sense independent of one's own enjoyment of it. Kierkegaard once said that, when speaking about truth, one must gesticulate with one's entire existence. The drama of Socrates' "ascetic" life can be interpreted as an existential argument that displays the truth of the goodness at the heart of things.

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NOTES

¹ *Phaedo*, 64a.

² The Stoic aim, of course, was to live in “agreement with nature” ($\Theta \in \textcircled{\text{R}} : \cong 8 \cong (\cong \Lambda : \Xi < \text{TH } \Theta \pm \text{N} \beta \Phi, 4)$); the evident severity of some of their exercises was due to a sharp division between what they referred to as animal impulse ($\textcircled{\text{R}} \Delta : \text{Z}$) and reason, the latter having a cosmic-divine, and thus supra-individual, foundation. See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, VII. pp. 86-88.

³ *Republic*, 419a. Quotations from the *Republic* in English are taken from the Bloom translation.

⁴ *Symposium*, 216d-e, 219c, 220e.

⁵ “I . . . have a convincing witness that I speak the truth, my poverty,” *Apology*, 31c.

⁶ *Apology*, 23b, 28e-29a, 29d, etc.

⁷ Curtis Johnson explains how obedience to what is best fulfills reason, and in this sense is not blind, but at the same time remains a kind of subordination to what lies above oneself, and in this sense is not autonomy in the conventional Kantian interpretation: see *Socrates and the Immoralists* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), pp. 37-53.

⁸ See “Das Problem des Sokrates,” in *Götzen-Dämmerung*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montineri (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), pp. 67-73.

⁹ See David Lachterman, “What is ‘the Good’ of Plato’s *Republic*?” *The St. John’s Review*, 39 (1989-1990): 145.

¹⁰ *Phaedrus*, 245c.

¹¹ *Phaedrus*, 247c.

¹² See *Phaedo*, 65c-d; *Rep.*, 475b-476d.

¹³ Not only does the thesis come up explicitly (e.g., *Protagoras*, 349b-358e; *Meno*, 88e-89a), but it is also defended implicitly in the various arguments concerning the necessity of knowledge or philosophy to “live well” ($(\Rightarrow \text{B} \Delta \zeta \Theta \Theta, 4 <)$), e.g., in the *Euthydemus* and the *Euthyphro*.

¹⁴ Rafael Ferber, *Platos Idee des Guten* (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag Richarz, 2nd ed., 1989), p. 49.

¹⁵ *Rep.*, 505e. Cf., *Gorgias*, 468b: “It’s for the sake of what’s good that those who do all these things [i.e., walking, standing still, etc.] do them.” See also *Philebus*, 20d.

¹⁶ “For we are, presumably, accustomed to set down some one particular form for each of the particular ‘manys’ to which we apply the same name,” *Rep.*, 596a.

¹⁷ C.J. de Vogel, *Rethinking Plato and Platonism* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), p. 162.

¹⁸ An excellent argument for this claim can be found in Eric Perl, “The Presence of the Paradigm: Immanence and Transcendence in Plato’s Theory of Forms,” *The Review of Metaphysics*, 53 (1999): 339-62.

¹⁹ *Rep.*, 508e-509b. The precise meaning of these claims has, of course, been disputed through the centuries. We do not intend to offer a particular interpretation here, but only to suggest that whatever interpretation

one gives ought to take into account the “immanence” goodness that one finds everywhere in the world precisely as a *result* of its transcendence – just as the sun’s distinction from the earth is what allows its light and warmth to be present everywhere within it.

²⁰ Of course, it is not clear simply from this why goodness should be the supreme principle of all things, rather than being or truth (insofar as one could equally say that goodness and being are both true; truth and goodness both “exist” in some respect). A further argument would be required in order to justify this ordering, which Plato himself never explicitly gives. For a lengthier discussion of the sovereignty of goodness in metaphysics and epistemology, see Eric Perl, “The Living Image: Form and the Erotic Intellect in Plato,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 69 (1995): 191-204; D.C. Schindler, “Going Down: Founding Reason in the *Republic*,” *The Journal of Neoplatonic Studies*, 9 (2001-2003): 81-132. In the present context, we simply accept the claim as our “working hypothesis.” One could say we remain here on the “third segment” of the Divided Line.

²¹ *Symp.*, 206a. The ascent to absolute Beauty described in this dialogue is in essence the attempt to find an “object” adequate to the soul’s original desire.

²² Socrates points out in the *Republic*, Book I, that the discussion of what sorts of goods are worth pursuing is ultimately a question of the shape that one’s life as a whole ought to take: 344d-e; 352d. A similar claim is made in *Gorgias*, 500b-d.

²³ Cf., *Rep.*, 581c; *Phaedo*, 68c.

²⁴ Although Diotima says that we must continue to study because the knowledge in us continues to decay (*Symp.*, 208a), this is due not to the nature of knowledge, but to the nature of the human soul. In fact, the whole pursuit of good things, she explains, be they physical or intellectual, is an attempt to imitate the eternal character of the good itself.

²⁵ See *Phil.*, 65b-67b.

²⁶ *Rep.*, 485d.

²⁷ *Rep.*, 489d.

²⁸ *Rep.*, 476c-d.

²⁹ *Phaedrus*, 254b-c. Beauty, as described here, produces what we could call a willing non-willingness, that is, a kind of possession in renunciation.

³⁰ Similar to the way in which many beautiful things are such only by virtue of “the presence of, or the sharing in, or however you may describe its relationship to the Beautiful we mentioned, for I will not insist on the precise nature of the relationship, but that all beautiful things are beautiful by the Beautiful,” *Phaedo*, 100d-e.

³¹ Compare *Rep.*, 490a-b, and 573b.

³² See *Rep.*, 344c.

³³ Cf., *Phil.*, 20b-c: “It is a doctrine that once upon a time I heard in a dream – or perhaps I was awake – that I remember now, concerning pleasure and knowledge, that neither of the two is the good, but that there is some third thing which is different from and superior to both of them.” In the *Greater*

Hippias, Socrates affirms that we desire intelligence ultimately because of the good it brings (297b).

³⁴ The argument that knowledge both *de jure* and *de facto* holds power in one's soul, which Socrates makes in the *Protagoras*, means that one *cannot* in fact choose something except under the species of good – i.e., to choose something is the same as to judge that it is good (352b-355e). This is simply another way of putting the Platonic principle that one pursues goodness in all that one pursues.

³⁵ Sergio Benvenuto, in “‘Lo Specchio della Potenza’: Eros e Volontà di Potenza in Platone,” *Il Cannocchiale*, 2 (2002): 3-27, here, p. 24, suggests that Socrates' “inconclusiveness” in his philosophizing is a positive gesture that opens into the transcendent.

³⁶ *Symp.*, 177d-e. Cf., the similar or related claims in *Theages*, 128b, *Lysis*, 204c, and *Phaedrus*, 257a. In *Meno*, 86b-c, Socrates claims to have knowledge of the difference between knowledge and opinion – which is clearly also an expression of the wise ignorance, the positive non-possession of knowledge.

³⁷ *Rep.*, 519e-520e. See Timothy Mahoney, “Do Plato's philosopher-rulers sacrifice self-interest to justice?” *Phronesis*, 37 (1992): 265-82. Stefan Schenke proposes, as the most compelling reason for the return to the cave, an imitation of the self-diffusive character of goodness that Plato describes in the *Timaeus*. See “Der Logik des Rückstiegs,” *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 92 (1985): 316-34.

³⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §48.

³⁹ *Apology*, 28d-29a.

⁴⁰ *Rep.*, 500c.

⁴¹ *Rep.*, 505e, 506d-509b.

⁴² *Sophist*, 253e-254b.

⁴³ *Symp.*, 174e-175a; 213c.

⁴⁴ *Meno*, 80a-b; see also *Euthyphro* 14a-15e; *Theages* 130b-e.

⁴⁵ *Symp.*, 173a-c.

⁴⁶ *Rep.*, 518c-d.

THE ETHICAL IMAGINATION IN BACHELARD'S READING OF NIETZSCHE

Kuan-Min Huang

INTRODUCTION

What is an ethical imagination?¹ Is there a place for imagination in ethical action? The answer is not very evident. A Kantian attitude is a characteristic response. In distinguishing the cognitive or theoretical function from the practical usage of law, Kant denies the exercise of transcendental imagination in the law of freedom. The *raison d'être* of the imagination in the realm of pure theoretical reason is the mediation between the sensible intuition and the understanding. How the law of freedom is applied to actions in the world of the senses, Kant sees only in the understanding rather than in the imagination,² which engages the schema of sensibility. In considering solely the form, Kant calls the law of nature into use as “the type of the moral law [*Typus des Sittengesetzes*],” which, as an example in actual experience, renders possible the application of the law of practical reason to experience.³ The rigid usage of this type of moral law guarantees the “rationalism of judgments” against empiricism and the mysticism of practical reason in preserving the supersensuous character of intelligible nature. Apart from this apparent rejection of imagination in practical reason, we have another negative presentation in the aesthetic realm.

Kant describes the active play of the imagination in the faculty of judgment. The sense of the Beautiful (*das Schöne*) reveals only “a certain liberality in our mental mind” in which “the freedom is represented as in play rather than in that law-directed occupation.”⁴ The relation of the imagination to morality is closer in the judgment of the Sublime (*das Erhabene*), in which the imagination is “regarded as an instrument of Reason.” But the feeling in the Sublime is only negative, as Kant defines it – “a feeling that the imagination is depriving itself of its freedom, while it is purposively determined according to a different law from that of its empirical employment.”⁵ And as such an instrument of Reason, the reflective judgment of the Sublime “represents the object as subjectively purposive, even by the objective want of accordance [*die objektive Unangemessenheit*] between the Imagination in its greatest extension and the Reason.”⁶ As inspiring the moral feeling before the unattainable, absolutely good, the Sublime grants the imagination only its inability to present the absolute which surpasses sensibility. The imagination here serves as a sacrificed satisfaction or a satisfaction through sacrifice,⁷ that is, it is negative on the aesthetic side but positive on the intellectual side.

Intellectual beauty (the Sublime) invokes thus an intellectual satisfaction by reserving the authority of Reason over Sensitivity. Conversely, the Sublime “is only represented as a might in the mind [*eine Macht des Gemüts*] to overcome certain hindrances of the Sensibility by means of moral principles,”⁸ and thus it attains its interest. Even later, in section 59 of the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant grants “Beauty as the symbol of morality,” the judgment uses an analogy to convey the intelligible Good to the sensible intuition, the imagination which incarnates the play of freedom does not bestow material goodness upon the actor, but rather, by “judging the beautiful as harmonious with the conformity to the law of the Understanding,”⁹ it installs a formal universality. The source of this conformity is taken as a “common sense [*Gemeinsinn*],” but the way of the connection between the theoretical and the practical faculties remains “common yet unknown [*gemeinschaftliche und unbekante*].”¹⁰

The Kantian point of view is typical in that the imagination occupies a place in moral determination in, at most, a negative way. This is often viewed as formalism in ethics. It is formal insofar as the morally good is determined through the following of rules.

It is in just this respect that Gaston Bachelard also tries to elaborate the connection of the will and the imagination through poetic imagery. In the first place, Bachelard discards the representational view concealed in the schematizing function of the imagination. If the imagination is taken as mediation, it is no longer a substitute for the reality withdrawn from the present *hic et nunc*. What is mediated, rather, is the human subject and the world, so that the poetic image serves as the direct contact in which the incarnation takes place on two sides – the human being is transformed into the cosmic being, and the *cosmos* into the human (*anthropos*). In the second place, the contact is materialist in the sense that the four elements – fire, water, air, earth – are seen as the original material images fulfilling the immediate contact.

In commenting on the “ascensional psychology” of the Swiss psychoanalyst Robert Desoille, Bachelard deduces his own principle of “moral imagination.” Desoille offers a method which assimilates the “axis of a sublimation” to the life-line realized in the verticality of aerial imagination. Bachelard adds here his assumption: “Imaginary lines are the real life lines, the ones most difficult to break.” He gives a general formula: “Imagination and Will are two aspects of a single profound force. Anyone who can imagine can will. To the imagination that informs our will is coupled a will to imagine, a will to live what is imagined.”¹¹ This principle restores the transformative force of the imagination; more specifically, this is a “transformation from oneiric energy to moral energy.” Here we have the term “moral imagination” – “[T]his imagination that should provide us with the sequence of beautiful images for the dynamic schema that we call heroism.”¹² The following passage

implies a critique of Kantian ethics: “As far as ethics is concerned, example is causality. But examples furnished by nature go deeper than those provided by man. The exemplary cause can become a substantial cause when a human being imagines that he is in tune with the world’s forces.”¹³ Bachelard cannot content himself with the common moralists in assuming the moral life as the work of the mind (*l’œuvre de l’intelligence*). What Bachelard argues here is the opposition between the intelligence and the imagination, between Reason and Sensibility in Kantian terms. The heroic example answers to the Kantian *Type* (*Typus*) in a reverse way: nature precedes humanity, diametrically against the separation of moral the law from the law of nature. In fact, with Bachelard, not only does his metaphysical principle of imagination reveal the union of imagination and will, but the human order (morality or ethics) corresponds to the natural order, i.e. anthropology with cosmology.

Following this principle, Bachelard develops a reading of Nietzsche using the image of air and interpreting from this the “ascensional psyche.” This interpretation is not just a complementary one that offers a classification of metaphors used by Nietzsche. Bachelard sees no symbolism in Nietzsche, but rather a vivid moral imagination that incorporates the transmutation of values. Bachelard grasps well the structure of forces in the metaphysics of Nietzsche, but extends the force of images convoked by the will. Here we shall consider some traits.

METAPHYSICS OF IMAGINATION AND ETHICAL IMAGINATION

As we have stated above, Bachelard’s core idea is the ethical imagination or moral imagination under the image of the Air. We shall note two points here: the justification of the use of the aerial image and of the imagination connected with value.

A first important reason why Bachelard says that Nietzsche is not a poet of earth is that he is not a poet “of matter,” but a poet “of action.” Stone and rock symbolize the hardness or “soft earth disgusts him [Nietzsche],”¹⁴ so the earth itself is attached to subterranean action rather than to something that sustains itself. Secondly, Nietzsche refuses to approve of the European melancholy and of the maternity, often incarnated in the image of water. As for fire, Bachelard observes that “Nietzsche’s fire is a flash of lightning (*un trait de foudre*). It is therefore a protection of Anger, of a divine and joyous anger. Anger, a pure act”¹⁵ He emphasizes the characteristics of coldness and asserts that “Coldness and height are the homeland of fire.”¹⁶ The action of fire is provided by air, which rises always higher. So the dominant element in this poetic of action is air.

Bachelard urges a double act of surpassing: 1) one should reserve the place of natural elements which involve the material imagination and dynamic imagination in front of the visual image realized in the imagination of forms; 2) in the element of air, the dynamic imagination dominates the material imagination: Nietzsche is a typical exemplification. The basic traits that Bachelard sees in Nietzsche are that Nietzsche himself is “an aerial being” (*un aérien*) and the air is “the substance of our freedom, the substance of superhuman joy.”¹⁷ This matter is closer to action than to other matters, the air is a liberating form of matter: “Nietzschean air, then, is strange substance: it is substance with no substantial qualities. It can thus characterize being as equal to a philosophy of absolute becoming.”¹⁸ By liberating the material side, the air becomes a negating matter, a matter that brings about nothing. The first lesson of freedom suggested here is the becoming nothing of the matter, i.e., the becoming matter of nothingness. In fact, this becoming can surpass being. For Nietzsche himself, the will to power assumes freedom and absolute becoming. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche has the will to power supercede the will to truth, and calls power into valuation: “That is your entire will, ye wisest ones, as a Will to Power; and even when ye speak of good and evil, and of estimates of value.”¹⁹ Nietzsche continues his logic of becoming: “Your will and your valuations have ye put on the river of becoming; it betrayeth unto me an old Will to Power, what is believed by the people as good and evil.”²⁰ The demand to go beyond good and evil is a voice of becoming, of self-surpassing. The problem of valuation is to create values and to master them, and it presupposes self-mastery and self-surpassing. Life itself bursts out from this river of becoming, but as Nietzsche says, “[I]t is not the river that is your danger and the end of your good and evil, ye wisest ones: but that Will itself, the Will to Power – the unexhausted, procreating life-will [*Lebens-Wille*].”²¹ This life is “that which must ever surpass itself [*das, was sich immer selber überwinden muss*].”²² Thus the logic of becoming can be summarized on the ontological level as the following: the essence of life consists in the act of surpassing, symbolized in the concept of *Overman* (*Übermensch*, *Surhomme*); a being should be an over-being.

With the idea of moral imagination or ethical imagination, ontological sense is given to poems. Instead of reading a poem as “an abstract text, like a text on ethics [*un texte moral*] whose author feels obliged to use concrete images to make himself clear,” Bachelard offers a reading of the poem as “a direct, concrete poem that was initially formed by the material and dynamic imagination and that creates new ethical values [*valeurs morales nouvelles*] by virtue of enthusiasm for a new poetry.”²³ In this sense, Bachelard confirms that “the aestheticization of ethics [*l’esthétisation de la morale*] is not something superficial.” He goes on to call this “the most efficacious imagination,” “ethical imagination

[*l'imagination morale*].” Here we have not only a justification of the moral or ethical image, but a direct creation of ethical value. This creative function unites the logic of becoming and of self-surpassing – it is ontological: “[I]t is the imagination in this case that raises being to a higher level.”²⁴ What, then, is this “higher level of being,” if not the orientation made by the superhuman being? Bachelard engages that metaphysics of imagination which equalizes Being, Ethos and Image. He has no hesitation in using the term “an idealism of force [*un idéalisme de la force*],” quite unusual for describing Nietzsche. But this idealism must belong to the guiding line of the metaphysics of the imagination: this force indicates dynamic action in permanent transformation. Here is the “axiom of this idealism” according to Bachelard: “[T]he being who ascends or descends is the being through whom everything ascends or descends.”²⁵ Bachelard gives his own example immediately: “Weight does not weigh on the world but on our souls, our minds, our hearts – it weighs on man.” This is “idealistic” weight. But I understand further an ontological sense in this dynamic ascension and descent; the image of air lets all other things change by rendering itself surpassed. Nietzschean force makes possible the passage up or down. However, this is nothing merely physical, but metaphysical. Using the image of air, Bachelard makes another comment: “[T]o one who triumphs over weight, to the superman, will be given a super-nature – that very nature that is imagined by an aerial psyche.” The effect of “super” or “over” transplants the physical immediately into the meta-physical. Superman and super-nature cannot occur without super-being. In this sense, nature and ethics are no longer two separated domains; they are unified in this ethical image. By discovering these Nietzschean images, Bachelard affirms that “[t]hey provide an experimental physics of the moral life. They carefully show us the mutations of images that must induce ethical mutations.”²⁶ The metaphysics of the imagination reveals an immediacy of image in the totality of being, including ethical being and natural being. But being is submitted to the becoming of being, to the super-being, to the freedom of being. Thus the ethical imagination calls into play at the same time the transformation of values. Bachelard is consistent with Nietzsche: a being should be a free being; to be is to be free.

AERIAL IMAGES IN NIETZSCHE

Now let us look at certain images through the interpretation of Bachelard.

(1) A Triad: Cold, Silence, Height

A first group is an imaginary triad of air: Cold-Silence-Height. Bachelard observes a substantiality of air in fresh odors. These fresh odors call for

the youth and newness.²⁷ Freshness makes the connection between the newness and the odor. For Bachelard, the metaphor of fire in Nietzsche is a cold fire. Only the freshness is akin to Nietzsche: “[T]his freshness is the true tonic quality of air, the one that makes breathing a joy, the one that dynamizes motionless air.”²⁸ It also corresponds to “the cold of the heights and glaciers and uncontrollable winds.”²⁹ On the View from the “Mount of Olives,” where silence and the cold winter cover the profound depth of Zarathustra on the high hill, Bachelard captures the Nietzschean solitude which abandons the crowd and market ethics, and he cites this key sentence of Zarathustra’s hymn – “Oh, how this silence takes a deep clean breath!”³⁰ We also have the effect of freshness, which brings new radically new values together with solitude. It is on this mountain peak that we find the Nietzschean air with this triple correspondence in Cold-Silence-Height. The final image of height suggests a sense of orientation which incorporates both movement and evaluation. This orientation marks the verticality of the whole dynamics.

(2) A Dialectics of Weighing and Flying

For Bachelard, the sense of orientation along the vertical axis unifies various images: flight and elevation, and, conversely, weight and gravity. The dynamic imagination animates a dialectics of lightness (*légèreté*) and heaviness (*lourdeur*). Flying is an act against heaviness, it will “overcome weight.”³¹ Bachelard meditates on the passage from “The Three Evil Things” in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: “Measurable by him who hath time, weighable by a good weigher [*wägbar für einen guten Wäger*], attainable by strong pinions, divivable by divine nut-crackers: thus did my dream find the world: -- My dream, a bold sailor, half-ship, half-hurricane, silent as the butterfly, impatient as the falcon: how had it the patience and leisure today for world-weighing!”³² Bachelard concludes that “the weigher of the world suddenly and immediately has winged lightness.”³³ But the qualities of “suddenly” and “immediately” come from the imagination. To weigh the world necessitates first flying over the earth. In the context of Nietzsche, Bachelard writes: “A heavy weigher is a contradiction in terms for Nietzsche. To evaluate superhuman powers, it is necessary to be aerial, light, and capable of ascending.”³⁴ To weigh means also to evaluate. Bachelard plays with the French words – *penser* (to think) and *peser* (to weigh);³⁵ one cannot think without evaluating the weight of such and such propositions or arguments; similarly, the image itself calls into play poetry and thinking.

For Nietzsche, to think does not exempt one from flight. If one continues to stay on earth, there is the danger of losing oneself in the crowd. It is the flight that brings one out of the earth, the crowd, the slave ethics. The spirit of gravity symbolizes the decline of ethics, and so

Nietzsche calls for a series of acts of transcendence: standing, walking, running, climbing, dancing and, finally, flying. Lightness is necessary for flight; before turning into the Overman, one must become a bird, which abandons the heaviness of good and evil.

By linking the flight of the bird with the peak of the highest mountain, Bachelard contrasts the vertical life with the horizontal life. In the vertical hierarchy, one finds the following sequence of distinct elements: water, earth, fire, air.³⁶ He observes a strange image of “fishing from the heights” in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (‘The Honey Sacrifice’): “From high mountains cast down thy glittering scorn-laughter! Allure for me with thy glittering the finest human fish;”³⁷ the fisherman Zarathustra fishes for men to ascend the high mountains. Along the vertical axis, the movement is ascension. The price is getting high. The home is the sky instead of the earth; it is a home for birds. But still the central image of aerial motion is the bird; the “alpha and omega” for Nietzsche designate the spirit. Flying into the sky is not just a conquest of the earth, a leaving of the earth. It is remarkable that “Nietzschean flight is characterized by impetuosity and aggressiveness,” and “it seems that the eagle claws the sky.”³⁸ In flight, one recognizes “a pure offensive imagination” against the sky. With this aggressive imagination, we can understand the image of the arrow used by Nietzsche to signify “a wild wisdom,” a revelation of the theatre of becoming such as the “play of the world”³⁹ in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In this eternal becoming, no value is fixed, and the old tables with moral inscriptions are changed into new ones. At least one thing is provided by the new table: “Man is something that must be surpassed.”⁴⁰ In the same way, ethical truth evolves along with the logic of becoming; with the image of the flying arrow, good and the evil are surpassed, and even the man who becomes the bird-arrow shall surpass himself. The evolution of ethical truth means a renewal of value. In short, it is a gushing forth of being (*un jet de l'être*),⁴¹ Bachelard remarks on the emergence of the world by bringing together the images of the dawn, the rising sun and the morning being (*l'être matinal*). This ontological emergence has ethical relevance. The sensation in the face of the rising sun is “the inner sensation of will, the feeling of decision.” It delivers “the eternal return of power,” which carries an irrevocable decision with the renewing act. The act of decision renews the world. Bachelard gives a lesson of Nietzschean “sympathy with the cosmic powers of return [*accord avec les forces de retour cosmiques*].”⁴² He rejects the interpretation of the eternal return as a circle made by a mill that endlessly turns and grinds the same grain, and accepts, on the contrary, the rediscovery of the new world and of new being. Flying like an arrow or a bird is an expression which involves a set of images rich in ethical affirmation. This arrow means that “[o]ur being is what projects the world anew.” The pro-ject is of the will to power. We can see here in Bachelard

and Nietzsche that the surpassing of metaphysics presupposes a metaphysics of surpassing, at least of surpassing imagination. In the equating of cosmic becoming and the transmutation of ethical values, Bachelard discovers a direct link through the aerial image.

(3) The Tree

In the image of the tree, there are two basic characteristics to notice: the conquest of the abyss and its verticality. The abyss – the bottom and the depth – are typical images for Nietzsche. On the contrary, what he advocates are the summit, the peak and the height. Bachelard proclaims that “Nietzscheanism is conquered vertigo. Nietzsche comes near the abyss to find dynamic images of ascent.”⁴³ The pine introduces two things: 1) it is vertical, “upright, braced, standing straight [*droit, dressé, debout*]”; 2) it symbolizes the forces of projection and of conquest. Bachelard uses a contrast of strong images: “Near the abyss, the plight of human beings is to fall. Near the abyss, the superman’s destiny is to spring up, as a fir tree does, toward the blue sky.”⁴⁴ The opposition of man and superman, and even that of evil and good, is expressed in a dynamism: to fall or to spring up. But the pine has showed itself to be a straight image that conquers the abyss. Bachelard cites also a passage from ‘The Welcome’ in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: “Whoever grows up high like you, O Zarathustra, I compare to the pine: long, silent, hard, alone, of the best and most resilient wood, magnificent...”⁴⁵ For Nietzsche, it belongs to a drama of the higher man who serves as a bridge to reach the height of the superman. The irony of Nietzsche’s view is that a simple tree can refresh an entire landscape; this is a metaphor for the highest and strongest will that surpasses that of the higher man. The refreshing force of the pine can be assimilated to the cosmic force; in refreshing the entire landscape, the tree makes the world anew. We read in Bachelard that “Nietzsche’s fir tree, on the edge of the abyss, is a cosmic vector.”⁴⁶ The will of the tree is thus a will of the world; by conquering the abyss, the pine, in its straightness and uprightness – in short, its rightness – animates dynamically the will to change, the will to renew the world.

In this account of the vertical life of the tree, Bachelard employs a double dynamism: the Nietzschean pine is more dynamic than material; the pine tree leads a dynamic life along with having a vertical dimension. This dynamic, ascending life animates the ethical will. Nietzsche sees in the pine a natural link between sky and earth, but also an ethical link between good and evil. But if one considers the image of the straight tree, is this an imagination about the form or is this a dynamic imagination? In the imaginative move from uprightness to ethical rightness, there is a formal procedure. In the analogy between the straight form of the tree and the righteous life of human beings, there is a metonymy of function. But

all of these observations are only static according to Bachelard; it is not sufficient to see, in the form of the tree, the righteous way of life. The will of cosmic ascending animates human action through the image of the tree. Ethical values are not the product of meditation. So when Bachelard says “Nietzschean images...carefully show us the mutations of images that must induce ethical mutations,”⁴⁷ he praises the heroism of moral action. “To live the Nietzschean philosophy is to experience a transformation of energy.”⁴⁸ This formula alludes to an ethical universe – “a cosmos that coincides with heroic life.” In a chapter entitled “The Aerial Tree” of *L'air et les songes* Bachelard mentions the Nietzschean image of the cosmological or cosmogonic tree. In a phrase reminiscent of Nietzsche, he writes, “we dream of a tree that constantly renews its cosmogonic power.”⁴⁹ The vital impulse is a vegetative will to power; it commands the whole universe. The terminological influence of Nietzsche on Bachelard is so evident that, in contemplating on the vegetative world, Bachelard introduces a (poetic) animism. The dynamic imagination described in the chapter on the aerial tree is exemplified in the poet who urges “an enthusiastic participation in the vegetative world.” Heroic enthusiasm penetrates the entire universe under the heading of the Nietzschean Becoming.

CONCLUSION

The commentary style of Bachelard reproduces the set of images dispersed in the half poetic/half philosophical text of Nietzsche. As a philosopher, I always take the prose of Nietzsche as inaccessible. His style is alien to the argumentative form of philosophy; by his use of aphorism, Nietzsche often expresses his judgments in poetic language; one can well ask whether Nietzsche is a philosopher or a poet. Another approach will take another text as key – for example, Gilles Deleuze uses the *Genealogy of Morals* in his *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Through Bachelard, I can understand many of the metaphors that later philosophers such as Sarah Kofman⁵⁰ or Jean Grenier⁵¹ employ in the explication of the metaphorical labyrinth in Nietzsche’s work, especially in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The metaphors are viewed, or rather defined, as images. In Bachelard’s reading, the emergence of images in the mind of a subject such as a poet or a philosopher is not arbitrary. It is related to a valorization of the images, and conversely to an imagination of values. A natural image has its value, and an elementary image has a fundamental value.

One can find images in everyday life, but an elementary image implied in a poem is rooted in the depth of the human mind. One important factor to be noticed is that the imagination is not a psychic faculty which is confined to human representation. What Bachelard asserts even more is that this imaginary function is cosmic. The valorization of

the image assimilates, at the same time, the universe, ethical action and the imagination. Bachelard agrees with Nietzsche in interpreting the transmutation of values through the transformation of images. In the vertical imagination, Bachelard explores the dynamic elevation of flying and weighing the action of the general value of life – “Everything is value, life is valorization.”⁵² But in fact, this poetic axiom is not just applicable to Nietzsche, but also to Shelley and Balzac. The Nietzschean ideas of eternal return and moral transvaluation (*Umwertung*) have their common presentation in the dynamic imagination. It does not matter if there is a mediation through visual image or mental projection. The projection in the imagination belongs to the immediate fusion of psychic and cosmic subjectivity. With this fusion, we can see that poetic value consists in the image itself, and that ethical value can also be sought in the dynamic imagination.

The power of image carries with it a special temporality which accentuates the poetic instant. According to Bachelard, the instant is more fundamental than the duration, since the latter is constructed by the former. An instant is also immediate in the sense that a transient moment in a poetic image is a condensation of cosmic time. If in Kant the moral judgment has its value in the transcendental time that surpasses empirical time and exists only in Reason, then in Bachelard an ethical image would bring an action into the cosmic scale in its poetic instant. The end (*telos*) rising out of the confines of experience demands nevertheless an instant of realization. (The poetic image, though unreal, has a certain reality; in the realm of action; it is an instant that fulfills practical demands, so it is a practical reality.) The ethical imagination does not justify the condition of possibility of any moral judgment. It animates action in calling it into ethical reality.

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NOTES

¹ It is necessary to distinguish the ethical from the moral, especially in some philosophical texts. But the English translators of Bachelard, like Edith R. Farrell and C. Frederick Farrell, use alternatively “the moral imagination” and “the ethical imagination” to render the same French term in Bachelard, “l’imagination morale.” We are not here to discuss the meaning of the terminological difference between the two concepts. The option for “ethical imagination” comes from the idea that this term covers a more extensive realm than “moral imagination”. I am also conscious that, in the context of Nietzsche, morality is more discussed than ethics, and that the metaphysics of subjectivity deals more with the concept of morality than on that of ethics.

² Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, Hrsg. Karl Vorländer (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1985), p. 81 [p. 122 in 1788 original edition]. We refer also to the *Critique of Practical Reason*, tr. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), p. 71.

³ Kant, KpV, pp. 81-82 [122-123]; CPrR, p. 72.

⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilkraft*, Hrsg. Karl Vorländer (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1974), p. 115 [p. 116, in 1790 original edition]; *Kant's Critique of Judgment*, tr. with introduction and notes J. H. Bernard, (London: Macmillan, 1914), p. 136.

⁵ Kant, KU, 116 [117]; CJ, p. 136.

⁶ Kant, KU, 117 [118]; CJ, p. 137.

⁷ Kant, KU, 118 [120]; CJ, p. 139.

⁸ Kant, KU, 119 [121]; CJ, p. 140. I modify the translation of “fundamental propositions” to read “principles,” given the German term *Grundsätze*.

⁹ Kant, KU, 214 [259]; CJ, p. 252.

¹⁰ Kant, KU, 214 [259]; CJ, p. 251.

¹¹ Gaston Bachelard, *L'air et les songes* (Paris: José Corti, 1987) (1943), p.130; see also the English translation : *Air and Dreams*, tr. Edith R. Farrell and C. Frederick Farrell (Dallas: The Dallas Institute Publications, 1988), pp. 111-112. [abbr. AS, 130; AD, 111-112]

¹² AS, 130; AD, 112.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ AS, 147; AD, 128.

¹⁵ AS, 153; AD, 133.

¹⁶ AS, 155; AD, 135.

¹⁷ AS, 156; AD, 136.

¹⁸ AS, 156-157; AD, 136.

¹⁹ Nietzsche, “Von den Selbst-Ueberwindung,” *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, hrsg. Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter), Band 4, p. 146 (KSA, 4, 146). In the recent Cambridge series of English translations, the title is rendered as “Thus Spoke Zarathustra,” but the older translations are often titled “Thus Spake Zarathustra.” The citation refers to: Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, tr. Thomas Common (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), p. 134 (= Z, 134).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Nietzsche, KSA, 4, 147; *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, p. 135 (Z, 135).

²² KSA, 4, 148; Z, 136.

²³ Bachelard, AS, 165-166; AD, 144. The English translators render here the noun “la morale” and adjective “moral” as “ethics” and “ethical”; however, in the precedent chapter on Desoille, they keep the term “moral”.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ AS, 183; AD, 158.

²⁶ AS, 172; AD, 149.

²⁷ AS, 158; AD, 137.

²⁸ AS, 159; AD, 138.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Bachelard, AS, 161; AD, 139; also in Nietzsche, KSA, 4, 233; Z, 225.

³¹ AS, 163; AD, 141.

³² Nietzsche, KSA, 4, 235; Z, 228.

³³ Bachelard, AS, 163; AD, 141.

³⁴ AS, 163; AD, 142.

³⁵ Cf. Bachelard, *La philosophie du non* (Paris : PUF, 1988 [1940]), p.

26. This verbal resemblance happens only in French language. The original German text uses *wägbar* (weighable) and *Wäger* (weigher), which are not orthographically akin to *denken* (to think); the word *wägen* (to weigh) has only a metonymic sense of thinking, such as in the phrase “*die Worte und Handlungen wägen.*” We can take it as an example of the problem of translation.

³⁶ Bachelard, AS, 173; AD, 150.

³⁷ Nietzsche, KSA, 4, 298; Z, 291.

³⁸ Bachelard, AS, 177; AD, 153.

³⁹ “Old and New Tables” in Nietzsche, KSA, 4, 247-248; Z, 241: “Where all becoming seemed to me dancing of Gods, and wantoning of Gods, and the world unloosed und unbridled and fleeing back into itself: – As an eternal self-fleeing and re-seeking of one another of many Gods, as the blessed self-contradicting, re-communing, and refraternising with one another of many Gods.”

⁴⁰ Nietzsche, KSA, 4, 249; Z, 243.

⁴¹ Bachelard, AS, 179; AD, 155.

⁴² Bachelard, AS, 180; AD, 156.

⁴³ Bachelard, AS, 170; AD, 147.

⁴⁴ Bachelard, AS, 171; AD, 148: “Près de l’abîme, le destin humain est de tomber. Près de l’abîme, le destin du surhomme est de jaillir...”

⁴⁵ Bachelard, AS, 171; AD, 148 ; Nietzsche, KSA, 4, 348; Z, 343

⁴⁶ Bachelard, AS, 170; AD, 148.

⁴⁷ AS, 172; AD, 149.

⁴⁸ AS, 173; AD, 149.

⁴⁹ AS, 254; AD, 223.

⁵⁰ Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche et le métaphore* (Paris : Payot, 1972).

⁵¹ Jean Granier, *Le problème de la vérité dans la philosophie de Nietzsche* (Paris : Seuil, 1966).

⁵² AS, 182; AD, 158.

THE NEGATION OF PUBLIC VALUES IN NEOLIBERALISM: MARKET VERSUS STATE OR STATE VERSUS CITIZENSHIP? ¹

Dionysios G. Drosos

It is well known that all variants of neoliberalism have one thing in common: all aspire to a social ideal which is marked by the minimization of state intervention in society and the emancipation of market forces, which are supposed to tend to the establishment of a 'spontaneous order.' Nevertheless, beyond its obvious overvaluation of individualistic values and its systematic annihilation of 'holistic' ones, the neoliberal social ideal puts forth a far more ambitious claim. Beyond the critique of public involvement in the production or distribution of (some) services, and beyond the rejection of planned or *ad hoc* state intervention in the market, what is mainly attacked is the moral foundation of any political concern with civil society's coherence, reproduction and development. Social coherence itself is contested by neoliberalism as an issue of public interest and of conscious political, civic activation. What is argued in this paper is that the logic of such a claim not only leads neoliberal theorists (mainly Hayek)² to theoretical inconsistencies, but also is politically dangerous, forging a political mechanism, 'minimal' in its social services, but 'maximal' in its authoritarianism. It is a new Leviathan, a realm of decisionism, where not only democracy, but even its cherished individualistic and anti-statist ideals are not spared.

THE DEFAMATION OF THE 'SOCIAL PRINCIPLE'

First of all, one should allow that the neoliberal critique of state interventionism has a real basis in the contradictions inherent in all administrative and state planning activities. The first movement of the neoliberal critique is to evidence the technical malfunctioning and the authoritative traits of state action in general. Ludwig von Mises distinguishes between the bureaucratic type of administration, which is appropriate for state action, and the economic type of administration, which is appropriate for private enterprise. State action, it is said, is, by its very nature, of a centralized, hierarchical and authoritative character.³ The state as such is imputed to have a tendency to totalitarianism. Hayek maintains that even the claim that the state could predict the consequences of social action would be presumptuous and infringes state's impartiality, and it should logically end in the forced imposition of uniform and preconceived moral values on every member of society. The state tends to be a 'moral' institution which does not tolerate any deviation from its general and unique norm.⁴ Milton Friedman also juxtaposes the

differences – tolerating and encouraging market-type action over the uniformity imposed necessarily by state-type action.⁵

It is admittedly true that, as the state assumes social welfare responsibilities, its intrinsic contradictions and limitations are exacerbated.⁶ Such real administrative and moral contradictions and limitations, however, are related to the typically capitalist separation of the state from society. The bureaucratic malfunctions, the authoritative character of decision making and application (particularly as far as social value priorities are concerned), the lack of motivation for individuals to assume social responsibilities – in brief, the distance between everyday private life and politics – are some of the negative facets of such a separated *state-form*. Yet, such separation, from which all these criticized complications arise, is not questioned, but is cherished by neoliberals as ‘natural’ and sacrosanct. But, if it is true that the *state-form* is the indispensable pendant of the constitution of market relations, then the sublimation of the latter puts severe limits upon the rhetorical critique of the former.⁷ The origins (both historical and structural) of state-type action are never detected nor questioned. What is put forward is the limitation and ‘minimalization’ of the scope of such action, without any transformation of its structure whatsoever. But that is not all.

Praise of the efficiency and effectiveness⁸ of the private sphere is systematically attended by a methodic undermining of the *social values* on which the public concern with social reproduction is historically founded; social justice, social welfare, equality, cooperation and solidarity. In the neoliberal reduction of society to a ‘game’ between egoistic agents, the notion of ‘distributive justice’ does not make any sense.⁹ ‘Distributive justice’ presupposes an administrative authority, desiring, deciding, planning and effecting a just distribution. Since distribution is ‘naturally’ carried out as the ‘unintended’ and contingent effect of an impersonal process, no ‘distributive authority’ is required or is legitimate. Hence the question of ‘just distribution’ is quite irrelevant. The implication of political authority into distribution is confined to what is called ‘corrective’ or ‘catalactic justice.’¹⁰ In this respect, the only ‘injustices’ conceivable are confined to the non-observance of the contracts, frauds of any kind and the partiality of the political administration. ‘Spontaneous order’ would entail a ‘natural’ distribution, while any involvement of conscious and rational alterations is bound – so goes the argument – to be violent and partial. Obviously such an argument abstracts from the implication of conscious, purposive acts of violence and constraint during the distribution (and even the production) process.¹¹ So far as the state validates (or even performs) such violent practices, so-called ‘catalactic justice’ risks losing its appearance of neutrality and impartiality, not to mention its supposedly spontaneous character.¹²

But, what is essential for the neoliberal argument against 'social justice' is the discrediting of its theoretical and practical precondition: the concern with the *dynamics of reproduction of society in its totality*. Such an attitude results from the methodological and moral individualist prerequisites of neoliberalism. It is impossible to estimate the participation of one member of society in the social production is impossible to be estimated, so that, what one would claim as his 'merited' portion of distribution cannot be computed either. Thus 'social justice' is considered to be a doubly empty of sense. For neoliberals, freedom means mutual non-coercion. So the rule of law should insure negative freedom instead of a welfare state securing to individuals resources to practice their 'positive' freedom. This also implies a negative understanding of opportunity. The idea of equality of opportunities (a Welfare State idea) cannot be supported by the idea of the rule of law.¹³ Coercion is understood as an intentional action of prevention or discrimination. So, market outcomes could not be coercive, because they are said to be non-intentional. The duty of the state is to protect negative freedom. No welfare state-distribution is compatible with the idea of the rule of law, conceived as a rule of mutual non-coercion. Distribution of wealth is treated as if it were a kind of 'genetic lottery';¹⁴ nobody is responsible for it; nobody should be coerced to submit to any project of distributive justice.

It is not just 'social justice,' which is attacked as a politically and morally suspect notion. It would be impossible, so it is argued, even to theorize society in its totality. What goes for the distribution of monetary values applies to social values too. The human species exists but is dispersed in individualities. This triviality is invoked by neoliberal extreme nominalism in order to vindicate the subjectivist claim that every person is exclusively responsible for giving a meaning to his life and opting for whatever moral values he pleases, in perfect abstraction from any social relation. Thus it would be morally unfounded for the members of society to participate in a social process of discussion, formation and reformation of the meanings and values, relating not just to their own private life but also to the totality of social relations.¹⁵ Individuals relate to each other, of course, but their sociability is reduced to market relations, as the only process resulting in a 'harmonious order,' and as the only legitimate locus for the validation of social values.¹⁶ Therefore values are focused on validating private skills and performances aiming at private ends. The analogy with the economic process of *formation* (production) and *realization* of exchange values, as prices (circulation), is obvious. There would be no such thing as 'social rights,' not just because of the inefficiency or malfunctioning of their political incarnation in the Welfare State, but because the very public values on which such 'social rights' are founded are not supposed to exist either. 'There is no society; there are only individuals.' There are no public values, other than those securing the

order of market. Therefore, 'social rights' would be considered as a *contradictio in terminis*.¹⁷

The alleged 'anti-authoritative' character of the individualist principle consists in its categorical reaction of any subject pretending to be the 'omniscient' judge and the 'omnipotent' executor of what is judged as good and useful for society as a whole. It is surely difficult to deny the reasons for such a claim. However, this seemingly 'emancipating,' 'libertarian' claim is by-passed, or even directly negated, as soon as neoliberal theory faces political problems, challenging its alleged spontaneity. Hayek uses the concept of 'invisible hand,' a concept traced back to Bernard de Mandeville and Adam Smith. But he uses it in the sense of an 'evolutionary variety' – modeled on the biological evolution of organisms – and not in an 'aggregate variety' as in its original use.¹⁸

Nozick holds that moral rules are valid solely as 'side constraints,' not as rules for the achievement of an 'end state.'¹⁹ In the opposite case, recourse to the 'utilitarian principle' rejected in the first place by Nozick would be unavoidable. Such 'side constraints' compel individual agents to respect the personal autonomy of each other, in the pursuit of their selfish interests. But the consistency of this theory is threatened when the 'compensation principle' is introduced. Such principle entails unavoidably a kind of utilitarianism. If a minimum of social coherence is to be respected, then it is necessary for Nozick to assume a transition from a 'state of nature' where individuals associate solely in 'protective associations' to the establishment of a 'ultraminimal state' and, from the later, to a 'minimal state,'²⁰ provided, of course, that no violence is exerted and individual rights are observed. Yet, given that these conditions are practically impossible to maintain, some kind of compensation is necessary for individuals to consent to changes in their situation. But such compensations entail the commensurability of gains and losses, so that the 'utility principle' is *de facto* re-introduced and, implicitly with it, some kind of concern for the minimal interest of 'society.' However, given the rejection in principle of any 'social entity' which can judge what is good for society,²¹ we arrive at a real predicament: either such a subject would *de facto* follow the application criteria of the 'compensation principle' (thus violating a fundamental principle of the theory), or the theory would persist in its principles, so that the problem rests unsolved.²²

Hayek is also led to a similar theoretical inconsistency. The radical rejection of any criteria involving the 'common good' or reflecting on the constitution of society as a whole, is the touchstone of Hayek's liberalism.²³ Nevertheless, this does not prevent him from arguing that securing a 'minimal income' for everybody is something 'useful' and even necessary for society so long as it prevents the destitution of a great part of the population.²⁴ But it is not clear at all, *who* is to decide, and *how* both the level and the distribution of such 'minimal income' will be decided

upon, given that a social concern with public values is theoretically excluded from the outset.²⁵ Further, Hayek has insisted that societies should not be evaluated on the basis of some ‘external’ criteria (for instance, their contribution to moral liberty); on the contrary, according to Hayek, societies possess their own appropriate organizational principles and value systems.²⁶ Nevertheless, Hayek himself judges the success of societies in terms of the achievement of an ‘end result,’ that is the maximum population that they can afford. But, such a criterion lacks any theoretical foundation. We are not told, either, why this ‘population principle’ (an unexpectedly ‘holistic’ one!) does not merge with a ‘redistributionist’ welfare principle.²⁷

It is not by accident that, in one way or another, neoliberal argumentation of different types ultimately draws on some kind of ‘regulative ideas,’ despite the fact that such ideas are altogether despised and rejected in principle. The neoliberal argument, although anxious to release social theory from the ‘yoke’ of the principle of social utility, is obliged to re-introduce it in order to avoid the fatal consequence of its own logic: the dissolution of society altogether and its own suicide as a social theory. Thus Nozick’s ‘minimal state’ or Hayek’s ‘minimum of social policy’ are propositions void of any theoretical sense, although they respond to the demands and exigencies of social reproduction that are unavoidably, though precipitately and un-theoretically reconsidered by neoliberals, despite their primordial principle, which excludes the state as a factor of ‘spontaneous’ social order – in Hayek’s terminology, this is *Cosmos* as opposed to *Taxis* and even contrary to the anti-statist principles so dear to their own rhetoric. The social utility principle, after being repressed in the beginning, comes back as a symptom at the end of the analysis. This arbitrary and unprincipled coming back is replete with serious political consequences.

THE PREDICAMENTS OF THE STATE-SOCIETY DICHOTOMY

The state as a historically separated political form of bourgeois sociability, and as a form incarnating the social totality (*Form der Allgemeinheit*), is bound to look after its legitimacy as such by presenting its action in terms of some kind of ‘common good.’ In such a *state-form* an instance – even abstract or mystified – of reference to the community is maintained, in proportion to the public character of its operations. This community-element is expressed in an ideologically biased way, either as ‘national,’ or ‘public,’ or ‘social’ ‘interest’ or ‘utility.’ Yet, in such an instance, for all its formal, abstracted, and controversial character, a fundamental criterion of public and political accountability nevertheless survives. It concerns the very moral and political foundations of the legitimacy of the

state, to the extent that this is exposed to public questioning of the social relevance of its action.²⁸

Such action is commonly recognized as qualitatively different from ‘catallaxy,’ by virtue of having its *public* character ratified and safeguarded *politically*. In this respect, politics is not confined to the state mechanism, but is also a constitutive element of *citizenship* in the form of ‘political rights.’²⁹ The point is that, by discrediting the *social principle*, neoliberal arguments undermine the public character not only of some economic operations or social service, but the public character of politics as well. The devaluation of ‘publicness’ [*Öffentlichkeit*] leads to the denial of the special character of politics as a type of action distinct from the spontaneous ‘catallaxy’ of market order. Political institutions are judged exclusively according to their subservience to the particular interests of market agents. So far as rationality is supposed to be an outcome of an unintended evolutionary selection process, the realm of rationality is confined to what is required for the market order; political institutions as such are not to be debated on the basis of value-rational criteria. As Hayek puts it, ‘And it is therefore in general not rationality which is required to make competition work, but competition, or traditions which allow competition, which will produce rational behavior.’³⁰

Political institutions are viewed positively only so far as they constitute elements of such ‘traditions’ – resulting from a long process of trial and selection, ending in market order. Such an impersonal selection mechanism discovers and ratifies their functionality with the market, which is *a priori* valued as the ultimate social value. Such a valuation is an ideologically-biased preconception; it is not the real outcome of the traditions but is set ‘before’ them, as the decisive criterion of their relevance. Neoliberal theory, while pretending to be free of any social value judgment, proceeds to a deduction from an *a priori* value judgment in which it takes refuge every time it is tangled up with social reproduction questions. But such a judgment, being *ex definitio* theoretically unintelligible, is bound to be left to the discriminating power of political decision-making. Despite (or perhaps because of) the alleged individualism and spontaneity of the approach, the second is balanced by a crude political *decisionism*.³¹

Individualism, although projected as an element of continuity with the classical liberal tradition, appears to be a problematic if not contradictory concept in the context of its neoliberal usage. In conditions of what Marx called the ‘real subordination of labor to capital,’ what Hayek called ‘spontaneous order,’ is but capital itself, imposing its impersonal motion behind the back of the producers. In this context, the relevant social subject is not the individual human being but social capital, so that the market could no more be justified or praised as the ideal locus of individual liberty, because the market is where individual *capitals*, not

individual *persons*, are related to and confronted with each other. Persons relate to the market not immediately as such, but as ‘economic factors’: either as consumers or as producers (i.e., as variable capital of the individual units of capitalist production). And if as consumers they are formally free (though substantially subordinated to the industry of production of artificial needs), there is nothing more administrated, coercive and despotic, even in neoliberal terms, than social relations of production within capitalist firm. The logic of the ‘free market’ could not be extended into the production process, unless another form of production takes the place of capitalism. The neoliberal claims for liberty stop before the door of this realm of despotism.³² Hayek himself writes about the authoritative character of capitalist production relations: ‘Competition is, after all, always a process in which a small number makes it necessary for larger numbers *to do what they do not like*, be it to work harder, to change habits, or to devote a degree of attention, continuous application, or regularity to their work which without competition would not be needed’ (emphasis added).³³

Thus obviously, it is the liberty of the *firm*, not that of *human beings*, that is claimed and praised. Hence the exclusively negative definition of freedom: not freedom ‘to do something,’ but freedom ‘from something.’³⁴ Indeed, the ‘positive’ freedom of the capitalist enterprise, unlike that of persons, has no problem with what is meant by ‘positive freedom’: it is always and everywhere *freedom to make profits*.³⁵

But freedom *from* what? First of all, it is freedom from any restrictions on the capitalist property rights. But what is property? In the *Declaration of 1789* of the French Revolution, there is expressed a conception of *property* as a substantial part of a person’s inalienable rights. Property, there, is valued not just as exclusive possession of a thing, but as part of a wider personal freedom in society, resulting in what is called citizenship.³⁶ Although this positive conception of property is, in its manifest political expression, an idea of the French Revolution, one could trace its origins back to John Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government* (§ 44). Moreover, Adam Smith’s understanding of property (although not directly derived from natural law, but rather from social recognition, through the exchange of moral sentiments and the sympathy of the impartial spectator, is no more akin to the neoliberal one. It has a positive dimension; its legitimacy depends upon social recognition and consent, resulting in social harmony. The tension between the two dimensions of property is latent in Smith’s theoretical scheme and quite explicit in his much debated critical pages on ‘alienation’ and corruption inherent in market relations.³⁷ This dimension has been silently by-passed, so that the neoliberal ‘canonization’ of Adam Smith is without reservations. As Winch ironically notes, Adam Smith ‘is now the patron saint of a free-market sect with some noted intellectual apostles such as

Friedrich Hayek, and with its own monastic “think tank”, the Adam Smith Institute. This new church has opened branches all over the world and achieved some large-scale conversions to the message of the “invisible hand” in Eastern Europe, a dark continent that was worshipping heathen gods before 1998.³⁸

The classical conception of property is filled with emancipatory aspirations towards a reformation of social relations. The positive conception of property is open to the claims of the producers to appropriate the product of their own labor.³⁹ Such a claim, founded on the labor theory of property rights, frustrated classical political economists, and has been abandoned (along with *political economy* itself, from the time of the neoclassical counter-revolution and the foundation of ‘*economics*’) because it is putatively constitutive not just of *civil* but also of *social* rights, enriching the content of citizenship and so challenging the capitalist despotism within production itself. This claim amounts to the deepening of political freedom, without which the freedom to participate in a moral community can hardly be exercised.⁴⁰ This development of citizenship, of political personality, introducing democracy into the production process, is a challenge for both the market and administrative despotism⁴¹, and could even work as a regulative principle for an alternative to that experienced in the late, so-called ‘socialist’ regimes.

Neoliberals, mystifying capitalist property and re-affirming its quasi ‘genetic’ origin, annihilate all historically acquired political and social limitations of capitalist property rights. The concept of private property is divested of any wider connotation related to the person or the owner, conceived not just as subject of private law but also as a citizen.⁴² Moreover, the neoliberal argument entails the negation of any extended content of citizenship, reducing it to elementary civil rights related to private property. In consequence, an even greater part of political participation rights is to be delegated to the closed groups of experts. The devaluation of citizenship is justified by neoliberals as a defense against non-economic agencies threatening freedom, which is always conceived as the freedom of the subjects of private ownership – which, as mentioned above, do not necessarily coincide with individual persons. The only use of the acclaimed individualism that remains is its ideological use; no other form of cooperation between individuals is tolerated except those three traditional ones: entrepreneurship, family, and the state. Before these collective entities, the individuals’ rights should abdicate.

There are some conservative approaches where it is admitted that there has been a forfeiture of modern aspirations to free and autonomous personality in modern capitalism, characterized by strong and multiple types of submission of individuals. But it is remarkable that, even in those approaches, what is proposed as an alternative to the ‘collectivist’ and ‘holistic’ ones, is the conceptualization of society in terms of ‘organism,’

where individuals are grouped in hierarchies of ‘collective bodies,’ charged with partial functions and responsibilities – that is social classes and stratifications, with privileges which should be conserved and safeguarded.⁴³

The ‘emancipation’ of private property from any social control or mediation, marks the definitive break of neoliberalism from the tradition of Enlightenment. The Enlightenment – for all its predicaments – was not an apologetic ideological movement, but rather an *état d’esprit* full of positive – yet sometimes too optimistic – aspirations, which could not be reduced to the safeguarding of ‘negative liberty,’ without doing injustice to them. For all the Hayekian rhetoric for the *universalization* principle, the Kantian claim for the *autonomy* of man as a moral being would be severely impoverished if reduced to an individualist ideal of negative freedom.⁴⁴ As has been stated, Friedrich Hayek's conception of unconscious laws of the market replaces Kant's transcendently binding moral law. Hayek's peculiar evolutionary conception of cultural tradition ‘...removes Kantianism's critical sting by denying any point of view from which the present might be critically judged.’⁴⁵

Even worse: Hayek's thesis turns dangerously akin to that of Carl Schmitt. Hayek, like Schmitt, argues that state activities are unavoidably discretionary. This echoes Schmitt's thesis that “state intervention in social and economic affairs tends to require a decisionistic legal form.”⁴⁶

R. Cristi has pointed out that what shortens the distance between Hayek and Schmitt are: a) Schmitt's attack on the state's vulnerability to democratic pressures and b) Hayek's normativist authoritarian constitutional proposals.⁴⁷ This is a serious failure for Hayek, given the declared direction of his primordial project to defend the *rule of law* (*Rechtsstaat*) against the assault of Hitler's *Kronjurist* (Crown jurist) (as he called Carl Schmitt).⁴⁸

As Sheuerman argues, the idea that only ‘general legal norms’ – as dramatically contrasted with ‘individual legal commands or measures’ – are compatible with the ideal of the rule of law (*Rechtsstaat*) is an essential part of Carl Schmitt's argument against the Weimar Left, aiming at the expropriation of royal property during the 1920s and early 30s. This amounts to a typically neoliberal anti-Welfare State critique.⁴⁹ In the end of this road, Schmitt argued for the complete abandonment of the ideal of the *rule of law*. Schmitt differs from Hayek, who agrees with his description of the ‘paradoxes’ of interventionist politics, only in believing (or perhaps understanding) that any return to the principles of the classic liberal ideal of state non-intervention would result in a self-contradictory utopia.⁵⁰

One should explore Sheuerman's thesis, insisting on the aspect of the dichotomy inherent in the capitalist form of production between the state and the sphere of private interest; this tension explodes in the

schemes of both Schmitt and Hayek, who cannot see politics other than as an authoritarian subject of discriminating power, because both are engaged in favor of the rule of capital. One must be critical of the typically capitalist junction of political authoritarianism and labor exploitation, to see that the intermediate instances of civil society, as expressions of political citizenship, are the only sources of checking and limiting both. Politics is not reduced to state authoritarianism, and the economy is not to be reduced to the blind forces of market only so far as citizens are activated by a belief in a common good, transcending their self-interestedness. This potentiality is the real target of neo-liberal ideology.

THE DYNAMICS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

The exhortation of politics out of civil society is bound to result in a resignation from any kind of control on the established, separated form of politics. If exclusive private property is to be unmitigated, neither will political power. Thus, neoliberal ‘anti-statist’ rhetoric turns out to be an advocacy of a quite particular form of statism: a narrower scope for state activities, but, at the same time, an even deeper isolation of state mechanisms from society. The State should not just cut its welfare expenditures, but also accomplish its divorce from society. Hayek is quite eloquent on this subject:

If in a society in which the spirit of enterprise has not yet spread, *the majority has power to prohibit whatever it dislikes*, it is most unlikely that it will allow competition to arise. I doubt whether a functioning market has ever newly arisen under an unlimited democracy, and it seems at least likely that *unlimited democracy will destroy it* where it has grown up.⁵¹ (Emphasis added).

It should not escape one’s attention that the Darwinian evolutionary process of making up ‘traditions,’ in the Hayekian scheme, although ‘spontaneous,’ is not ‘natural.’ For Hayek, capitalist ethics – ‘the learned morals of market order’ – identified with the process of civilization – develop contrary to the instincts of human nature, which are rather ‘socialist’ in substance.⁵²

If issues like ‘social justice’ and notions as ‘society’ are kept out of theory as mere nominal forms, it is implied that any related moral or political argumentation or discourse must be disallowed. Society is not allowed to be concerned with its own reproduction, even less its transformation; the very notion of ‘society as a subject’ is supposed to be but an inadmissible anthropomorphism. Yet in the end, in the place of the ‘non-existent’ society, there is a very real subject that must decide on these matters: the state – an entity so defamed and despised in the

beginning! In this respect, it is remarkable that most neoliberal ideologists – and first of all Hayek – end up promoting constitutional reforms that liberate the state from the barriers of any social control whatsoever. The severe limitations to be put on the general right of voting, the reduction of political practices to mere economic enterprise activities, the isolation of executive and even legislative power, are some of the proposed political preconditions of liberty.⁵³ All these measures tend to an even deeper separation between the state and the civil society, exacerbating the antinomies which result from such a separation – namely, the authoritarianism of the state.⁵⁴ Quite a libertarian project!

The ‘social principle,’ here accused as totalitarian, has been working historically as a balancing principle, mitigating both the state *and* the market by developing the institutions of democracy and checking the divisive and disintegrating consequences of their inherent tendencies. The shortcomings or even failures of such institutions occasioned neoliberal claims, aiming really not at ‘minimizing’ the state, but at ‘minimizing’ and abolishing those very elements which historically mitigated the oppressive class character of state despotism. In the neoliberal project, political power is to be isolated, *viz.* protected from ‘publicness’; it should be safeguarded in its present, separated, sacrosanct form and even freed from any institutional check. Such criticism, however, has no foundation if the state is to be reduced to the role of armed guarantor of the *ethos* of the market. The idea of a state subordinate to no logic or ethics other than market, gives the statesman an absolute political and moral authority over any reflective judgment: political decision is to be checked by no social element other than the market; should it be servile to the market’s exigencies, it would be limitless. Provided the verdict of the market’s selection mechanism be favorable, there is no valid politics or ethics other than those advanced by the sovereign. It seems most likely that Hobbes’s, and not Smith’s, authority could inspire such a project.

Thus, the aspirations of neoliberalism appear to be more ambitious than at first sight; they go far beyond a mere ‘liberalization’ of market relations: it is mainly the extension of the ‘market principle’ in politics that is aimed at; it is the *privatization of politics*.

By prohibiting any conscious and rational activity as potentially totalitarian, neoliberals finally get an enforcement of the state by means of the complete isolation of its mechanisms from any social control.⁵⁵ It is worth noting that Smith, celebrated by neoliberals as a ‘founding father’ of their values, aspired to the emancipation of the state from private interests and its submission (as an impersonal mechanism) to a system of social controls, quite the opposite that is claimed by neoliberals: that is, the fragmentation of the state elements and its organic connection with private interests. It is the utopia of a society identified with a pure and perfect market that inspires the neoliberal project.⁵⁶ It is dangerous in

practice and self-contradictory in theory. Its realization implies the demolition of society. The reproduction of the economic system presupposes the reproduction of society. The later is impossible without compromises or subversive tensions. The neoliberal re-affirmation of the capitalist project in its dogmatic purity touches the limits of market domination on society; the perfection of such a domination risks destroying both itself and its object.

The very separation of the state and individuals as private owners is typical of capitalist society, and it is mitigated by the historical development of citizenship. It is a separation that is exposed to the conditions of social reproduction. The development of political and social rights tends to control and alleviate the socially disintegrative effects of market relations based on civil rights alone. Such a tension is reproduced by the democratic dynamics of social forces.⁵⁷ The reproduction of the economic system is potentially jeopardized by the historical dynamics of civil society which potentially tends to cut across the limits of the functional necessities of the social form of production and the related separations. Such a tension makes it necessary that political power has a *public character*; this is what invests class domination with a *political form*; what makes the state something more than a mere bourgeois trade union. It is this mediation that constitutes the real defense of society against the totalitarian tendencies of the state, as dictated by the neoliberal project of forging market 'spontaneity.' The real challenge for the neoliberal state and market is the autonomous development of civil society, irrespective of the functional needs of capitalist reproduction.

I understand by civil society, then, not just a nexus of 'intermediate institutions,' but a 'regulative idea' of debate, coordination and convergence of all actual or potential forms of sociability, animated by values, not susceptible to be accomplished within the structures of both the market and the state. Such forms of sociability involve a broad range of activities, individual and collective, spontaneous and organized, concerning the whole civilization process: (the production and distribution of) wealth, culture, religion, science, ecology, and politics. These forms of social life are certainly schools of empathy, sympathy, public discussion and moral recognition, but that is not all. Their dynamics put them in tension with 'spontaneous order'; they tend either to transcend market relations or to degenerate into enclosed, introspective, isolated communities. If a social alternative is to be built out of them, they should be put under the 'categorical imperative' to transcend collective egoism, exclusive particularism, and mutual intolerance. By the 'debate, coordination and convergence' of those forms, I understand their consensus and accountability to the *principle of universalizability*, and their aspiration to a *universal moral community*.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, such a community could not be expected to result from the enforcement of a construction of abstract rationalism or deontological apriorism; the application of the *principle of universalizability*, is a matter of *phronesis*, and *phronesis* would be the offspring of common moral experience, practice and maturation. One could – and even should – not give *a priori* prescriptions for a new utopia to be realized. This would surely invigorate the neoliberal objections against ‘constructivism.’ One should also not indulge in faith in paradise on earth; paradise could never be ‘constructed.’

Yet, historical experience should teach us – although history never taught anyone – what this project should not be. Every attempt to resurrect obsolete forms of the past, inspired either by romantic ‘communitarianism’ or ‘scientific socialism’ (i.e. ‘state capitalism’), or to invent new messianic radicalisms, should be prevented. What is needed is not to radically ‘eliminate’ – to abolish altogether – either the market or the state, but to resist their inherent tendencies to level and castrate civilization, to corrupt and dissolve moral communities and to destroy physical and human nature.

Enthusiastic ‘puritan,’ ‘eliminating,’ and ‘abolishing’ radicalisms end by becoming totalitarian in character; this is true not only for pre-modern religious or secular fundamentalisms, but also for both the twins of Modernity: collectivism and neoliberalism. Alternatives should be build on tradition – certainly not conceived as a Darwinian selection process, in the Hayekian sense – exploring and developing spiritual and moral traditions; not reifying and fetishizing them, but submitting them to the ‘golden standard’ of mutual respect and openness to universalization.

What is urgent is to preserve nature, culture, and civilization from the devastating assaults of the market and its political supplement. But, any partial, regional, or ‘one issue’ movement will be exhausted, domesticated, and assimilated by the system of exchange values, until the validation of a common language of mutual recognition, respecting the universalization principle, which binds both individuals and communities.

There is no guarantee of success. But, unless such a language is universally established – that is, a common language between *values* that make life worth living and dying for – *exchange* value would stand alone as the universal standard of any *value* whatsoever; and our precious–civilization, for all its sins and fallacies, would be (if it is not already) reduced to a senseless and indifferent number of commodities for sale in the ‘cultural’ sections of supermarkets.

In this case, society would degenerate to a Hobbesian ‘state of nature,’ a realm of terror and unfreedom. If politics is not to be just a matter of state administration, and ethics a matter of market relations, a political and moral regeneration and transformation of civil society is absolutely necessary. If morality entails moral community, such a

community should be universal, transcending the dichotomy between dogmatic-authoritarian collectivism in politics and impoverished, egoistic individuality in markets.⁵⁹

CONCLUDING NOTE

Neoliberalism constitutes an extreme version of modern radicalism.⁶⁰ It is a problematic which, inspired by the principles of individual freedom, brings the modern rejection of the traditional ontological paradigm to its utmost consequences. The ontological paradigm has already been in crisis since the Renaissance and Reformation, both of which, although in different ways, are marked by the emergence of *subjectivity*. This crisis finds its mature philosophical expression (not without internal differentiations) mainly during Enlightenment. The Enlightenment movement, which gave birth to such philosophical personalities as Hume, Rousseau, Voltaire and Kant, developed on the basis of a broad consensus between its different participants, converging all on a disapproval of the inherited ontological schema. However, this negation opened the bag of Aeolus, installing in the place of old certainties a moral predicament, endemic and organic to modernity. The split of traditional community into political society and the sphere of private individuals, as well as the polar antithesis between ‘tradition’ and ‘constructivism’ concerning moral resources of social life, are in substance expressions of the self-division of the modern subject itself (i.e. the problem of viability of modern moral community).⁶¹

Against this problem, neoliberalism articulates a kind of ‘Gordian knot’ solution, i.e., a non-philosophical solution. It is supposed that the spontaneous market order *per se*, without the toil of any human endeavor – e.g., rational reflection, moral responsibility, and conscious activity – ‘solves’ *de facto* the problem of social unity and harmony, a question traditionally solved by theologically-inspired ideas and practices and which modern philosophy made relentless efforts to articulate in its own secular terms. However, the radical rejection of conscious, rational reflection, combined with the no less radically secularized, neoliberal version of modern assumptions, amounts to a paradoxical self-refutation of Modernity itself; namely the market becomes a substitute for Deity, considered no more as a Subject but as an impersonal spontaneous order: moral responsibility as well as the rationality of mortal human beings are not to be valid, not even conceived independently from the belief and subjection to the rule of this secular ‘God’; the Enlightenment’s vision of *moral autonomy* comes to an end.

There is a bitter irony when we consider this itinerary; from the refusal of objective ontological order to the emergence of subjectivity, and to the utmost secularization of the subject and from the questioning of the

self-foundation of theoretical and practical Reason, to the relapse into an irrational and amoral order, into a religion without God, an idolatry of the market. An ‘easy’ reply to this challenge, based on the symmetrical inversion of the argument, i.e. the idolization of the other modern abstract extremity, the *community*, in the place of the *individual*, runs the risk of equally procrustean solutions. In a tragic way, modern freedom runs the risk of producing its own refutation, since in its extreme ‘pure’ forms undermines its self-foundation, taking refuge in the *deus ex machina* of externality and heteronomy: either in a Darwinian survival of the fittest or in the form of state despotism. Neoliberalism’s ultimate achievement is to combine both!

This typically modern impasse should motivate and invigorate the self-knowledge and maturation of critical thought. Would this be possible without questioning the aspiration of dogmatic rationalism to ‘construct’ *ex nihilo*, in a God-like manner (or even artificially, technologically re-create) the meaning of the world and life? Would this be possible without a re-assessment of the objectivity of moral order, without nostalgically resurrecting pre-modernity, and instead fertilizing traditions with the universalizable values of subjectivity and freedom? Could this subjectivity be fruitful, without overcoming the divorce between abstract *individuality* and abstract *totality*? Would this be possible without restating the subject, neither as an *individual* nor as (political or dogmatic) *collectivity*, but rather as a *person*: as a risky and not institutionalizable feedback between the Self the Other, aspiring to transcend both selfishness and totalitarian annihilation of individuality. Would this be possible without a radical transformation of both social relations (including relations of production), and morality (including the re-conception and re-evaluation of our relation to God)?

Could, finally, such an undertaking be fertile without a genuine reconsideration of different traditions, that are the means via which moral norms (modern morality not excepted) are revealed and inherited?

Problems of this type are the ‘unintended consequences’ of the modern inconstancy to banish theology, while usurping its religious aspirations. Typical to this attitude is the recurrence of two alternative but equally perverted secular ‘religions’ (in a variety of forms), deifying either the *state* or the *market*. Both are expressions of the predicament mentioned above.

All these questions converge, I think, to the same *enjeu*: what is ultimately in question is the re-affirmation of the inherent rationality of the Being, and his voluntary determination not to be subjugated to any kind of order (secular or divine), which pretends to be Absolute without being Subject. But this, of course, should be an issue of a substantial and urgent philosophical project, beyond Pre-Modernity, Modernity, and Post-

Modernity, that exceeds the ambitions of the present paper, which nevertheless ends with this perspective left open.

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NOTES

¹ The author is indebted to the anonymous referees of *Philosophy, Culture, and Traditions* for their critical comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this paper.

² The present paper focuses mainly on Hayek, who, I think, provides the most refined, brilliant and attractive variant of neoliberalism.

³ Ludwig v. Mises, *Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis* (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1981), pp. 95-106. For a detailed exposition of Mises's theory of praxeology, see Mises, *Human Action. A Treatise on Economics* (London: William Hodge & Company Ltd., 1949), *passim*. In the same vein, see also the distinction between 'civil association' and 'enterprise state,' in Michael Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct* (Oxford: Clarendon 1975), p. 311.

⁴ See Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 77.

⁵ See Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 15; also, Milton Friedman and R. Friedman, *Free to Choose. A Personal Statement* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1980), pp. 47-54.

⁶ Besides referring to the shortcomings of bureaucratic administration, neoliberals use a range of arguments against any extension of the state's activities beyond the 'absolutely necessary' negative and formal ones – typical of a 'minimal state.' Welfare State arrangements are often criticized for their 'moral hazard' effects and the undermining of the ethics of reciprocity. See Norman Barry in "Conservative Thought and the Welfare State," *Political Studies*, 45 (1997): 332-335. See also Mead's attack on the Welfare State and his critique of the 'new type of man' resulting from such policies. For Mead, unemployment is due to the incompetence of unemployed individuals. Lawrence Mead, *The New Politics of Poverty. The Non-Working Poor in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), pp. 339-340. The solution would, not unexpectedly, be typically authoritarian in character: "The solution of the work problem lies not in freedom but in governance" (*ibid.*, p. 181). This issue will be treated below. Sometimes even the Fathers of the Christian Church are 'recruited' by neoliberals as defenders of neoliberal projects. See Linda Raeder, "Augustine and the Case for Limited Government" *Humanitas* 16 (2003), *passim*. For a more balanced appraisal of the relation between religion and the market, see David W. Haddorff, "Religion and the Market: Opposition, Absorption, or Ambiguity?" *Review of Social Economy*, 58 (2000). As the controversy between Richard Neuhaus and Mark and Louise Zwick testifies, this issue divides theologians no less than philosophers and social theorists. See

R. Neuhaus, “Those Unsecular Evangelicals,” *First Things* (August/September 1999): 80-99.

⁷ The legitimacy of the neo-liberal ‘minimal state’ is dependent upon the neo-liberal understanding of market order. But as R. Plant has pointed out, this entails the danger of making the legitimacy of the neo-liberal state depend upon such state initiatives as are excluded from the idea of it as purely instrumental to the market – which is assumed to be ‘in principle unprincipled’ and does not have a positive value of its own. The need for legitimacy would require that the state justify itself as a framework of freedom, rewarding desert, but this would be a ‘noble lie’, as Hayek himself admits. Raymond Plant, “Neoliberalism and the Theory of the State: From *Wohlfahrtsstaat* to *Rechtsstaat*,” *The Political Quarterly*, 75 (2004), p. 36. In the same vein, Theodoros Papaioannou provides an excellent critique of the contradiction inherent in Hayek’s idea of market as ‘catallaxy’, excluding and requiring at the same time substantive politics. See Theodoros Papaioannou, “Market Order and Justice in Hayek’s Political Theory: the exclusion and requirement of substantive politics,” *Social Science Information*, 42 (2003): 229-252.

⁸ What is at stake in this neoliberal rhetoric – especially Hayek’s – is providing a *moral*, not just an economic justification for “laissez-faire.” See Niels Bjerre-Poulsen, *Organizing the American Conservative Movement 1945-1965* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2002), p. 27.

⁹ See Friedrich Hayek’s *Law, Legislation and Liberty: a new statement of the liberal principles of justice and political economy*, Vol. 2, pp. 70-71; Hayek’s “The Atavism of Social Justice” in *New Studies in Philosophy, Politics and the History of Ideas* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 57-68. In this respect, the antipathy of libertarian conservatives toward ‘collectivism’ “leads to a disdain for egalitarianism” – to a strong opposition to the civil rights movement and to any concern for inequalities, viewed as a threat to individual freedom. Dell P. Champlin, Janet T. Knoedler, “Whither, or Wither the Good Society?” *Journal of Economic Issues*, 39 (2005). For the deepening of inequalities in world wide scale under the neoliberal regime, see John Rapley, *Globalization and Inequality: Neoliberalism’s Downward Spiral* (London/Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004).

¹⁰ This notion has its roots in Aristotle’s distinction between ‘distributive’ and ‘corrective’ justice. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V, iv. See also H. B. Acton, *The Morals of Markets and Related Essays* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1993), pp. 99-134. The contestation of the ‘distributive’ justice principle is a permanent trait of liberalism, which can be traced back to Hobbes. Neoliberals tend to simply accept this idea and its consequences.

¹¹ For a critique of the idea of the neutrality of laissez-faire and of the ‘non-coercive’ character of the market, see David Miller, *Market, State and Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 81-93, and Peter Lindsay, “Exposing the Invisible Hand: The Roots of Laissez-Faire’s Hidden Influence” *Polity*, 37 (2005), *passim*. In our era of globalized neoliberalism, Karl Polanyi’s *dictum* sounds more valid than ever: ‘Laissez-faire was planned; planning was not.’ See his *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press,

1957), p. 141. As Glasman argues, in the absence of a web of social relations ('unions, corporate bodies, trade associations and regulations') constraining the market, society would be distorted 'in the name of another unrealizable utopian project,' as happened in post-socialist Poland. Maurice Glasman, "The Great Deformation: Polanyi, Poland and the Terrors of Planned Spontaneity," *New Left Review*, Vol. a. (1994), p. 84. On this issue, see also the argument of Marangos that the neoliberal 'shock therapy model' is deeply anti-democratic and consistent with dictatorial rather than democratic regimes. John Marangos, "Was Shock Therapy Consistent with Democracy?" *Review of Social Economy*, 62 (2004), *passim*.

¹² This is a predicament due to the neoliberal conception of the 'minimal state.' Such an idealized formal and negatively operating political organization would be unable to deal with conflictual and illiberal phenomena. As Papaioannou argued, this is a methodological and epistemological failure of Hayek's theory due to his idea of 'evolutionary rational' activity, justifying morally 'catallaxy' – something incompatible with a conception of the political other; this is in contrast to the formal, 'minimal state.' Papaioannou, "The Moral Market, the Minimal State and the Great or Open Society: A Critique of Hayek's Neo-Liberalism" in *Democratization, Morality, Authority and Power Conference* Cardiff: University of Cardiff <<http://www.caerdydd.ac.uk>>, *passim*.

¹³ The traditional, anti-individualist, conservative understanding of order was used to found the Welfare State on the basis of the morals of responsibility and reciprocity, excluding any conception of welfare rights. For this reason, R. Plant conceives welfare rights as connected with civil rights; this avoids a conservative/communitarian defense of the Welfare State. R. Plant, *Modern Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 266-82. See also N. Barry, "Conservative Thought and the Welfare State," p. 336. For conservatism, welfare subsidies are not founded in social justice, but consist mainly in 'eleemosynary activity.' *Ibid.*, p. 337.

¹⁴ See R. Plant, "Neoliberalism and the Theory of the State," pp. 26-28.

¹⁵ For the distinction between 'negative' and 'positive' freedom, neoliberals have recourse to the classic Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), *passim*. However, it is far from indisputable that values, which make life worth living, can emerge 'spontaneously from negative liberty alone.' See the argument of Robert Grant, "Morality, Social Policy and Berlin's Two Concepts," *Social Research*, 66 (1999), *passim*. As Grant has argued, negative liberty has no sense beyond that of self-realization and self-responsibility, which are issues of positive liberty and moral education. Indeed, the exclusive, single-minded concentration on negative liberty – what used to be called "the permissive society" – -seems ultimately to be destructive of moral life. A primordial freedom for human being is the 'freedom to participate in the moral community' (*Ibid.*, p. 1235). For the effect of negative freedom in producing inequalities in substantive freedoms, see George DeMartino, *Global Economy, Global Justice: Theoretical Objections and Policy Alternatives to Neoliberalism* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 113. Posner also contests the legitimacy and the success of the efforts

of Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman and other economists ‘to make economics a source of moral guidance.’ See Posner, “The Problematics of Moral and Legal Theory,” *Harvard Law Review*, 111 (1998), *passim*. For a contestation of the alleged individual independence from the will of others within market, see Steven R. Smith, “Distorted Ideals: The ‘Problem of Dependency’ and the Mythology of Independent Living,” *Social Theory and Practice*, 27 (2001), *passim*.

¹⁶ Although Hayek includes ‘communitarian elements’ in his theory, as Charles R. Mccann, Jr. has shown, he is nevertheless committed to an ‘individualistic ontology’, pretending to avoid the ‘reification’ of society, while unwittingly moving towards a ‘reification’ of the individual and thereby reducing its essential freedom to the economic dimension of existence. But as the capitalist economy is the realm of money and self-interest, this kind of freedom is restricted not by the state, but by the prevailing form of sociability which is inherently self-contradictory. Charles R. Mccann, Jr. is right in arguing for the relevance of some of the tenets of the Scottish philosophers of the Enlightenment, but this constitutes an ideological rather than a philosophical attitude in attempting immediate transitions between historical ideas and forms; the liberal ideas of 18th century Scotland were born in a context different in many aspects from those of our era. Such is, I think, the attitude of Hayek in his reading of the Scottish Enlightenment – a reading in which the original loses much of its richness, its critical potential, and its relevance for today’s capitalism. See Charles R. Mccann, Jr., *Individualism and the Social Order: the Social Element in Liberal Thought* (Routledge, 2004), *passim*.

¹⁷ For a ‘technical’ and skeptical approach regarding welfare rights and the possibility of bringing them under the rule of law, see Guido Pincione, “Market Rights and the Rule of Law: A Case for Procedural Constitutionalism” *Harvard Journal of Law & Public Policy*, 26 (2003), *passim*.

¹⁸ For the substantial difference between these two versions and its ideological importance, see Edna Ullmann-Margalit, “The Invisible Hand and the Cunning of Reason,” *Social Research*, 64 (1997), *passim*. As Ullmann-Margalit puts it, for Hayek “all the institutions constituting our social fabric can – and should – be explained invisible-handedly, [...] invisible-hand explanations are evolutionary explanations, and [...] evolutionary explanations presuppose a functionalist outlook” (*Ibid.*, p. 191). For Hayek’s biased understanding of *common law* and his inescapable concession to set ‘strict criteria’ for the selection of rules that would make a ‘valid’ tradition out of common law, see Ronald Hamowy, “F. A. Hayek and the Common Law,” *The Cato Journal*, 23 (2003), *passim*. For a critique of universalizing Darwinian principles, see Geoffrey M. Hodgson, “Generalizing Darwinism to Social Evolution: Some Early Attempts,” *Journal of Economic Issues*, 39 (2005), *passim*.

¹⁹ Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974), p. 29.

²⁰ Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp.10- 28.

²¹ Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, pp. 30-32.

²² On this subject, see Eric Mack, “Nozick on Unproductivity: The Unintended Consequences” in *Reading Nozick. Essays on Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, ed. Jeffrey Paul (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), pp. 169-190; see also Mack, “How to Derive Libertarian Rights” in *Reading Nozick*, pp. 286-302; Samuel Scheffler, “Natural Rights, Equality, and the Minimal State” in *Reading Nozick*, pp. 148-168; and Thomas Nagel, “Libertarianism Without Foundations” in *Reading Nozick*, pp. 191-205.

²³ “In a free society the general good consists principally in the facilitation of the pursuit of unknown individual purposes” (Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, Vol. 2, p. 1). Hayek endorses the distinction introduced by Oakeshott between *nomocracy* and *teleocracy* (Hayek, *Ibid.*, p. 15). *Teleocracy* corresponds to a constructed order [*Taxis*], while *nomocracy* corresponds to the spontaneous order of ‘catallaxy’ [*Cosmos*] (*Ibid.*, p. 108, fn. 5). The neoliberal state should be a *nomocratic* and not a *teleocratic* state. See also Plant, “Neoliberalism and the Theory of the State: From *Wohlfahrtstaat* to *Rechtsstaat*,” p. 33.

²⁴ Hayek, *Law, Legislation, and Liberty*, p. 87.

²⁵ See Raymond Plant, “Hayek on Social Justice: A Critique” in *Hayek, Co-ordination and Evolution: his legacy in philosophy, politics and the history of ideas*, eds. Jak Birner and Rudy van Zijp (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 176-177.

²⁶ Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit. The Errors of Socialism. The Collected Works of F.A. Hayek*, vol. 1, ed. by William W. Bartley III, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1988, ch. 8, pp. 120- 134.

²⁷ See Barry, “The Road to Freedom: Hayek’s social and economic philosophy”, pp. 143-144, 148-149. As Finn has shown, the neoliberal amoral defense of capitalism by Milton Friedman, James Buchanan, and Friedrich Hayek fail on their own terms, since they implicitly incorporate moral presumptions which are essential to their argument while they pretend to eliminate moral judgments from their ‘scientific’ approaches. Daniel R. Finn, “The Moral Ecology of Markets: On the Failure of the Amoral Defense of Markets,” *Review of Social Economy*, 61 (2003), *passim*.

²⁸ This is what is principally at stake in politics. The outcomes of politics are unpredictable, particularly in democracy; they could not be reduced to a blind, automatic mechanism. Indeed, this is inconceivable, given the conscious, rational commitment and action of citizens aspiring at a common good. From this perspective, a notion of ‘democracy-as-a-spontaneous-order’ would sound like a *contradictio in terminis*. See Gus Di Zerega, “Democracy as a Spontaneous Order,” *Critical Review*, 3 (1989), pp. 206-240. For the need for deepening the participations of citizens in defining state policy and practice, as well as the introduction of notions such as ‘empowered participatory governance’ and ‘associational democracy’, and the radicalizing of Habermas’ discursive theory of justice, see, Archon Fung, “Associations and Democracy: Between Theories, Hopes, and Realities,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 29 (2003), *passim*. Thomas F. McInerney, “Law and Development as Democratic Practice,” *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law*, 38 (2005), *passim*. For the disintegrating and undemocratic consequences of the New Right project for

‘state-nations’, like Canada, where national character is traditionally identified with public services, see Gordon Laxer, “Surviving the American New Right,” *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 37 (2000), *passim*.

²⁹ On this conception of citizenship, see T. H. Marshall and Tom Bottomore, *Citizenship and Social Class* (London: Pluto Perspectives, 1992), *passim*.

³⁰ Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, vol. 3, p. 76.

³¹ By *decisionism* we understand the domination of *voluntas* over *ratio*: the Hobbesian ‘*Auctoritas, non veritas facit legem.*’ See W. E. Sheuerman, “The Unholy Alliance of Carl Schmitt and Friedrich A. Hayek,” *Constellations*, 4 (1997), p. 186, note 22, and F. Renato Cristi, “Hayek and Schmitt on the Rule of Law,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 17 (1984), p. 524. But Sheuerman indicates also the indebtedness of Hayek to Schmitt’s critique of the welfare state, an element ignored by Cristi (Sheuerman, p. 184, note 3).

³² In the market place, firms and households are the two main subjects involved in exchanging commodities. In both cases, market order is not relevant for their interior structure. The collective subject that we call ‘the family’ could not be considered as a model of libertarian relations. Nevertheless, notice the praise of traditional family relations in Acton, *passim*, and in George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty* (London: Buchan & Enright, 1982), *passim*. The family, as a form of community, is regulated by another order of rules. Hayek himself acknowledges the tension between “the two orders of rules”: those of the “small band”, like families, and those of “extended order of the cooperation through markets.” See Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism*, p. 18. Even writers sympathetic to Hayek, such as Vernon Smith, acknowledge the fact that ‘unintended outcomes’, although beneficial for everybody, may (because they are foreign to our immediate experience) confront and destroy the traditional bonds connecting people, without replacing them with new ones. V. L. Smith, “Human Nature: An Economic Perspective,” *Daedalus*, 133 (2004), *passim*. For the danger of the divisive effects of community in a multicultural polity and classical liberalism’s attention to the perils of pluralism, see Richard Boyd, “Reappraising the Scottish Moralists and Civil Society,” *Polity*, 33 (2000), *passim*.

³³ Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, vol. 3, p. 77.

³⁴ Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (London: Routledge, 1960), pp. 87-113.

³⁵ As Hodgson states, firms cannot be conceived as markets; they are not markets because of the “asymmetrical rights of authority within contracts of employment.” G. M. Hodgson, “Generalizing Darwinism to Social Evolution,” *passim*. As Burczak argues, capitalist exploitation violates principles of appropriative and contractual justice, rather than distributive justice, so a project of elimination of exploitation is conceivable without being a project of authoritarian collectivism, as the model of ‘state capitalism’ has been. Theodore Burczak, “Ellerman’s Labor Theory of Property and the Injustice of Capitalist Exploitation,” *Review of Social Economy*, 59 (2001), *passim*.

³⁶ See Étienne Balibar, *Les frontières de la démocratie* (Paris: La Découverte, 1992), *passim*.

³⁷ I treat this issue in Dionysis Drosos, “Adam Smith and Karl Marx : Alienation in Market Society” in *History of Economic Ideas*, 4 (1996), *passim*, and in my book entitled: *Market and State in Adam Smith: A Critique of Retrospective Justification of Neoliberalism* [in Greek] (Athens: Sakis Karageorgas Institute, 1994).

³⁸ Donald Winch, “Adam Smith’s Problem and Ours,” *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, 44 (1997), p. 385. Julio De Santa Ana also sees in this sacralization of the market a form of ‘civil religion’ and a dangerous idolatry that praises exploitation and injustice. Julio De Santa Ana, “The Concept of Civil Society,” *Ecumenical Review*, 46 (1994).

³⁹ For the distinction between ‘private property’ and ‘capitalist private property,’ see Burczak, *passim*.

⁴⁰ Robert Grant, “Morality, Social Policy and Berlin’s Two Concepts,” p. 1234.

⁴¹ For a critique of neoliberalism, transcending the ‘classical left’ alternative of state interventionism and inspired by the vision of developing the capacity of autonomous social actors to influence political decision-making, see Alain Tourain, *Beyond Neoliberalism* (Polity Press, 2001).

⁴² Mark Pennington (in his critique of Habermasian deliberative democracy from a Hayekian perspective) typically fails to distinguish between the consumer’s ‘selfish’ action and the citizen’s ‘other regarding action.’ He maintains that this is a “false dichotomy”, under the pretext that “markets are not atomistic, but fundamentally social institutions.” See M. Pennington, “Hayekian Political Economy and the Limits of Deliberative Democracy,” *Political Studies*, 51 (2003): 722-739. But of course the problem is not whether the market is a social institution; has there ever existed anything like an “atomistic” institution? As M. Peters has noticed, in Western advanced liberal states, *homo economicus* has displaced *homo politicus*, and “a notion of consumer sovereignty has been substituted for the sovereign citizen” as result of the subordination of both state and civil society to the market. M. Peters, *Poststructuralism, Marxism, and Neo-Liberalism: Between Theory and Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001.), p. 69. Nevertheless, see the review of his book from Richard Brosio, questioning the critical relevance of Peters’s postmodern assumptions. Richard Brosio, “Does Post Structuralist Thought Represent a Challenge to the Neoliberal Project and Actually Existing Capitalism?” *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 24 (2005), pp. 63-78.

⁴³ Richard Weaver, “Individuality and Modernity” in *On Individuality*, ed. Felix Morley (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1977), pp. 87-113.

⁴⁴ In this respect, it worth mentioning the vehemence with which Mises attacks Kant’s ‘Idea for a universal history with a cosmopolitan purpose,’ which he considers to be a monument of ‘Mysticism and Collectivism.’ Mises, *Market, State and Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 53. Baldacchino in “Ethics and the Common Good: Abstract vs. Experiential,” *Humanitas*, 15 (2002) blames Kant’s political theory for supporting an

“absolute tyranny in the name of universal right.” This holds much better for Hayek’s vision of liberal state, as expressed in his proposal for constitutional reform. Once again, the crucial dilemma should not be, I think, between the state’s *or* the market’s unchecked rule, but between active political citizenship and unmediated, ‘uncivilized’ capitalist rule, combining market *and* state authoritarianism. Kevin Dodson maintains that libertarian conservatism, for all its rhetoric for individual freedom, systematically by-passes the question of how Kant’s ‘regulating idea’ of autonomy could be realized without securing the capacity of every rational agent to be a ‘co-legislator’ – that is, to be subject to no one other – which is impossible without the material conditions necessary to the exercise of such independence. Kevin Dodson, “Kant’s Socialism: A Philosophical Reconstruction,” *Social Theory and Practice* 29 (2003), *passim*. Under neoliberal rule, the great bulk of mankind should be definitely excluded from this emancipatory perspective.

⁴⁵ Richard B. Day, “History, Reason and Hope: A Comparative Study of Kant, Hayek, and Habermas: Dialogue on Personal and Political Ethics” *Humanitas*, 15 (2002), pp. 10-13. Hayek’s moral system is *functionally subordinated* to the maintenance of its presuppositions; any aspiration to moral autonomy is out of question. In Hayek’s words: “A system of morals also must produce a *functional order*, capable of maintaining the apparatus of civilization which it presupposes” (Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, Vol. 2, p. 98).

⁴⁶ William E. Sheurman, “The Unholy Alliance of Carl Schmitt and Friedrich A. Hayek” *Constellations*, 4 (1997), p. 182.

⁴⁷ F. Renato Cristi, “Hayek and Schmitt on the Rule of Law,” pp. 521-535.

⁴⁸ Hayek, *Studies in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 169.

⁴⁹ Hayek himself praises the virtues of Schmitt’s understanding of the threat that welfare state activities represent for the rule of law; see Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), pp. 443, 485; Hayek, *Studies in Philosophy, Politics and Economics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 169; Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, Vol. 1, p. 139 and Vol. 3, pp. 194-5.

⁵⁰ Sheurman, pp. 172-177.

⁵¹ Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, Vol. 3, p. 77. See also Hayek’s statement, during his visit to Pinochet’s Chile, that a self-restrained dictatorship could do better in matters of liberal economic policy than an unhindered democracy. *El Mercurio*, 19 April, 1981, cited from Cristi, *Le Libéralisme Conservateur. Trois essais sur Schmitt, Hayek et Hegel* (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1993), p. 12. For the compatibility between authoritarian political forms and the capitalist market, as experienced in Chile, Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore, see David Harvey, *A Brief History of Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 64-86 and 120-151. On the erosive impacts on the foundations of citizenship and democratic life under neoliberal rule, see Henry A. Giroux, *The Terror of Neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the Eclipse of Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2004), *passim*. For the assumption of “ideological symmetry” between fundamentalism and neoliberalism, both being

forms of postmodern totalitarianism, see Couze Venn, "World Dis/Order. On Some Fundamental Questions," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 19 (2002): 121-136.

⁵² Hayek, *Knowledge, Evolution and Society* (London: Adam Smith Institute, 1983). See in this respect Andrew Gamble, *Hayek: the iron cage of liberty*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), pp. 28-29.

⁵³ Nick Bosanquet, *After the Night* (London: Heinemann, 1984), pp. 14-18.

⁵⁴ See Karl Polanyi's alarming statement more than 60 years ago that the securing of capitalist private property rights requires state intervention, so that free market policies entail political centralization and are parallel with state authoritarian forms. It is no wonder that Hayek's extreme individualism leads to what Hodgson calls "a kind of totalitarian liberalism." M. Hodgson, "The Political Economy of Utopia," *Review of Social Economy*, 53 (1995). Hayek's proposals for constitutional reformation, in the third volume of his *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, blatantly violate his 'anti-constructivist' principles. A number of critics have identified this obvious inconsistency. Chandran Kukathas, *Hayek and Modern Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 46-83; Maurice Glasman, "The Great Deformation: Polanyi, Poland and the Terrors of Planned Spontaneity", pp. 59-86; Gamble, *Hayek: the iron cage of liberty*, pp. 72-73; Bruce Caldwell, "Hayek and Socialism," *Journal of Economic Literature*, 35 (1997), p. 1873; Papaioannou, "The Moral Market, the Minimal State and the Great or Open Society"; Daniel R. Finn, "The Moral Ecology of Markets," pp. 150-155, Richard Robison, *The Neoliberal Revolution: Forging the Market State (International Political Economy)* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

⁵⁵ A similar conclusion is arrived at by a different reasoning by Roger Frydman, "L'État et le modèle économique" in *L'économie fiction, contre les nouveaux économistes*, eds. Wladimir Andreff et al (Paris: Maspéro, 1982), pp. 15-54.

⁵⁶ Hayek's logic is of a 'puritan'/totalitarian character. Hayek's ideal is a pure form of market society, released from every 'atavist' form of past social relations, which should be deliberately liquidated, while for Adam Smith, the 'system of natural liberty' is a kind of 'regulative idea' of a harmonious synthesis, a proper mixture of (real – not invented) traditions, mediated spontaneity, and wise 'public spirited' arrangements, checking the excesses and 'selfishness' of a "monopolizing or commercial spirit." For Smith, the market is a *civilizing* and, at the same time, *corrupting* mechanism. It is surely not a panacea.

⁵⁷ Hayek seems perfectly aware of this, hence his anxiety over the dangers of 'unlimited democracy.' See fn. 49, above.

⁵⁸ Such a project should not be rejected from the outset as unrealistic or paradoxical under the conditions offered by modern technological capabilities. T. Gaspar, P. Gervai, and L. Trautmann "The End of Neoliberal History: The Future of Economics Journal," *Futures*, 35 (2003) explore the new perspectives opened by Information Technology (IT) to resolve what they call 'the welfare-freedom-culture paradox' by unifying the order of an unselfish conception of

freedom with the harmonization of cultural traditions without contradicting universal moral values.

⁵⁹ Timothy Fort in “The First Man and the Company Man: The Common Good, Transcendence, and Mediating Institutions,” *American Business Journal*, 36 (1999) is too optimistic concerning the mutual supportiveness of liberalism and civic republicanism. Although he recognizes that intermediate institutions should be “autonomous centers of power” and that “it may well require civil disobedience,” he fails to identify Hayek’s liberalism as precisely that kind of ‘caricature’ of classic liberalism that Cass R. Sunstein (as cited by Fort) would find incompatible with his enriched conception of citizenship (See C.R. Sunstein, “Beyond the Republican Revival,” *Yale Law Journal*, 97 [1988], p. 1567). He further fails to realize that the authoritarian political project of neoliberalism is at odds with every conception of ‘common good’ other than the abstractness of the market, which is congenial with the abstractness of the state. Mediating institutions should be endowed with political power so that both state and market can be checked and balanced by moral and political agents.

⁶⁰ For Hayek, there is no alternative; the neoliberal ‘Great Society’ is the only possible and sustainable version of modernity. All concerns with altruism, equality, and solidarity are but forms of ‘atavism’, remnants of the ethics of tribal groups. A. Gamble, *Hayek: the iron cage of liberty*, pp. 26-31. As Hayek himself put it, “Socialism is simply the re-assertion of that tribal ethics whose gradual weakening had made an approach to the Great Society possible” (Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, Vol. 2, p. 134).

⁶¹ Classical liberalism, in its original expression as an integral part of the Scottish Enlightenment, presented a very interesting attempt to settle the issue. On this view, modern, ‘civilized’ society is conjoined with a form of moral community. This moral community was not conceived in terms of the submission of individuals to common values, but in terms of mutual recognition through the development of moral sentiments of approbation and disapprobation. However, this short-lived view was embedded substantially in its historical context. The neoliberal restatement of ideas, traced back to the Scottish Enlightenment, is heavily ideologically biased, detaching forms of thought from their original social and political context, reducing the richness of Hume’s, Smith’s and Ferguson’s moral argumentation, and silently by-passing the reservations expressed by Smith, Ferguson and of course Reid, with respect to the moral integrity and viability of the paradigm. This subject is treated in a book of mine entitled *Moral Community and Civil Society in the Scottish Enlightenment. The Utopia of Civilizing Commerce*, to be published in Greek.

FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY AND HUMAN VALUES IN AN AFRICAN CULTURE

B.A. Lanre-Abass

INTRODUCTION

Discussions about human values in various disciplines give rise to different set of problems. In the present context, however, issues surrounding human values will be discussed as they relate to feminist epistemology. This version of epistemology has grown out of critical interrogations of the universalistic presumptions of the theories of knowledge of the western philosophical tradition. Skeptical about the very possibility of developing a theory of knowledge “in general” whose claims to universal validity are premised on its abstraction from the specificities of human circumstances, proponents of this epistemology have insisted on the constitutive part that epistemic location plays in the making and evaluating of knowledge claims.¹ They take issue with the Enlightenment’s project of seeking an absolute grounding for knowledge and its resultant consequence (that of abstract individualism).

Lorraine Code, a major proponent of feminist epistemology, describes the dominant theme in Enlightenment epistemology as the “autonomy obsession of ideal knower with the separation of subject from object of the knower from the known.”² She calls for the need to remap the epistemic terrain. It is as a result of this call that this work offers an epistemology which holds that appeals to the subjective are legitimate; that knowledge is socially constructed and, therefore, must be seen in the context of the social relations in which its production occur. Recognition of the socially constructed nature of human society and relationships is reflected in and forms the basis of feminist epistemology. It is in line with this that this work examines the social processes through which values like care, love, concern, kindness and so on are created and maintained. It offers a feminist critique of traditional (western) epistemology, stressing the need to transcend the existing abstract individualism that is characteristic of western epistemology in order to reinforce values like care, love, emotional connectedness and attachment in an African society.

Much of the work on human values has occurred within a framework which takes for granted the social and cultural context within which it occurs. This paper raises questions within these contexts emphasizing at the same time that these values (which are often overlooked because society seems not to recognize their importance) are needed in order to ensure a stable human society. This paper concludes that feminist epistemology reflects certain important human values and,

since we find these values in African culture, feminist epistemology's critique of traditional (western) epistemology is plausible.

Human values are values centered on the autonomy of human beings as dignified, rational beings, possessing the source of truth and right. They are values which serve to achieve a harmonious ordering of human life in all its manifestations. They include values like honesty, solidarity, understanding, benevolence, compassion, loyalty, showing mercy, concern and kindness, exhibiting love and emotional attachment, generosity, and so on. These values are basic to human existence and no human relation is complete without them. Coupled with these are human dignity and respect for the individual, which are often considered basic.³

The phenomenon of human relations recognizes that each individual has certain needs, but that people differ in what they consider important. Such a relation also reveals that a person joins a group to get something from it and that the group in turn expects a contribution from each of its members.⁴ It is the ability to exhibit these values that makes human relations possible.

Similarly, each individual lives in contact with others because people are social beings. In African society for example, a person's first group is usually his or her immediate family – parents, sisters and brothers. In most African societies, individuals also participate in a large group of other close relatives. Children learn first to live with their family and playmates. As they grow, their activities may center on their church, friends, age group at school, or special interests and hobbies. Adults may surround themselves with their own family or belong to a labour union or political party.

Whether as a child or as an adult, the basic elements in human relations require the possession and display of the values of kindness, solidarity, care, love, emotional attachment, respect for human dignity, and so on. Nobody is an isolated individual because the self according to (Barbara Christian)⁵ has no speck from which to grow. Individuals are what they are in relation to society, the absence of which is not enough for human fulfillment. It is against this background that feminist epistemologists explain that there can be no Archimedean perspective from which knowledge can be acquired because such an assumption abstracts the knower from the known. Hence, we have the rejection of abstract individualism by feminist epistemologists, emphasizing the subject as a socially conditioned individual. Rather than being detached, the knowing subject must be connected to the object of knowledge, and this accounts for the feminist epistemologist's emphasis on values like involvement, attachment, connection, solidarity and so on. What, then, is the idea behind feminist epistemology?

THE MAIN IDEA OF FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY

Feminist epistemology is an aspect of social epistemology that explains how gender influences our ways of knowing. It focuses on issues about the subjugation of women's sensuous, concrete, relational activity which permits women to grasp aspects of nature and social life that are not accessible to inquiries grounded in men's characteristic activities.⁶ According to Jane Flax,

The task of feminist epistemology is to uncover how patriarchy has permeated both our concept of knowledge and the concrete content of bodies of knowledge, even that claiming to be emancipatory. Without adequate knowledge of the world and our history within it (and this includes knowing how to know), we cannot develop a more adequate social practice. A feminist epistemology is thus both an aspect of feminist theory and a preparation for and a central element of a more adequate theory of human nature and politics.⁷

Continuing in the same vein, Flax explains that feminist epistemology represents the return of the repressed and the exposure of the particular social roots of all apparently abstract and universal knowledge. It prepares the ground for a more adequate social theory in which philosophy and empirical knowledge are reunited and mutually enriched.⁸ Feminist epistemology is interested in examining the type of social relations that exist between men and women by directing our attention to the distinctively gendered senses of self, others, and nature and the relations among the three that are characteristic of African culture.

Feminist epistemology also attempts to offer an epistemology that is less distorted and more adequate. It focuses on the concept of reciprocal knowing which has to be relational and contextual, and will no longer enshrine the dualities of enlightenment epistemology. It is indeed a successor epistemology towards which feminist epistemology moves all.⁹

Feminist epistemology can be better explained through a careful understanding of social epistemology. Many feminist epistemologists have been inclined to embrace this type of epistemology. As Sandra Harding succinctly puts it, "knowledge claims are always socially situated."¹⁰ Situated knowledge considers how people may understand the same object in different ways that reflect the distinct relations in which they stand to it. It is described as knowledge that reflects the particular perspective of the subject.

Feminist epistemology, as a form of social epistemology, aims at incorporating the experiences of women within the existing epistemic framework. It offers ways of better understanding and evaluating female

experience. It is motivated by the recognition that everyone who knows something is a person occupying a position in one or more social groups. This in turn makes the social location of the knowing subject relevant to the epistemic evaluation of the subject's beliefs.

Again, feminist epistemology explains that we are cognitively located within an epistemic community, and what happens or goes on in that community and our relationship with others affects what we know. The epistemic community itself is created, maintained and enlarged by the act of receiving and transmitting knowledge. All these activities are possible because individuals are epistemically responsible to their communities. It becomes evident here that there can be no Archimedean perspective from which knowledge can be acquired, as held by traditional epistemologists.

Feminist epistemologists are mainly concerned with abstract individualism as a feature of traditional epistemology. They trace the failure of traditional epistemology to flawed conceptions of knowledge and the knower's objectivity. They therefore offer various arguments, which they present, not only as essential arguments in feminist epistemology but also as reactions to traditional epistemology.

FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY AS A REACTION TO TRADITIONAL EPISTEMOLOGY

The main argument in feminist epistemology is premised upon a particular idea: the rejection of the attempt to find an absolute grounding for knowledge. The belief in a permanent, ahistorical, Archimedean point that can provide a certain grounding for knowledge claims, according to feminist epistemologists, misconstrues both the nature of subjective intellection and the nature of the objective world.¹¹ They base their argument on the claim that the dominant epistemologies of modernity, as they have developed out of the Enlightenment, have defined themselves around the ideals of objectivity and value neutrality.¹² Ideal objectivity has come to mean a detached, neutral and disinterested approach to a subject matter that exists in a publicly observable space, separate from knowers/observers and making no personal claims on them. The ideal of value neutrality, on the other hand, elaborates this disinterested aspect. Such ideals are best suited to govern evaluations of the knowledge claims of persons whose situations allow them to assume that theirs is a 'view-from-nowhere.' Feminists' attack on foundationalism therefore raises questions concerning the specific forms of knowing, and the particular conceptions of subjectivity. A consequence of such a view-from-nowhere conception of knowledge is that the individual becomes disembodied. This means that the individual becomes an isolated knower occupying a

completely neutral standpoint. This view of an abstract individual reflects neither group interests nor private emotions.

Specifically, the abstract individualism of traditional epistemology became the most controversial point in the feminist reshaping of the knowing subject. Xose and Adan¹³ give four main characteristics of the abstract and individual subject of traditional epistemology. First, the knowing subject is culturally and historically invisible and disembodied, because knowledge is universal by definition. Second, the subject of scientific knowledge is different from the object it tries to describe and explain, since it is determined both in time and in space. Third, knowledge acquisition takes place in neutral individuals or groups of individuals that exhibit no class, gender or race specific features and, finally, the subject is homogenous and unitary, since knowledge must be consistent and coherent.

Feminist epistemologies require all of these characteristics and the foundationalist epistemologies they reflect. It is for this reason that, as noted above, Lorraine Code¹⁴ insists that we need to remap the epistemic terrain. Mapping out the epistemic terrain calls for an analysis of what it means to say "S knows that P." On this view, the knower who occupies the S position is anonymous and interchangeable with any other S who is rational, self-conscious, and autonomous. It is also assumed that such knowers can have the same cognitive access to P. The question, which is directed to the anonymous S's of such standard formulations, is, according to Sandra Harding, "Whose knowledge?"¹⁵ Here, she is not expecting a simple answer of one's identity; she is interested in exploring the complex relations through which knowers and knowledge production takes place, relations that also become constitutive of those knowers and of that knowledge.¹⁶

With a similar emphasis on "who knows", Lynn Hankinson Nelson argues that the feminist analysis of political positions and relations in the development of knowledge (including science), especially as they concern sex/gender systems, leads us to entertain seriously the view that knowers might be more accurately identified as communities in that "communities, not individuals, 'acquire' and possess knowledge."¹⁷ In line with this, one can say truth is plural and its foundation lies in the shared historical and cultural meanings of the social world.

Another issue that has taken center stage in feminist epistemology has to do with certain notions often employed in mainstream epistemology. Feminist epistemologists are of the opinion that central epistemological regulatory notions like objectivity, good method, rationality, and the abstract individual are conceptualized to favour men.¹⁸ As a result they, like the anti-foundationalists, concentrate less on formal universal conditions for making and justifying knowledge, but rather emphasise the specificities of knowledge construction. Apart from

conceptualizing these notions to favour men, traditional epistemology fails to take into account real life situations.

The argument that certain notions are conceptualized to favour men can be better understood by drawing on Nancy Chodorow's object-relations theory¹⁹, which explains that women are "made not born" in such a way as to define and experience themselves concretely and relationally.²⁰ In contrast, newborn males are turned into men who define and experience themselves abstractly and as fundamentally isolated from other people and nature. Not-yet-gendered newborn males and females are shaped into the kinds of personalities who will want to perform activities that are peculiar to the masculine and feminine gender. The consequences that object-relation theorists describe are just what Hartsock finds when she examines the adult division of labour by gender: relational femininity vs. abstract masculinity.

The consequence of the above division is the creation of a mode of knowledge-seeking structured by certain sets of dualisms. Such dualisms include culture/nature, rational mind/prerational body and irrational emotions and values, objectivity/subjectivity, and public/private and then links men and masculinity to the former and women and femininity to the latter in each dichotomy. These dualisms are the consequences of the traditional epistemologists' attempt to base knowledge on reason, excluding the constitutive role of emotion as elements of knowledge. As a result of this exclusion, feminist epistemologists see the need to offer an epistemology that stresses the importance of values, such as emotional connectedness, love, care, concern, involvement attachment, solidarity and so on. This work, therefore, emphasizes the need to reinforce these values which are also values that the traditional Yoruba society stresses.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONCEPTS AND HUMAN VALUES IN YORUBA CULTURE.

The Yorubas are Sudanic-speaking African people inhabiting southwest Nigeria and parts of Benin and Togo. More than seventeen million live in these areas. They speak a language called Yoruba, which belongs to the Niger-Congo family of African languages.²¹ Traditional Yoruba society included city-states, which consisted of towns, villages, and the surrounding farms and forests. Some city-states were ruled by a king called an Oba, who was believed to be divine. Others were governed by chiefs or by the heads of large family groups. Some city-states became large kingdoms, the most powerful of which were Ife and Oyo.

The Yorubas recognize certain human values like love (*ifé*), kindness (*inurere, ore*), concern (*aniyan, ifiyesi, ohun ti o kan ni*), helping others (*iranlowo*), compassion (*Anu*), friendliness (*ore, enikeji*), mutual

agreement or solidarity (*ifowosowo*), care (*ajo, itoju*), respect (*owo, kasi*), faithfulness (*otito, loto*), and so on. These values are more than mere behaviour; they are particular ways of acting and, hence, they are not gender specific.

The value of caring for others (*ajo, itoju*), for example, involves caring about somebody and takes at least some of its value from the object to which it is directed. It is commonly expressed among the Yorubas as:

Eni keni ti iwo nipa lati se iranlowo fun, ohun ni enikeji re.
(Whoever is opportuned to help or care for his nearest neighbour should do so.)

This expression requires that individuals display concern toward others, not only because caring is a fundamental value, but also because it is reciprocal.

Eni t'o ba da omi siwaju yoo te ile tutu. (He who does good to others should expect good in return.)

However, the value of caring for others is often seen as fundamental because other values get their significance from the way they contribute to it. Caring expresses a basic tendency toward action, a positive and responsive nonindifference:²² a disposition to foster the other, which logically entails a prior knowledge of the other's good. One could, for example, display receptivity (*gbigba sinu*), relatedness (*jije iyekan*), and responsiveness (*idahun*) toward others. These values are gender-neutral. They aid in understanding and in challenging various attitudes of indifference towards the plight of others.

Caring, once again, seems a particular way in which one's regard for others is expressed. This value with its attendant features is overlooked by mainstream epistemology because they are cast as feminine. If they are more characteristic of women than of men (as held by some eighteenth century epistemologists), then this accounts for the feminist epistemologists' claim that these values are gender-neutral and, hence, the need for everybody to possess them to ensure a peaceful society.

A care-focused feminist approach to epistemology has as its primary task the rehabilitation of such culturally associated values as compassion, empathy, sympathy, nurture, kindness and so on. It makes the culturally ascribed 'female' virtue of care, for example, just as important to everybody as the culturally ascribed male virtue of justice.

Caring as a value has associated features which are expressed in form of love, emotional attachment, friendliness, connectedness, involvement and so on. The Yorubas would say:

Iwa j'owa lo'unje ore jore. (People of similar character flock together, becoming friends.)

In any society, there are images of friendship and accepted ways of behaving toward others. When people claim that they are friends, they can point to cultural images, rules of conduct and customary modes of behaviour to confirm their claims. The Yorubas, for example believe that everybody must possess good character traits (*iwa omoluabi*). For them,

Ehin funfun l'oso enu; iwa rere loso eniyan. (Just as white teeth are good and desirable for the mouth, so too is good character desirable for human beings.)

These good character traits (*iwa omoluabi*) enable an individual to enter into a close relationship with the other or to be a member of an association. Friendship is simply a human condition and, in so far as one regards it thus, it is appropriate to look at it within the context of a theory of needs, a typology of love and an examination of relational provisions.

Relationships are sustained not merely by people's feelings for one another but also by people's routines, their trivial interconnections and presence in one another's spheres of life, by their strategic behaviour intended to sustain the relationships and also by the actions and communications of other friends, mutual acquaintances or colleagues.²³

One way of looking at it is to recognize that friendship involves the sharing of our lives, not just our feelings, and that our lives are made up of all that humans think, feel, experience, and do. If friendship involves all these, little wonder then that the Yorubas always emphasize reciprocity:

Bun mi, n bun o, l'opolo i ke, fun mi, ki nfun o, ni ile-aye. (Give and take is the usual song of the toad and this also applies to human beings.)

Apart from developing a reciprocal attitude, individuals should see themselves as a group, identify with each other, and have a sense of collective esprit de corps:

Agba jo owo lafi nso ya, owo kan o gberu dori. (People should collectively come together because one hand cannot lift a heavy load.)

Also:

Igi kan ko le da igbo se. (A tree can never make a forest.)

Interaction creates socio-cultural worlds where different roles are played by different individuals. Through this process of interaction, normative expectations are clarified, priorities affirmed and relationship cultures develop.²⁴ This challenges claims to independent or isolated living and such expressions as “I am only enjoying this relationship, I can do things as well on my own and remain detached from the other person.” This expression is captured as:

Didun l’o dun l’a n ba ore je efo, ti ile oge to oge ije. (Eating vegetables with a friend denotes that the relationship has not gone sour, for one can just as easily eat one’s vegetables alone.)

Feminist epistemologists favour an expression of a self that is deeply embedded in relationships. There is, therefore, a need to call for a very supportive and constructive relationship. Friendship, like love, is unlikely to occur randomly between those in different parts of the social structure. As explained by Allan,

Friendships in whatever form they take are relationships of equality. They are so in two different senses. Firstly, there is reciprocity and an equivalence of exchange within friendship.... Secondly friendships are relationships of equality in that friends are accepted as being equal within the relationship. There is no hierarchy in friendship, no differentiation.²⁵

People have come to realize that communities are ultimately social networks. One gets to know more about others in such networks and the possibility of receiving help without actually asking for it is greater within such networks because of the greater visibility of the situation. These networks stimulate friendship. The relationships continue to exist as sources of attachment, interaction and intimacy. In all these three, emotion (*imi-edun*) plays a central role. It allows people to be involved with others. This involvement requires that the principal actor should do to the other person what should be done to him. This confirms the reality of our interconnection; hence the need to take other people’s feelings into consideration. An expression in the Yoruba language enjoins that one should understand others as being in one’s own place.

Bi a ba be igi ni igbo, ki a fi oran ro ara eni wo. (One should ask oneself the question of whether one can allow a person to cut him/her the way he/she cuts the tree in the forest.)

The tree (*igi*) symbolizes the helpless individual whose feelings one has to take into consideration.

The display of emotion is essential to the individual (male or female) and to society. Emotions should not be seen as necessarily passive or involuntary responses to the world. Rather, they are ways in which we engage actively and even construct the world. If we have no emotional response to the world, it is inconceivable that we could ever come to value one state of affairs more highly than another. Emotions have both “mental” and “physical” aspects, each of which conditions the other; they presuppose language and a social order. Thus, they can be attributed only to what are sometimes called “whole persons,” engaged in the on-going activity of social life.²⁶

Just as values presuppose emotions, so emotions presuppose values. Values presuppose emotions to the extent that emotions provide the experiential basis for values. Emotions and values are closely related. The relation is so close, indeed, that some philosophical accounts reduce values to the holding or expressing of certain emotional attitudes.

By construing emotion as epistemologically subversive, the western tradition tends to obscure its role in the construction of knowledge and in the lives of individuals. This derogatory western attitude towards emotion fails to recognize that emotion is necessary for human survival. Emotion prompts us to act appropriately, to approach some people and situations and to avoid others, and more importantly, to be involved in others’ plights. Without emotion, human life would be unthinkable. Emotions have both intrinsic and instrumental value. Although not all emotions are enjoyable or even justifiable, life without any emotion would be life without any meaning. Emotion allows people to be aware of many aspects of the situation around them. Hence, emotion and other associated experiences may make a valuable contribution to knowledge. Rather than repressing emotion in epistemology in favour of (male) abstract rationality, it is necessary to rethink the relation between knowledge and emotion, and construct conceptual models that demonstrate the mutually constitutive rather than the oppositional relation between reason and emotion. It is against this background that this work argues that experiences such as showing care, concern, love, being emotionally attached and connected should be seen as important human values, the absence of which will pose problems for a peaceful and mutual co-existence among members of any given society.

Like everything else that is human, emotions in part are socially constructed; like all social constructs, they are historical products, bearing the marks of the society that constructed them. Within the very language of emotion, cultural norms and expectations are embedded. Thus, we absorb the standards and values of our society in the very process of learning the language of emotion, and those standards and values are built into the foundation of our emotional constitution.

Just as appropriate emotions may contribute to the development of a society, so a society may contribute to the development of appropriate emotions. Human values require that the members of both sexes individually develop all their faculties as far as possible and individually integrate them into a harmonious whole in their own person. In this regard, there are no gender-specific values. Emotions are not feminine nor are values gender-specific just because they have been thought to be so by men.²⁷

The constitutive role of emotion squares with the notions of human dignity (*jije enia*) and respect for persons (*Bi bowo fun enia, kika enia si*). Respect is reciprocal and this calls for the need to curb all forms of excessive behaviour that are likely to pull down a person's integrity. The Yorubas emphasize respecting the elderly because:

Eni aba laba ni baba. (The very first person in the village is the eldest.)

He is expected to be of good behaviour and to lead by example. He can neither do things in isolation, nor can he be a tyrant. He thus carries other people along in decision making

Agba t'o ba je aje-iwehin ni yoo ru igba re de'le. (An elderly person who decides to finish his meal alone will take the bowl home unassisted.)

Also:

Agbalagba t'o ba wo ewu aseju, ete ni yo fi ri. (An elderly person who is intolerant will meet with people's disfavour.)

To ensure that the elderly are accorded a certain respect, which is also reciprocal, the Yorubas enjoin that they be straight-forward in their dealings with others, irrespective of sex and age.

Bi a o je osaka, ki a je Osaka; bi a o si je osoko, ki a je osoko; osakansoko ko ye omo eniyan. (A person should take a proper stand on any issue. Not making the appropriate decision or being indecisive is bad.)

The implication of the above is that respect (*Bi bowofun enia*), truth-telling (*otito*), loyalty (*iwa isoto*), and honesty (*isedede*) are values which the Yorubas also cherish. For them,

A ki i ni otito ni inu k'a gbawin ika s'orun. (An honest person cannot be wicked to others otherwise such a person is not honest.)

This is similar to another proverb which says:

Eni a ko ni ka t'o si se e, oti ni ika ninu funra re tele ni; ta ni n ko niki a to se rere? (A person who was taught to be wicked and consequently became wicked has built-in vices, for no one teaches the virtues of being good before doing well).

What follows from the above, however, is that there are African critiques of traditional (Western) epistemology that are related to the values earlier presented. One of these is highlighted by Zubairi B. Nasseem in his *African Heritage and Contemporary Life: An Experience of Contemporary Change*.²⁸ In an attempt to explain some epistemological aspects of the African heritage, Nasseem argues that most of the contemporary problems of human inter-state, inter-racial, and international relations arise due to ignorance of or unsympathetic regard for the views of the "other." He describes the starting point of epistemology as a controversial issue in the history of philosophy. Traditional epistemology is said to have started from the Descartes' postulate, "Cogito ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am). Later western epistemologists took up their arguments from this dictum either by affirmation (in the case of the rationalists) or by denial (in the case of the empiricists).

The starting point of African epistemology traditionally speaking, going by Nasseem's idea, should be the premise, "We are, therefore I am." The African philosophy is a collective mind and, for the African, "I" presupposes "We." In fact, "I" is contingent upon "We."

Speaking in a similar tone, K.C Anyanwu explains that, as we deal with African epistemology, it is pertinent to realize that we are entering into a cultural world whose philosophy of integration, and whose principles of understanding and of aesthetic continuum, differ completely from the western ideas of what constitutes trustworthy knowledge and reality.²⁹ For him, knowledge is not universal but local. In the traditional African view, knowledge is immediately social: it is not "I" who knows, but "We" who know. It emphasizes interrelationships among people: this is also the emphasis of African knowledge systems.

Commenting on African approaches to epistemology, Ptika Ntuli³⁰ explains that an understanding of interconnectedness and simultaneous states of being characterizes African philosophy of being in the world and the relationships among people. We need to end the dualism set up by western thought. Interdependence is captured in the concept "Ubuntu" (*Ajosepo*, in Yoruba culture). This philosophy recognizes that individual identity is possible only in community with others and nature.

“I am because you are.” Without relationship and reference to the other, the individual cannot be. One cannot have a sense of “I” without a sense of “We.”

Ntuli further explains that, in Africa, the human being exists because I belong; I belong, therefore I exist. It is a being *with* somebody that structures us. This philosophy creates a mindfulness of the other that is necessary, relevant and significant to any human existence. It challenges us to see the importance of interrelationships among human beings. These interrelationships underpin our subconscious mind and underlie the culture in which we live in. It is therefore not difficult to see that feminist epistemology has a support in African philosophy that stresses interconnectedness and mutual understanding.

CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that feminist epistemology is basically correct in its critique of dominant epistemological models. Feminist epistemology reflects certain important moral as well as epistemic values which are overlooked by traditional epistemology. This work argued that these values are values which we find in African culture, and all that human beings are expected to possess in order to have a peaceful society where everybody will live in mutual agreement. This validates feminist epistemology. It is in order to further highlight the plausibility of feminist epistemology’s critique of traditional (Western) epistemology that this work drew on the Yoruba culture, which also emphasizes values stressed by feminist epistemology. They include values such as emotional involvement in others’ plights, showing concern, respect, kindness, being honest, showing care, love and so on.

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NOTES

¹ Lorraine Code, “Feminist Epistemology” in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig (London: Routledge, 1998), Vol. 3, pp. 597-602.

² Lorraine Code, *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 24.

³ *The World Book Encyclopedia*, www.worldbook.com. p. 427.

⁴ *The World Book Encyclopedia*, p. 427.

⁵ Barbara Christian, *Black Feminist Criticism: Perspectives on Black Women Writers* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1985), p. 54.

⁶ Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 148.

⁷ Jane Flax, "Political Philosophy and the Patriarchal Unconscious: A Psychoanalytic Perspective on Epistemology and Metaphysics" in *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology and Philosophy of Science*, eds. Sandra Harding and Merrill Hintikka (London: Reidel Publishing Company, 1983), p. 269.

⁸ Flax, "Political Philosophy and the Patriarchal Unconscious," p. 249.

⁹ Harding, *The Science Question*, p. 153.

¹⁰ Harding, *The Science Question*, p. 65.

¹¹ Mary Hawkesworth, "Knowing, Known: Feminist Theory and Claims of Truth" *Signs* (Spring 1989), p. 547.

¹² Lorraine Code, "Feminist Epistemology," pp. 597-602.

¹³ M. Xose Agra and Carme Adan, "Feminist Epistemology without Knowing Subject?" <http://orlando.women.it/cyberarchive/files/adan.htm>.

¹⁴ Code, *What Can She Know?*, p. 24.

¹⁵ Sandra Harding, *Who's Science? Who's Knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 48-49.

¹⁶ Phyllis Rooney, "Feminist-Pragmatist Revisionings of Reason, Knowledge and Philosophy," *Hypatia*, 8 (1993), p. 24.

¹⁷ Lynn Hankinson, Nelson, *Who Knows? From Quine to a Feminist Empiricism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), p. 24.

¹⁸ Lorraine Code, "Feminist Epistemology".

¹⁹ Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 39.

²⁰ Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, p. 42.

²¹ Dan R. Aronson, "Yoruba" in *The World Book Encyclopedia* Vol. 21 (USA: World Book Inc., 2002), p. 569.

²² Jeannine Ross Boyer and James Kinder Mann Nelson, "A Comment on Fry's *The Role of Caring in a Theory of Nursing Ethics*," *Hypatia*, 5 (1990), p. 157.

²³ S. Duck, *Relating To Others* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1988), p. 100.

²⁴ Pat O'Connor, *Friendship Between Women: A Critical Review* (New York: Harvester Wheat Sheaf, 1992), p. 147.

²⁵ G. Allan, "Friendships and Care for Elderly People," *Ageing and Society*, 6 (1986): p. 45.

²⁶ Allison M. Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology," *Inquiry*, 32 (1989), pp. 158-159.

²⁷ Susan Khinzaw, "The Reasonable Heart: Mary Wollstonecraft's View of the Relation between Reason and Feeling in Morality, Moral Psychology and Moral Development," *Hypatia*, 13 (1998), p. 87.

²⁸ Zubairi B. Nasseem, "African Heritage and Contemporary Life: An Experience of Contemporary Life," <http://www.crvp.org/book/series02/11-2/chapter-i.htm>.

²⁹ K.C. Anyanwu "The African Worldview and Theory of Knowledge" in E.A. Rush and K.C Anyanwu (eds.) *African Philosophy* (Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 1984), p. 78.

³⁰ Ptika Ntuli was interviewed by Alison Lazarus. See Alison Lazarus “African and Feminist Approaches to Peace Education: Meetings on the Margins,” *Conflict Prevention Newsletter*, 3 (October 2000), pp. 10-12.

TEMPELS ET LA PHILOSOPHIE BANTOUE

Mejame Ejede Charley

Placide Tempels a extrapolé sur toute la pensée des “Banntu” et même au-delà, ce qu’il a abusivement appelé “l’ontologie des Baluba” – et il s’impose de dire un mot sur les théories de Tempels. L’on sait qu’en dépit de la critique de ces théories par Paulin Hountondji et d’autres, beaucoup de gens, y compris des Africains, continuent à les considérer comme un dogme. Pourtant, en les situant critiquement dans le contexte linguistique Luba et Bantu, elles ne tiennent pas.

En effet, par son livre: *La philosophie bantoue*¹, Tempels a popularisé le concept de “*philosophie bantoue*.” Ce livre contient même un chapitre (le chapitre 11) consacré à l’ontologie bantoue, et il parle des “systèmes ontologiques bantous” etc. Le fait même d’avoir osé parler de “philosophie bantoue” ou d’ “ontologie bantoue” dans le contexte géopolitique de son époque, constitue un grand mérite pour Tempels, étant donné le courage que cela exigeait à cette époque où l’Europe entière était encore toujours prisonnière des théories racistes qui avaient engendré le nazisme, entre autres, mêmes si celui-ci venait d’être politiquement vaincu. Malheureusement, en analysant le contenu même de son livre, nous avons le regret de devoir dire que ce livre a handicapé l’émergence d’une véritable pensée philosophique bantoue ou de véritables ontologies africaines dans la mesure où a) d’une part, les théories avancées dans son livre ayant un semblant de cohérence pour ceux qui ne connaissent pas les réalités linguistique africaines ou pour ceux qui ne se donnent pas la peine de les analyser eux-mêmes, beaucoup d’intellectuels se contentent de les répéter sans le moindre esprit critique; b) d’autre part, parce que certains critiques africains qui ont perçu le caractère superficiel et même fallacieux de ces théories et qui les ont rejetées en même temps que tout ce qu’ils ont appelé “les ethnophilosophies,” n’ont pas été capables de les dépasser et de proposer quelque chose de mieux. Les deux positions vis-à-vis des théories de Tempels et de ce qui a été appelé l’ “ethnophilosophie” ont conduit la pensée philosophique bantoue dans la phase actuelle qui se caractérise par une grande stérilité et, plus grave encore, dans une sorte de paralysie.

Nous aussi nous sommes conscient du fait que l’ethnophilosophie n’est pas encore de la philosophie, mais ce n’est qu’en cherchant à dépasser positivement l’ethnophilosophie que la vraie philosophie africaine verra le jour. Nous pensons, comme Tshiamalenga Ntumba, que l’hypercriticisme des ethnophilosophies finira par n’être que stérile, si elle continue à rejeter tout effort de recherche sur les traditions africaines.

L'autre livre qui a beaucoup influencé la pensée philosophique bantoue est celui d'Alexis Kagame intitulé: "la philosophie bantu-rwandaise de l'être" paru en 1956.² Je dois d'abord signaler le fait que, à ma connaissance, Alexis Kagame n'a pas pris clairement position pour ou contre Tempels mais que, du fait même qu'il n'en parle que discrètement, il est probable qu'il n'acceptait pas ses théories même s'il ne les a pas critiquées ouvertement. Pourtant les critiques des ethnophilosophies le rangent abusivement du même côté que Tempels. Pour moi, il existe une différence fondamentale entre les théories de Tempels et celles d'Alexis Kagame. Alors que Tempels, dans un langage à la fois arrogant et paternaliste, impose à la pensée bantoue quelque chose qui lui est étrangère comme nous allons le démontrer, Alexis Kagame, au contraire, en mettant en exergue une partie des catégories sémantique que l'on retrouve dans beaucoup de langues de la zone orientale, dit quelque chose de vrai, quelles que soient les reproches faites à sa méthodologie par ailleurs. Le problème pose par la méthode de Kagame, c'est qu'il ne prend pas assez de précautions avant de généraliser sa découverte sur l'ensemble du monde Bantou. Le Ntu n'a pas la même valeur dans toutes les langues Bantu. Ce n'est d'ailleurs pas étonnant que ses critiques les virulents soient des ressortissants de la partie occidentale de la zone Bantoue dans laquelle le phénomène "NTU" n'est pas aussi vivement perçu que dans la zone centrale et orientale. De toutes les façons, Kagame aurait pu approfondie ses recherches sur les langues bantoues et aller au-delà des classes nominales car il aurait pu alors se rendre compte du fait que les catégories sémantiques construites autour de la racine NTU ne représente, en définitive, qu'une infime partie de l'univers noétique bantou. De toutes les façons, les mérites d'Alexis Kagame vont bien au-delà de ses écrits sur la philosophie bantoue, et comme il a admis lui-même, c'est aux générations montantes qu'il appartient de le corriger et de le compléter.

Revenons à présent sur les théories de Placide Tempels pour les soumettre au test de l'analyse critique du langage, car, si ce qu'il appelle la philosophie ou l'ontologie bantu est vrai, seule l'analyse des langues bantu en commençant par le kiluba qui est la langue des peuples parmi lesquels Tempels a travaillé et qui sont donc censés lui avoir fourni la matière première à partir de laquelle il a construit ses théories.

Nous pensons donc que ce que Placide Tempels appelle "philosophie bantoue" et ce qu'il a dit sur "l'ontologie bantoue" est complètement à côté de la réalité. Voici à peu près l'essentiel de ce que nous considérons comme de graves lacunes d'ordre méthodologique dans son système:

En dépit de sa bonne volonté fort louable de chercher à axer la pensée africaine ou bantoue sur les systèmes de pensée universels, Tempels est resté incapable de transcender son temps pour sortir de l'a priori raciste qui cherchait constamment à inférioriser les formes

d'humanités et de cultures autres que les humanités et les cultures occidentales. Cet a priori raciste, en ce qui concerne les capacités intellectuelles humaines, se manifeste a) dans certaines théories anthropologiques que nous retrouvons chez certains philosophes du siècle des lumières tels que Voltaire et Hegel; b) dans certaines théories évolutionnistes qui, dans les sciences de l'homme, aboutirent aux classifications hiérarchiques des populations humaines du globe et de leurs cultures; c) dans les théories de Frazer sur l'animisme et de Lévy-Bruhl sur la mentalité primitive. Les effets conjugués de toutes ces théories finirent par ériger en dogme une sorte de dualisme épistémologique que l'on perçoit immédiatement dès que l'on commence à lire les écrits de Tempels sur la pensée bantoue. Tempels était, en effet, fermement convaincu qu'il appartenait à une race qui possédait des facultés intellectuelles supérieures à celle des autres races, et à celles de "peuples primitifs" qu'il appelle aussi les "peuples claniques," dont font partie les peuples noirs en général et les Bantous en particulier. Ce qu'il y a d'assez particulier dans le système de Tempels, c'est qu'il est parvenu, grâce à son paternalisme lampant, à concilier dans sa personne l'a priori raciste dont nous venons de parler avec sa double mission d'évangélisation et de colonisation. S'il voulait généreusement mettre son intelligence "supérieure" à la disposition de ce qu'il appelait "les systèmes ontologiques des Bantous" pour en saisir l'essence et la porter à la connaissance du public, surtout de ses confrères missionnaires et de ses compatriotes coloniaux, c'est parce qu'il était avant tout un missionnaire européen qui croyait fermement que l'Afrique ne devra son salut qu'à sa christianisation et à son occidentalisation. Autrement dit, ce qu'il croit apporter à l'Afrique en tant que missionnaire et 'philosophe' c'est ce que nous pouvons appeler, en reprenant ses propres termes: "la sagesse de la civilisation chrétienne occidentale." Ainsi, l'un des problèmes posés par l'approche des réalités africaines par Tempels et par tous ceux qui ont essayé de prendre au sérieux la pensée africaine du temps de la colonisation, c'est le fait de vouloir à tout prix la subordonner aux modes de penser européens ou occidentaux tout en respectant les barrières imposés par le système hiérarchique des races et des cultures élaboré par le racisme des temps modernes. C'est dans cette logique que Tempels déclare que:

La civilisation bantoue sera chrétienne ou elle ne sera pas. L'europanisation superficielle des masses ne peut que tuer le bantouisme. Mais comme le christianisme a pu informer une civilisation occidentale, il contient dans la vérité de sa doctrine et le dynamisme humain qu'il suscite les ressources pour sublimer et ennoblir une civilisation bantoue.³

Vouloir “sublimier et ennoblir” la civilisation bantoue par son assimilation dans une autre civilisation implique bien un ordre axiologique qui va du moins noble au plus noble et du plus bas vers le plus haut, cela va de soi. Tempels a délibérément adopté un système qui divise intellectuellement l’humanité en deux classes. Le langage dichotomisé qui oppose constamment le “nous”(les civilisés, les blancs) au “eux”(les primitifs, les noirs, les bantou), adoptée par Placide Tempels, ainsi affecte la façon même dont il formule son “ontologie” et se doublera d’un paternalisme inacceptable comme l’on peut le voir aux déclarations qui suivent qui reviennent partout dans son oeuvre:

Par les méthodes d’analyse et de synthèse de nos disciplines intellectuelles nous pouvons, donc devons rendre aux ‘primitifs’ le service de rechercher, classifier et systématiser les éléments de leur système ontologique.⁴

Il est grand temps, dit-il, de définir la pensée fondamentale de l’ontologie bantoue, unique clé permettant de pénétrer la pensée des indigènes. Un des problèmes que pose la méthodologie de Tempels c’est l’incohérence et l’imprécision dans usage de la terminologie philosophique classique. Ainsi, le terme “ontologie” qui devrait se comprendre comme un discours sur l’étant, ce qui suppose qu’il s’agit bien d’un système de pensée clairement et explicitement exprimé dans une terminologie spécifique, désigne chez lui tout autre chose:

N’attendons pas du premier Noir venu, (et notamment des jeunes gens), qu’il puisse nous faire un exposé systématique de son système ontologique. Cependant, cette ontologie existe: elle pénètre et informe toute la pensée du primitif, elle domine et oriente tout son comportement.⁵

L’autre incohérence du livre de Tempels est que l’hôte de son ontologie est tantôt le Mulaba, tantôt le Muntu, tantôt le primitif, et même le noir comme le montre le passage que nous venons de citer. L’on peut ainsi se demander finalement s’il s’agit de l’ontologie noire, de l’ontologie primitive, de l’ontologie clanique, de l’ontologie bantoue ou de l’ontologie luba. Or, les Baluba sont un peuple bien connu de l’Afrique centrale, les peuples dits Bantous sont des peuples africains d’une origine linguistique et peut-être ethnique commune mais qui sont comptés en termes de centaines. Si maintenant le système s’étend à tous les Noirs nous passons du domaine ethnographique au biologique, en étendant le système jusqu’à la catégorie des peuples non occidentaux mais non clairement définie que Tempels appelle les “primitifs” ou les “peuples claniques” nous sommes au niveau des théories évolutionnistes. Quelle est donc la caractéristique

commune à toutes ces catégories humaines qui permet à Tempels de penser pour eux et de formuler leur ontologie implicite qu'elles sont incapables de formuler elles-mêmes? Tempels répond lui-même: la caractéristique commune à ces peuples c'est tout simplement de ne pas appartenir à la culture occidentale chrétienne qui crée un type humain ainsi défini:

Si l'Européen moderne et hypercivilisé ne parvient pas à se libérer de l'attitude ancestrale, c'est parce que ses réflexes reposent sur un système complet philosophique, d'inspiration chrétienne, sur une conception intellectuelle, claire, complète et positive, de l'univers de l'homme, de la vie et de la mort et de la survie d'un principe spirituel: l'âme. Cette acception du monde visible et invisible est imprimée trop profondément dans l'esprit de la culture occidentale pour ne pas ressurgir irrésistiblement lors des grands événements de la vie.⁶

Si Tempels cherche avec tant d'intérêt à reconstituer l'ontologie des "primitifs" ou des Bantu malgré eux, c'est parce qu'il semble croire en l'existence d'une pensée logique universelle et en un système philosophique simple et primitif ou en une ontologie logiquement cohérente que tous les peuples auraient reçue en partage au départ, mais qui ne subsisterait qu'à l'état dégradé chez les peuples non-chrétiens et non-occidentaux et donc chez les Bantu.

Sans exclure d'autres incidences (divines ou humaines), il nous faut postuler, chercher et trouver, comme ultime fondement d'un comportement humain logique et universel, une pensée humaine logique.

Point de comportement vital sans un sens de la vie; ... point de constant pratique rédemptrice sans philosophie du salut.

Faut-il dès lors s'étonner de ce que nous trouvons chez les Bantous, et plus généralement chez tous les primitifs, comme fondement de leurs conceptions intellectuelles de l'univers, quelques principes de base, et même un système philosophique, relativement simple et primitive, dérivé d'une ontologie logiquement cohérente?

Plusieurs voies doivent conduire à la découverte d'un pareil système ontologique. Une connaissance approfondie de la langue, une étude poussée de l'ethnologie, un examen critique du droit, ou encore la maïeutique bien appropriée de l'enseignement du catéchisme, peuvent nous la révéler.⁷

Comment maintenant concilier l'idée de l'évolution avec les décadentismes que suppose la théorie d'une humanité primitivement uni et partageant le même système philosophique ou la même métaphysique conservée intégralement dans le christianisme et dans la culture occidentale et dégradée ailleurs? Tempels affirme d'abord qu'il est universellement admis que l'humanité évolue. Donc les Bantous parmi lesquels (du moins ceux parmi lesquels vivait Tempels) ne sont pas des primitives purs. Ils sont évolués. Si, maintenant, comme on a prétendu, "le fondement de la religion des primitifs était : le mânisme, l'animisme, ... le totémisme, le magisme,"⁸ ils auraient évolué de quoi vers quoi? Tempels est donc obligé d'affirmer que des phénomènes dont il admet la réalité chez ses protégés, ne sont pas le fondement de la croyance religieuse des Bantu, mais des phénomènes plus récents que le théisme et le monothéisme primitive ou le culte de l'Être suprême des Bantu. Faudrait-il en conclure que les Bantous ont été successivement monothéistes, puis animistes et après cela totémistes? Qu'ils auraient donc chaque fois changé de religion? Faudrait-il admettre que ces changements de religion ont été le fruit de révolutions? Sur le problème de savoir s'il y aura eu décadence et non évolution Tempels semble rester dans l'embarras car sa position n'est pas claire:

N'est-il pas plus vraisemblable que ces modifications des conceptions religieuses ont été le résultat d'une évolution progressive depuis leur religion primitive? Cette question ne me paraît pas pouvoir être disputée: il y eut évolution et non point révolution.⁹

Ce qu'il en donne comme preuve ne résout pas non plus le problème:

En voici la meilleure preuve: les Bantous actuels ont gardé leur foi dans les éléments de leur religion originelle théiste, et cependant nous les voyons à la fois, mânistes, animistes, dynamistes, totémistes et tenants de la magie. Mais il y a plus: chacun peut aisément vérifier aujourd'hui que nos Bantous contemporains diront en parlant du mânisme, du fétichisme, de l'animisme, etc.. : «tout cela est voulu par Dieu, l'Être suprême, et tout cela a été donné pour aider les hommes.»¹⁰

Pour être conséquent avec lui-même, Tempels aurait dû refuser l'idée que les Bantous aient évolué et maintenir clairement la théorie décadentiste. Mais apparemment il n'avait pas le courage de s'opposer ouvertement à un courant de pensée que les savants de sa culture d'origine

semblaient majoritairement admettre (l'évolutionnisme), et il se contenta encore d'une formule floue:

Pourra-t-on encore prétendre, après cela, qu'à chaque changement de pratique les Noirs aient changé de mentalité, qu'ils aient modifié leur système de pensée et leur conception du monde? Et si, au contraire, nous trouvons ces diverses pratiques coexistantes, devons-nous en conclure que les Bantous en sont arrivés à avoir six ou sept systèmes philosophiques parallèles? Il faut au contraire admettre raisonnablement que toutes ces manifestations diverses se rattachent à une conception unique, à une même idée de l'univers, à un même système métaphysique.¹¹

Nous voyons dans les *Prolegomènes* de Kant que la métaphysique occidentale est bien loin d'être ce "système complet philosophique, d'inspiration chrétienne, sur une conception intellectuelle, claire, complète et positive, de l'univers, de l'homme, de la vie et de la mort et de la survie d'un principe spirituel"¹² dont Tempels est si fier. Mais apparemment Tempels n'est pas du niveau des penseurs qui pourraient avoir une vision critique du système culturel auquel ils appartiennent. Il n'a pas l'air d'être conscient des problèmes posés par la métaphysique véhiculée par la tradition philosophique théologique européenne ou occidentale. C'est cette incapacité d'avoir une distance critique vis-à-vis de sa propre culture qui permet, entre autres, à Tempels d'être aussi hautainement dogmatique et paternaliste vis-à-vis des autres peuples:

Quiconque veut étudier les primitifs ou les primitifs évolués, doit renoncer à atteindre des conclusions scientifiquement valables, tant qu'il n'a pas pu pénétrer leur métaphysique. Affirmer à priori que les primitifs n'ont pas d'idées au sujet des êtres, qu'ils n'ont pas d'ontologie et que toute logique leur fait défaut, c'est tourner le dos à la réalité. ... L'ethnologie, la linguistique, la psychanalyse, la science du droit, la sociologie et l'étude des religions ne pourront donner des conclusions définitives, qu'après que la philosophie et l'ontologie du primitif auront été complètement étudiées et décrites.¹³

En effet, dit-il:

si les primitifs ont une conception particulière de l'être et de l'univers, cette "ontologie" propre donnera un caractère spécial, une couleur locale, à leurs croyances et pratiques religieuses, à leurs moeurs, à leurs droit, à leurs institutions, et coutumes, à leurs

réactions psychologiques et plus généralement à tout leur comportement.¹⁴

La troisième incohérence de Tempels consiste dans le fait qu'après avoir ainsi proclamé tout haut l'existence d'une "philosophie bantoue" et d'une "*ontologie bantoue*," Tempels se contredit en quelque sorte en chuchotant à l'oreille de ses lecteurs occidentaux qu'en fait, ce qu'il appelle "*philosophie bantoue*" ou "*ontologie bantoue*" n'est rien d'autre que de la "*philosophie magique*" et que ce n'est que pour se faire comprendre des autres européens qu'il utilise cette terminologie qui leur est familière:

Il ne s'agit pas en effet d'étudier l'attitude de quelques individus. Il s'agit de comparer deux conceptions de la vie, -- la conception chrétienne occidentale d'une part, et la conception "magique" d'autre part, -- qui se sont perpétuées à travers le temps et dans l'espace, deux conceptions qui, au cours des siècles, ont embrassé des peuples et des groupes culturels entiers.

La permanence de ces attitudes à travers des siècles d'évolution contingente ne trouve d'explication satisfaisante que dans la présence d'un ensemble de concepts logiquement coordonnés et motivés, dans une «Sagesse». Le comportement ne peut être universel pour tous, ni permanent dans le temps, s'il n'y a pas à sa base un ensemble d'idées, un système logique, une philosophie positive complète de l'univers, de l'homme et des choses qui l'environnent, de l'existence, de la vie, de la mort et de la survie.¹⁵

Puisque nous traiterons de philosophie, il nous faudra user du vocabulaire philosophique accessible au lecteur européen. Comme les peuples bantous ont une pensée étrangère à la nôtre, nous l'appellerons provisoirement "philosophie magique", nos mots ne couvriront peut-être pas complètement leur pensée. Nos vocables européens ne fourniront qu'une approximation de concepts et principes qui nous sont étrangers.¹⁶

Profondément convaincu que même s'il faut bien parler de philosophie ou d'ontologie bantou, il ne s'agit que d'une philosophie de seconde zone, Tempels adoptera, dans son essai, de retrouver le système ontologique ou le système de pensée des "primitifs" (pour lui en effet, les expressions "peuples primitifs" et "peuples claniques" se recouvrent sémantiquement et ce qu'il dit des bantou ou des noirs, vaut d'office pour les autres peuples claniques¹⁷), une méthode d'analyse du réel linguistique luba qui lui fera éviter, consciemment ou inconsciemment, tout ce qui a trait au verbe être dans cette langue. Pourquoi évite-il de signaler les

nombreux verbes “être” que contiennent le kiluba, le ciluba et les autres langues bantu? De plus, l’on peut même se demander si le matériau sur lequel il s’appuie pour formuler son hypothèse ou sa doctrine sur la force vitale comme valeur centrale chez les Bantu ne relève pas plus de la sociologie ou de l’ethnologie plutôt que la philosophie comme telle comme l’a déjà souligné Paulin Hountondji en 1976, qui a été le premier à utiliser ce terme pour qualifier le système de Tempels.¹⁸

Tempels affirme, en effet, qu’il est

dans la bouche des Noirs, des mots qui reviennent sans cesse. Ce sont ceux qui expriment les suprêmes valeurs... Ils sont comme des variations sur un leitmotiv qui se retrouve dans leur langage, leur pensée et dans tous, leurs faits et gestes.¹⁹

De quoi s’agit-il?

Cette valeur suprême est *la vie, la force, vivre fort* ou *force vitale*.

De tous les usages étranges, dont nous ne saisissons ni rime ni raison, les Bantous diront qu’ils servent à acquérir *la vigueur ou la force vitale, pour être fortement*, pour renforcer la vie, ou à assurer sa pérennité dans la descendance.

Dans le mode négatif, c’est la même idée qui s’exprime lorsque les Bantous disent: nous agissons de telle façon pour être gardés du malheur ou d’une diminution de la vie ou de l’être ou encore pour nous protéger des influences qui nous annihilent ou qui nous diminuent.²⁰

Tempels travaillait comme missionnaire chez les Baluba du Katanga ou du Shaba qui parlent le kiluba. C’est ainsi que, quand il parle de “force,” de “force vitale,” de “vie,” chez les bantu, il traduit les mots du kiluba bukomo et bumi. Que ces concepts soient importants dans cette langue, cela ne devrait étonner personne. Effectivement les concepts de “force,” de “vie” et de “paix” sont importants dans les cultures africaines et l’on les retrouve dans les formules de salutation et dans les prières ainsi que dans les imprécations divinatoires ou autres. De ce fait, ces concepts représentent des valeurs centrales chez les Baluba et chez d’autres peuples Bantu et Africains. Mais de là à conclure aussi qu’ils constituent le cadre noétique dans lequel se déroule toute la pensée chez tous ces peuples et même chez tous les peuples soi-disant primitifs ou claniques, c’est à notre avis, aller un peu trop vite dans la besogne. On peut se demander pourquoi Tempels n’a pas commencé par étudier la pensée grecque, par exemple, dans laquelle les concepts tels que: *βίος*, *ζωή* (la vie), *ψυχή* (le souffle vital, le principe vital, la force vitale), *ρώμη* (la vigueur physique), *ίσχυς* (la force de résistance, la force physique, *βία* (la violence), *όρμή*

(l'impétuosité), *ἐνέργεια* (activité, énergie) *δύναμις* (l'énergie, la puissance), *βεβαιότης* (la solidité), *καρτερίς* (l'endurance), *ἀνάγκη* (la nécessité, la force fatale) etc. ont apparemment une très grande importance, ce qui lui aurait permis de voir que les concepts de *Koma* et *bumo* chez les *baluba* du *Katanga* ne représentent rien de particulier en comparaison du rôle joué par les concepts grecs en question.

On peut faire le même raisonnement en ce qui concerne toutes les langues indo-européenne et se demander pourquoi *Tempels* n'a pas vu l'importance de la force vitale dans ces langues et dans les civilisations y correspondantes pour aller la voir seulement chez les *Baluba* et en tirer des hypothèses aussi catastrophiques pour la philosophie.

Avec le simple flair de la sociologie ou de l'ethnologie il aurait pu se contenter d'affirmer que l'apparente surévaluation du concept de la force vitale chez ceux qu'il appelle abusivement d'ailleurs les "peuples primitifs" ne relève pas d'une structure mentale spéciale, mais tout simplement du fait que l'environnement géopolitique et biologique dans lequel ils vivaient et vivent encore pour la plupart était générateur d'un stress permanent en ce qui concerne la vie et la survie au jour le jour. Nous pouvons ainsi accepter sans difficulté son affirmation suivante:

La force, la vie puissante, l'énergie vitale sont l'objet de prières et des invocations à Dieu, aux esprits et aux défunts, ainsi que tout ce qu'on est convenu de nommer magie, sorcellerie et remèdes magiques. Eux-mêmes diront qu'ils s'adressent au divin pour apprendre "des paroles de vie", qu'il enseigne la manière de renforcer la vie. Dans chaque langage bantou on découvrira facilement des mots ou locutions désignant une *force*, qui n'est pas exclusivement "corporelle", mais "totalement humaine." Ils parlent de la force de notre être entier, de toute notre vie. Leurs paroles désignent "l'intégrité" de l'être.²¹

Effectivement donc, les termes exprimant les concepts de vie et de survie ou de force vitale dans le discours de la vie quotidienne et dans les moments de crise chez les peuples *baluba* sont assez fréquents, mais cela n'est déterminer ni naturellement ou racialement comme le sous-entendent ses affirmations. En tous les cas les quelques citations de mots du *Kiluba* que fait *Tempels* ne suffisent pas pour démontrer sa thèse selon laquelle la structure mentale des *Bantu* comme des autres "peuples claniques" serait telle qu'ils ne peuvent penser rien d'autre que la force vitale et tout ce qu'il s'y rapporte au lieu de se mouvoir dans l'horizon ontologique comme le suppose toute ontologie non dichotomisé et universaliste. Mais en réalité il croit là faire une analyse philosophique alors que son analyse relève d'une autre discipline. Cette analyse de *Tempels* en réalité relève, comme nous venons de le dire, de la sociologie ou de l'ethnologie ou de

l'ethnopsychologie, mais en aucun cas nous ne voyons pas comment, du point de vue méthodologique, on peut passer correctement de la sociologie à l'ontologie. C'est un exemple pertinent de la confusion des genres qui, comme nous l'avons déjà souligné à la suite de beaucoup d'autres, est l'une des principales sources d'erreurs dans les discours humains. Dans ce cas-ci Tempels aurait dû présenter son livre non comme une contribution à la philosophie, encore moins à la sociologie bantu encore que son niveau d'analyse permet difficilement une telle généralisation. Ainsi lorsque Tempels prétend nous servir de "l'ontologie bantu" pour nous dire que les Bantu parlent souvent de la vie et de la force vitale ce n'est qu'un abus de langage.

Voici la trame de son raisonnement: Les prémisses en sont que:

- a) la pensée occidentale chrétienne, ayant adopté les formules de la philosophie grecque, ... définit le plus souvent cette réalité commune à tous les êtres, ou si l'on veut, l'être comme tel: « la réalité qui est », « quelque chose qui existe », « ce qui est ». Sa métaphysique a été basée sur un concept fondamental plutôt *statique* de l'être ²²;
- b) Ce concept de l'être le plus courant dans notre philosophie occidentale est statique en ce sens que la notion de force n'est pas incluse dans la notion première d'être. En général l'attribut de force apparaît comme un accessoire, un accident de l'être en soi. On appellera l'être le support de la force et des changements.²³

Ici Tempels semble citer *ad mentem* la formule aristotélicienne bien connue selon laquelle la philosophie est la science de l'étant en tant qu'étant (τὸ ὄν ἢ ὅν) et qui consacre formellement la philosophie comme ontologie pour dire que ce concept est le plus abstrait ou le concept universel par excellence et fait donc abstraction de tous les aspects concrets et de toutes les modifications possibles de l'étant ou ne s'occupe des modes catégoriels de l'étant. Ce serait donc là l'aspect "statique" des êtres dont parle Tempels qu'il assigne à la pensée occidentale. Comme une propriété sans nous préciser par ailleurs s'il s'agit d'une propriété "raciale" ou si c'est simplement un trait culturel et qu'il oppose à l'aspect "dynamique" réservé aux Bantu et autres peuples "primitifs" ou "claniques":

C'est ici qu'apparaît la différence fondamentale entre la pensée occidentale et celle des Bantous et des primitifs. (Je ne compare que des systèmes ayant inspiré de vastes civilisations.).

Dans l'interprétation de la même réalité la pensée primitive reçoit sa nuance propre de l'accent, qu'elle met sur l'aspect dynamique des êtres; tandis que la pensée scientifique de

l'Occident semble mettre l'accent sur l'aspect statique des choses.²⁴

Analysons un peu le texte de Tempels qui semble contenir l'essentiel de l'"ontologie" et même de tous les "primitifs" (pages 35-36 de son livre):

Il semble que les primitifs n'ont pas interprété ainsi la réalité. Leur notion de l'être est essentiellement dynamique. Ils parlent, vivent et agissent comme si, pour eux, la force était un élément nécessaire de l'être.

La force est inséparablement liée à l'être, et c'est pourquoi ces deux notions demeurent liées dans leur définition de l'être.

Ceci doit être reçu comme base de la philosophie bantoue. C'est un minimum qu'il faut admettre, sous peine de ne pas comprendre les Bantous.

Ainsi les Bantous auraient une notion composée de l'être, que l'on pourrait formuler: l'être est ce qui *possède* la force.

Cette hypothèse minimale ne me paraît au demeurant pas satisfaisante, ni même absolument exacte. Elle ne rend pas suffisamment compte du caractère propre de la notion d'être du primitif. Je crois serrer de plus près la vérité si je définis la notion d'être du primitive comme: *l'être EST force*.

En effet, la formule européenne "avoir la force", nous la comprenons inconsciemment d'après notre philosophie. Si nous formulons le concept d'être du Bantou comme étant: "la chose qui possède la force", le lecteur en retiendra que la force est considérée comme un attribut de l'être. Or, pour le Bantou, la force n'est pas un accident, c'est même bien plus qu'un accident nécessaire, c'est l'essence même de l'être en soi. Pour lui la force vitale, c'est l'être même tel qu'il est, dans sa totalité réelle, actuellement réalisée et actuellement capable d'une réalisation plus intense.²⁵

.....

L'être est force, la force est être. Notre notion c'est "ce qui EST", la leur "la force qui est." Là où nous pensons le concept "être", eux se servent du concept "force." Là où nous pensons le concept « être », eux se servent du concept « force ». Là où nous voyons des êtres concrets, eux visent des forces concrètes. Là où nous dirions que les êtres se distinguent par leur essence ou nature, les Bantous diraient que les *forces* différents par leur essence ou nature.

.....

C'est parce que tout être est de force, et n'est qu'en tant que force, que cette catégorie *force* embrasse nécessairement tous les êtres: Dieu, les homes vivants et trépassés, les animaux, les plantes, les minéraux. L'être étant force, tous ces êtres apparaissent aux Bantous comme des forces. Ce concept universel n'est guère utilise par les Bantous, qui sont bien susceptibles d'une abstraction philosophique, mais qui ne s'expriment qu'en termes concrets. Ils donneront un nom à chaque chose, mais la nature intime de la chose nommée se présente à leur esprit comme telle ou telle force spécifique et non comme une réalité statique.²⁶

Tempels prend ensuite le soin de défendre ses protégés contre certaines thèses abusives:

Il serait abusif de conclure que les Bantous sont "dynamistes" ou "énergétistes", comme si l'univers était animé d'une force universelle, une sorte de puissance magique englobant toute existence, ainsi que semblent le croire certains auteurs, lorsqu'ils traitent de "mana", "bwanga", "kanga", "elima" ou "meg-be." Telle serait l'interprétation européenne d'une philosophie primitive mal assimilée. Les Bantous font une nette distinction, et connaissent une différence essentielle entre les divers êtres, mettons entre les diverses forces. Parmi les diverses espèces de forces, ils arrivent tout comme nous à reconnaître l'unité, l'individu, mais bien entendu en tant que *force* individuelle.²⁷

Tempels avait par ailleurs pris soin d'inviter ses lecteurs (occidentaux) à lire son étude en faisant abstraction aussi de sa philosophie occidentale que des préjugés qu'ils pourraient avoir déjà au sujet des Bantous et des primitifs et, éventuellement, de réserver leur critique de son mode d'exposition ou du choix des termes jusqu'à ce qu'ils aient pris connaissance des preuves et des cas d'applications qui leur seraient fournis ultérieurement.²⁸

Nous ne connaissons pas d'autres écrits de lui dans lequel il aurait donné les preuves de ses thèses, et leur nature est telle qu'il lui serait plutôt difficile d'en trouver. Reprenons quelques uns parmi les théorèmes plus importants de ce que Tempels veut présenter comme de "l'ontologie Bantu", mais qui, en réalité, ne sont que les produits de l'idiosyncrasie pandynamiste tempelsienne. Tempels ajoute que lorsque les Bantous essaient de se dégager des métaphores ou des périphrases, ils désignent Dieu lui-même comme le puissant, celui qui possède la force en lui-même est le générateur de la force de toute créature. Il précise que Dieu est le "Dijina dikatambe": le grand nom, "parce qu'il est la grande force, le <mukomo> comme dissent les Baluba, celui qui est plus fort que tout

autre.”²⁹ Ce qui est curieux, c’est que Tempels qui semble bien connaître le kiluba dont il donne certains termes et expressions tout au long de son exposé comme nous l’avons vu, vite soigneusement de citer toute expression qui contiendrait le verbe “être.” S’il l’avait voulu, il aurait vu que même les expressions: “avoir la force” et “l’être EST force” qu’il présente comme étant caractéristiques de la pensée Bantu, ne peuvent être traduites en kiluba que grâce à un verbe “être”: “Être fort” ou “avoir la force” s’exprime en kiluba: soit par l’expression “kwikala na bukomo” qui signifie littéralement “être avec la force”; soit par le verbe “kukomo” qui signifie, d’après Avermaet, “être fort, gagner des forces, s’affermir, être en bonne santé, se bien porter, être solide, être énergique, être dur, durcir, être bien fixé, être ferme, être affermi, atteindre toute sa résistance, être mûr, mûrir.” “Bukomo” désigne: “la vie, la bonne santé, la vitalité, la vigueur, la force, l’énergie, la force d’âme.” Quand à son théorème central de l’ontologie: “l’existence est force”, il ne peut être rendu en kiluba que de la manière suivante: “bwikadi budi na bukomo” (littéralement: “l’existence est avec la force”) mais dans le langage normal, cela signifie simplement que la vie est dure ou difficile, aussi banalement que cela peut se dire dans n’importe quelle langue. Il est donc impossible en kiluba, d’exprimer même l’idée d’avoir la force sans faire appel au verbe “être.”

De même essayons tout naïvement de rester linguistiquement l’autre formule du théorème de Tempels qui dit que pour les Bantu “l’être est ce qui possède de la force.” Cela se dirait obligatoirement en kiluba (du kassai) par exemple: “dikala didi cintu cidu ne bukole.” Si ce que dit Tempels était vrai, cet énoncé qui serait un énoncé central de l’ontologie Bantu, ne contiendrait aucun verbe être. Or si nous analysons notre énoncé en kiluba, nous constatons que sur les six mots qui le composent, trois sont des formes du verbe être:

diikala (di-ikala): l’acte d’être, l’existence (c’est la substantive verbal du verbe “kuikala “: “être, exister, demeurer”; l’expression “kwikala ne” exprimant, dans langue également, la possession)

2) didi (di-di): est;

3) cintu;

4) cidu;

5) na; bukole.

Si nous mettons cet énoncé dans une autre langue Bantu comme le kinyaruanda, nous aurons deux possibilités:

a) ukubaho ni ikintu gifite ingufu;

b) ukubaho ni ikintu ngikomeye.

Disons tout de suite que l'énoncé a) n'a pas de sens non plus en kinyarwanda tout en étant grammaticalement correct, alors que l'énoncé b) n'a de sens que si l'on lui donne la signification suivante: l'existence est difficile, la vie est dure, ou bien: la vie est quelque chose de précieux. Pourquoi Tempels a-t-il masqué ce fait et faire de son contraire le fondement de l'ontologie luba ou Bantu? Pour montrer l'usage généralisé du verbe Kwikala (être avec le corps) être fort, en bonne santé; "ikala muntu wa moyo mukole" (sois un homme d'un coeur, d'un esprit solide, fort; sois un homme courageux); "luikala matumba" (qui vit, habite à l'extrémité du village): home fort, courageux.; kuikala ku mulala wa, (kuikala ku mulango wa): (être) appartenir au cercle de (être) appartenir sur la ligne de: être du parti de; kuikala kunyima kua (être inférieur à quelqu'un); kulu kudi kuishia (il commence à faire jour, ou, le temps devant sereiner); pikala kulu kutshie (s'il fait beau, si le ciel est sereiner); kuikala ne ngulube (être avec un sanglier; avoir le prépuce: être incirconcis). Si donc en Kiluba, il n'est même pas possible d'exprimer l'idée de la possession sans faire appel à un verbe "être", comment peut-il sérieusement affirmer que, chez les Bal-uba (et à partir de là généraliser à tous les Noirs et enfin à tous les "primitifs"), c'est l'idée que seule la force constitue l'horizon à l'intérieur duquel se meut toute leur pensée? Pour nous, le seul mérite de Placide Tempels est d'avoir été le premier européen qui, au moment où l'Europe était dans l'apogée de la démence raciste des années 1940, a osé parler de l'existence d'une "philosophie Bantu" et même d'une "ontologie bantu."

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NOTES

¹ Dont la traduction française a été publiée en 1949; voir Placide Tempels, *La philosophie Bantoue* (Paris: Collection Présence africaine, 1949/1965).

² Alexis Kagame, *La philosophie bantu-rwandaise de l'Être* (Bruxelles: Editions Duculot, Gembloux, 1956).

³ Tempels, p. 121.

⁴ Tempels, p. 15.

⁵ Tempels, p. 15.

⁶ Tempels, p. 14.

⁷ Tempels, p. 15.

⁸ Tempels, p. 21.

⁹ Tempels, p. 23.

¹⁰ Tempels, p. 23.

¹¹ Tempels, p. 23.

¹² Tempels, p. 14.

¹³ Tempels, p. 16.

¹⁴ Tempels, p. 16.

¹⁵ Tempels, p. 14.

¹⁶ Tempels, p. 27.

¹⁷ Voir Tempels, pp. 14 et 25.

¹⁸ Paulin J. Hountondji, *Sur la philosophie africaine. Critique de l'ethnophilosophie* (Paris : Maspéro, 1976).

¹⁹ Tempels, p. 30.

²⁰ Tempels, p. 30.

²¹ Tempels, p. 30.

²² Tempels, p. 34.

²³ Tempels, p. 34.

²⁴ Tempels, p. 34.

²⁵ Tempels, p. 35.

²⁶ Tempels, p. 36.

²⁷ Tempels, pp. 36-7.

²⁸ Tempels, p. 29.

²⁹ Tempels, p. 31.

THE CLAIM OF TRUTH AND THE CLAIM OF FREEDOM IN RELIGION

Tran Van Doan

POWER, TRUTH AND FREEDOM

The “Third World” and socialist countries have often been accused by the West of abusing human rights. One of their alleged “crimes” is especially controversial: the violation of religious freedom.¹ As expected, they completely rejected such condemnation, as do a great many Western thinkers. However, this reply falls on deaf ears. Worse, it is ignored, paradoxically, by the accusers as well as by the accused. In fact, there is almost no difference among the powerful rulers, be they in the “first” or the “third” world. They set the standard for “truth” and “justice,” at least in their own countries, and claim the rights for themselves. For the ruling classes, freedom serves as a pretext, and not as a true concern. The remark of Mr. Jiang Zemin, the former President of China – echoed by the rulers of many countries – that China has a different conception of human rights, and that freedom is fully respected there, actually follows the same logic of power (the reverse of Bacon’s logic of knowledge): he who has power has the right to decide! The ruled have no other choice but to dutifully obey the ruler’s criteria of human rights imposed on them against their will, simply because power is not in their hands.

Rulers know well that knowledge and power are twin brothers, and that justice and human rights are subject to their whim. Sadly, truth and rights do not stand on the side of the weak. Justice for the poor and oppressed is only a beautiful slogan (or an opium, to recall Marx’s remark about religion) used to console them. Blaise Pascal’s ironic remark that “justice is for everyone, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer,”² may sound too pessimistic, but it is often true. This “naked truth” about power is applicable to all men, regardless of race or geographical origin. So, the answer is quite simple: if power determines truth, then acquiring power is essential. Truth serves rather as a means and not the end.

Bacon’s attempt to elevate knowledge (truth) to the same rank as power has been distorted. Knowledge is taken, not as a noble ideal, but as a tool against humanity. Similarly, the Enlightenment’s spirit has been corrupted: neither the force of judgment (Kant) nor the idea of freedom makes history – only power (the power of the people in the case of the French Revolution) can do this. That means that rulers have successfully transformed “the force of knowledge” into an effective weapon to eliminate the rights of the ruled, and suppress their freedom, and to impose upon them the “Western” criteria of truth and “moral” standards.

Gun-boat diplomacy, artillery power, the modern technologically-equipped army (products of belief in knowledge-as-power) and (Western) truths and morals are now used to consolidate and expand the power of the ruling class.

Rousseau, surely, is neither the first nor the last thinker to draw attention to the hypocrisy of the rulers. Socrates might have had the right to claim the title of thinker *par excellence*, with his critique of the Sophists and his total devotion to truth. One may say with some confidence that both Socrates and Rousseau (in contrast to Galileo and Descartes), with their relentless critique and non-compromising attitude, set a good example for intellectuals. As we see, true philosophers, social activists and, above all, theologians have often raised their critical voice against the rulers' rampant abuse of human rights.³ They mistrusted the "truth" proclaimed by the rulers. They challenged knowledge (ideology) that claims to be final. In their view, those who pretend to possess absolute truth (total knowledge) are the worst offenders against human rights and freedom. Racism, imperialism, capitalism, colonialism – to list just a few of the most recent ideologies and practices – are united by the belief in a certain "truth": truth about the superiority of a certain race (the Aryan race in the case of Nazism, and of the Han race in the case of feudal China), of a certain nation (the British empire, Napoleon's France), of a certain class (aristocracy in the past and the upper class today). So, in the eyes of Western intellectuals, the claim of truth is nothing but a fabricated idea, used as justification for the atrocities the rulers commit.

From this perspective, the West's condemnation of the "Third World" and the angry response of the latter amount to a bitter fight – not for truth, justice and freedom, but for power. This is not the kind of battle between Cain and Abel, much less between the bad and the good. That is a war fueled by an uncontrolled lust for power. So the accusers should be as embarrassed as the accused. The self-proclaimed prosecutor turns out to be the most outrageous violator. Are they blatant liars? Or are they sincere and of good will? No doubt, they simply belong to the same class as the accused, and have the same insatiable ambition. And they both claim truth for themselves.

On such a model, one can make sense of similar controversies in our present world. The burning and dreadful conflict in the Middle East, just like the tension between the North and the South, cannot be understood without a thorough investigation of the relation of power and truth. Truth is not claimed *in se*, but out of the conviction that it has a role in acquiring, consolidating and preserving power. Absolute truth justifies a lasting power. Against such dogma, we stick to our belief, and regard it as a "sacred mission" to defend our religion or ideology. Freedom is therefore understood as the right to believe in our own truth, and to liberate us from "un-truth." Freedom even means the "duty" to engage in

convincing others of our truth (through missionary work). In a loose description, freedom expresses our “free” will to take whatever measures necessary to achieve our goal, including violence and dictatorship. In this context, we can understand the reason why “fighters for freedom” have resorted to means contrary to freedom and human rights. The acts of suppressing, murdering, terrorizing, enslaving, intimidating, chiding, etc., are “justified” by “belief” and “truth.” Freedom, therefore, means emancipation from the yoke of others, but not from our own yoke. We understand now the paradox of freedom and truth: freedom contains in itself an element of un-freedom, and “our” truth contains in itself an element of anti-truth.⁴

This paradox is vivid in human activity. On the pretext of defending freedom of expression, for example, a great part of the Western media has severely wounded religious feeling and belief—not only in the Islamic world, but all in religious communities.⁵ In the name of truth, rulers forcefully condemn intellectuals to silence. They deny and even testify against truth. So, it is not a question of whether freedom of expression (a human right) is compatible (or incompatible) with the exercise of religious freedom (also a human right), but a question of truth-claims and freedom-claims, which must be carefully dealt with.

I am trying to approach the problem from an indirect or oblique perspective. I will not follow the traditional approach by beginning with a definition of truth or freedom, but with a critique of the human illusion of being the inheritor of God’s truth and God’s nature (freedom). I will argue that it is neither our yearning for freedom nor our belief in God, but rather our illusion of truth-possession, our arbitrary identification of truth with freedom, as well as our artificial separation of truth and freedom from life, that is the cause of conflict. This means truth and freedom *in se* are not the cause of conflict. Conflict is rooted in our lust for power, and expressed in our claim of being inheritors of truth and possessors of freedom.

To prove the tenability of this view, I will examine the process of turning from truth-in-life to truth-as-life. Such a radical turn has been made possible thanks to philosophers like Plato and the Neo-Platonists. They conceived of *freedom in terms of truth*. As *free* men, they were firmly convinced of their “own” truth. The claim of truth-possession is, thus, identified with a claim to freedom. My investigation into the concept of freedom in religion yields the same result. The original understanding of freedom as a part of human nature that makes man what he is has been distorted in philosophy into a pure theory of freedom as an *unconditioned free state*. This means freedom cannot be understood apart from life. So when the Jews understood freedom as the emancipation from the state of slavery, they regarded the true man as a free man. A slave is not a man, and slavery means un-freedom. Such a concept of freedom does not intrinsically contain the concepts of finitude and dependency. Man is

limited by death and by his dependency on others. But he feels nonetheless free because he is a true human being, and a true human being is always aware of his finitude and his dependency. Therefore, the idea of God's providence does not include the feeling of un-freedom. The believer in God never feels or regards himself as a slave but, rather, as God's son. He enjoys his freedom even if he knows his limits.

Based on such considerations, we can see how one might approach the view of "the clash of civilizations" (to use Samuel Huntington's language). In my own view, the clash among different peoples is not rooted in difference of cultures or civilizations, but rather in the belief of the superiority of a particular culture (i.e., in a strong belief in a certain system of values as the truest and highest ones, and especially in our illusion of being the sole possessor of such truth and such freedom). So any solution to such a conflict would be possible only if human beings were willing to free themselves from the utopia of being the sole possessors of – to use Kant's language – the "kingdom of truth."

THE TURN FROM TRUTH IN LIFE TO TRUTH AS LIFE

The main reason for conflict among religious worlds, and even among scientific communities,⁶ is most probably rooted in our illusion of being the sole possessor of truth. That happened to the Medieval Christian Church, the Enlightenment protagonists, and the religious fundamentalists today. Conflict becomes deadly when our desire transcends our own finitude, when we entertain the illusion of being our own creator. The "philosopher-king" of Plato, the "philosopher" of Hegel, the "superhuman" of Nietzsche and the "proletariat" of Marx, all created more troubles than solutions simply because of the claim of being the possessor of the "final truth." To be sure, such an illusion is constructed on and cemented by the formal logic of truth with its corollaries: the principle of identity and the principle of non-contradiction: the true must be the same, and consequently, truth is universal and necessary. The mathematical formula of truth, $1=1$, has been taken as the most obvious and irrefutable way of expressing judgment in all sciences, including human sciences. Descartes and the German rationalists expanded and applied this mathematical formula to the whole of the human sciences (moral science, in the case of Kant). It goes more radically with a bizarre principle of either-or (that Søren Kierkegaard has attacked in his *Either-Or*) and its logical law of "the excluded third" (excluded middle). So the conclusion of one true God is drawn from the premise of one truth. If our God is true, then your gods must be false; if our ideology is true, then all other ideologies must be false.

It is not a mistake to take truth as the objective of sciences, but it would be questionable to believe it as the *αρχη* and the *τελος*, the alpha and the omega (i.e. the total sum of human life).

Let us begin first with the claim of truth as the unique objective of life, and the sole principle determining our thinking and actions. To many of us, the idea of a philosophy was clear in Homeric tradition: a tradition centered on life. The turn begun with Thales who, in his search for the origin of life, identified the characteristic of life with life itself: the most original life must be the truest (i.e. the most universal and necessary) one. Truth and life seem to be the same. Other Greek philosophers followed suit and went much more radically. The Pythagorians abstracted from human life and identified numbers as the origin of universe. (They may be quite correctly regarded as the predecessors of Galileo. The last described the universe in terms of mathematical structure.) In a word, one may say that Pre-Socratic philosophy exhibits, in a certain sense, a constant search for truth, by means of arguments based on truth itself. Truth and not life is now the objective of our quest.

It was Socrates who gave a final and decisive imprint on truth as the unique objective of philosophy. By insisting on truth implicit in life, Socrates embraced the view that truth is the most valuable treasure. Indeed, true to his view, he sacrificed his own life for truth. Truth is also the objective of the business of scientific research. It is the essence of science indeed. And it is the surest means to safeguard truth and life.

But what is truth? This question, the most important one, has not been satisfactorily answered so far.⁷ When Socrates chided the Sophists for mistaking truth with opinion, and especially for having claimed truth for themselves, he had clearly opted for the view that truth can be acquired only by means of a constant search and critique (in the form of *dialogue*). Now the problem is, if truth can be acquired only by a permanent process of investigation, then any acquired truth is purely temporal. The newly acquired truth would replace the once-believed one. Following Hegel, we might say that temporal truth appears real, but it is the reality of a certain people in a certain age (i.e. an incomplete, partial truth). Hegel, however, still believes in an eternal truth which he identified with reason. In his view, the true kernel determining the *Zeitsgeist* and the *Volksgeist* must be the rational.⁸ But the kernel (the rational) is either unknowable (as *noumenon* in Kant) or incompletely known because the rational emerges in a constant and infinite process (Hegel). So truth known by us cannot be grasped *in toto*. We know only a part of it. Karl Popper radically developed this view to the edge of rationalism and to the brink of a possible collapse of Platonian truth: no truth is final.⁹ Any claim of having a final truth would contradict the essence of truth. In this Socrates' way of philosophizing, what we may grasp is not truth but reality (i.e. a temporal

and spatial aspect of truth). We know a certain *facet* of truth but not truth in its totality.¹⁰

The question of “What is truth?” is still unanswered. It was left open by Socrates and his followers. His closest disciple, the ambitious Plato, attempted to fulfill the mission of his master by claiming to arrive at a final, irrefutable answer. He proved that truth is universal and necessary. It is the substance of all substances. In a word, it is divine. Despite the warm reception of the Neo-Platonists (like Plotinus, Philo, and Clement of Alexandria) who found in God the absolute Truth, such an answer, unfortunately, leaves more irresolvable puzzles. Nietzsche is neither the first nor the last who rebelled against such view with his satirical declaration of the death of God. The non-existence of God is interpreted as the non-existence of truth, just as His death means the end of Plato’s truth. Without an absolute truth, Nietzsche plunged into a certain form of nihilism: the bottomless abyss. He was full aware of the negativity of such thinking. Nihilism does not shed any new light on truth. In contrast, truth appears now as non-truth. The question of “what is truth?” has not been answered. It is simply dismissed as non-sense: “Was sind denn diese Kirchen noch, wenn sie nicht die Gräfte und Grabmäler Gottes sind?”¹¹.

The turn from *truth in life* to *truth as life* has been unmasked by Heidegger. He is not the first but is surely the most eloquent opponent of Plato’s truth and even of Nietzsche’s nihilism.¹² Traditional truth in terms of representation, or of correspondence (*adaequatio intellectus et rei* of Thomas Aquinas), or of agreement, or of identification (positivism), or of “coherence” and “pragmatics” could not reveal the true essence of truth, because it is detached from the *Ursprung* of truth (i.e., life).¹³ Traditional criteria of truth have been based on fact, or phenomena, or similarity, but not on their source and their *dynamic force*.

So, if truth is not life but only an essential aspect of life (authenticity), then it is not the question “What is truth?” but “What is life?” that must be the objective of philosophy. In Heidegger’s harsh critique, philosophers from Plato to Nietzsche have scratched where there it no itch. Ontology must be anthropology,¹⁴ and therefore, truth cannot be separated from human life. The investigation of life and its basic characteristics casts a new light on human beings in terms of freedom and on truth itself. Kant’s insistence on autonomy as the essence of morals (i.e., on freedom) does not contradict his faith in truth as the foundation of morals. Only in the context of life can truth be grasped in freedom, and can freedom manifest itself in truth. In Heidegger’s interpretation of truth as *αληθεια* truth no longer plays the role of God or the a-temporal and non-spatial mathematical formula, but reveals itself freely in the world. *Erschlossenheit*, *Entdecktheit*, *Unverborgenheit* (uncovering, self-revelation), etc., are the essential characteristics marking the nature of truth.¹⁵ In this sense, Heidegger regards the essence of truth as freedom.¹⁶

Heidegger's radical interpretation of truth in the sense of self-revelation is, of course, not new. However, it is interesting to note that even if Heidegger has tried very hard to dismiss the role of God as *custodis*, *providentia* or the *philosopher* (see Hegel) in favor of God as *artis ingenius* (like Nietzsche), he still follows the same logic of religion: only the like-God being can reveal itself. Only the like-God being possesses the *power of self-existence*, and the *power of self-determination*, i.e., *the power of a creator*. It is in this sense that Heidegger regards freedom as the essence of truth. Like the Epiphany that expresses the self-revelation of God's true nature, freedom displays the essence (i.e. the condition and nature) of human existence. If Epiphany is a process of God in the World then, analogically, Being is in a constant process of self-emergence.¹⁷ So Being's epiphany expresses not only its autonomy but, all the more, its freedom: to be the self and, at the same time, the other (the different). It is in this sense that Heidegger may be right to claim that the essence of truth is freedom, and that the postmodernists have understood science in particular and human beings in general.¹⁸

FREEDOM AND TRUTH IN RELIGION

I would argue that Heidegger's interpretation of truth does not stem directly from Nietzsche's thought (as some postmodernists may insist), but is rooted in a religious source.¹⁹ Earlier religious thinkers never separated truth and freedom from life. Truth in religion is not a formula, or a criterion, or a means, but the most authentic aspect of life, just as freedom is not what is given to us but an essential part of human life which makes humans like God. There is no formula of truth in religion. There is no unique way leading to God. And, of course, there is no image that can depict precisely and truthfully the Godhead. Here is the reason why God forbids idolatry. In this sense, Heidegger's interpretation of Being's authenticity does not follow the pattern of traditional criteria of "certainty" and "clarity" (e.g., of Descartes). Authenticity refers to what essentially constitutes life. As such, it gives light to what Christ means by truth. Truth cannot be separated from the Way and from our Life: *Christus via, veritas et vita est*. (John 14:6).

Truth and Life

One clearly finds here the closest, almost inseparable, relationship between truth and life, truth and the way to life. These ideas are the most important concepts in virtually every religion; not just in Christianity. These ideas determine the behavior, thought, and even aspirations of believers. There is no contradiction here between freedom and truth, truth and life. In this perspective, Alfred North Whitehead rightly wrote:

A religion, on its doctrinal side, can thus be defined as a system of general truths which have the effect of transforming the character when they are sincerely held and vividly apprehended.²⁰

Of course, “system of general truths” here does not mean the system of truth built on purely mathematical form. Truth can be known only through its effect on life. This means truth is considered as truth only if it is “sincerely held and vividly apprehended.” Needless to say, this kind of understanding of truth is found in many religious traditions, Eastern as well as Western. Let us take a look in the history of Christianity to see how such a truth is conceived.

According to Waldemar Molinski,²¹ truth (in Hebrew, *emeth*) originally meant “to be firm, reliable, faithful or fidelity” (2 Sam 7:28; Ps. 119:160), “sincerity and constancy” (Ps 132:11), “loyalty of the people to God” (Jos 24: 14; 1 Kg 20:3; Is 38:3; Ps 26:3; 86:11). The meaning of truth as the correspondence between assertion and reality (3 Kg 10:6; 22:16) or the identification of “law as truth” (Job 4:6; 13:6; Ecclesiasticus 27:9) comes only second. Similarly, truth in the *New Testament* means, firstly, “fidelity and reliability of God” (Rom 3:1-7), “human sincerity” (2 Cor 7:14; Phil 1: 18; 3:8; 4:4; 1 Tim 2:7; 2 Jn 1), or “the quality of the genuine and obligatory which attached to the gospel” (Eph 4: 21; Gal 2:5, 14; Rom 2:8; 2 Cor 4:2; Gal 5:7). Truth is taken to be “the word of God” (2 Cor 4:2; Gal 5:7), and the sense of “authoritative doctrines” (1 Tim 6:5; 2 Tim 18; 3:18; 4:4) comes second. The interpretation of truth as “to fulfill the laws of God” (2 John 4; 3 John 3f) follows the interpretation of the divine law as love. So, in John’s Gospel, truth is understood as the most necessary act of love, “the reality of salvation which sets man free” (John 8:32).

Such an understanding of truth was the basic teaching in early Christianity²² until St. Augustine who, under the influence of Neo-Platonism, explained truth in terms of reality. He combined the Johannine *Logos* with the Plotinian *Nous* (*Confessions*, VII, 9). In other words, he linked ‘truth as life’ to the divine (contemplative) truth. In *De Trinitate* (VII, 3), he stated that the (God) Son is the truth since He is the Word who reveals the (God) Father. As such, Augustine understood truth as eternal reality. In *De Libero Arbitrio*, he clearly conceived of truth as absolute, eternal and changeless (II, 15, 39). Drawing from such a premise, he argued that truth is not created but only discovered by us (*De Vera Religione*, 39, 72). Truth is the ultimate objective of our life, and our search for truth determines the movement of thought.²³

From St. Augustine on, Christian philosophers (Boethius, St. Anselm of Canterbury,²⁴ and especially St. Thomas) have interpreted truth as the “primordial opening out of being” (*ens et verum convertuntur*) and,

at the same time, as the function of the judgment (*adequatio intellectus et rei*).²⁵ St. Thomas identified God as the first Truth and the foundation of all truth,²⁶ while Duns Scotus, by distinguishing the ontological from the logical truth, described God as the source of ontological truth. To prove God's existence, one has to rely on logical truth, however.

Now, we discover a gradual change from the concept of truth as life (ontological truth) to that of the source of life (God), and finally to that of so-called logical truth. Modern philosophers, such as Descartes, went farther. Descartes conceived God as the warrant for logical truth (*Meditationes*, III). He argued that man cannot be the origin of his infinite ideas (i.e., truth) (*Discours de la méthode*, 2, 14). So it is God who is the source and the warrant of truth. However, Descartes insisted on the *clarity and distinctness of an idea* as the essential characteristics of truth – something which exists only in pure thinking (*Meditationes*, III, 4).²⁷ Such a truth loses its source in life and is squandered in “the world of purely thinking.” Descartes' radical interpretation of truth in terms of logical truth gives way to a modern way of understanding of truth as purely logical, and consequently, truth is detached from life.

Freedom and Life

A similar turn is found in the human understanding of freedom. The original meaning of freedom in religious tradition as the *true* image of God (*imago Dei*) has been often interpreted as a restricted freedom: the freedom of the created. Such an interpretation inclines one to the view that only the total, unrestricted freedom of the Creator can be called *true* freedom. Freedom here is understood as the free act towards any possible purpose. But this kind of understanding of freedom, in fact, surpasses the original meaning of freedom: freedom towards a fixed purpose (i.e., *imago Dei*).

Now the question is, if human freedom cannot overstep its limit (human nature) and surpass its own purpose (to become perfect *like* God), then so-called *positive* freedom (i.e., freedom to) and *negative* freedom (i.e., freedom from) must be understood in the context of human nature and human activities – in the context of human life. This means that freedom expresses the human attempt to overcome the conditions that restrain, diminish or dismiss the fulfillment of human life, and at the same time, displays the human drive to fulfill one's life. So the question here is twofold: What conditions do we need to overcome?, and What kind of life can fulfill human nature? The answer to these questions is essential to our understanding of freedom.

What conditions do we have to overcome or do we have to be free from? The answers given by different religions, philosophers and politicians show the different approaches to the problem. In Christianity, it

is sin that limits human capacity of self-fulfillment. In Buddhism, craving for wealth, pleasure power, and continued existence are the main causes of unhappiness. To Marxists, it is the unjust social structure. It is clear that a kind of freedom in terms of emancipation, or liberation is implicit in each of these answers: liberation from slavery, escape from the yoke of *samsara*, and emancipation from class oppression. That is what we often identify as negative freedom, the *libertas a coactione*.²⁸

Such freedom does not, however, solve the inner contradiction of freedom: freedom can be gained at the cost of another's un-freedom. There is hardly any demarcation between individual freedom and individual interest. If freedom means to pursue one's own interests freely, then conflict is a logical result of freedom. And to solve conflicts requires the restriction of another's freedom. The others here are the powerless. So the belief that freedom is the most desired, or the ultimate, objective of human beings would not make sense, or makes little sense, to the majority of people. The belief in freedom as "freeing from" would turn to be an illusion so long as power is still in the hands of a few.

Aware of this sad fact, John Stuart Mill proposes an understanding of freedom from its positive aspect. He writes: "The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way."²⁹ He concedes the fact that such freedom is possible only if we can become our own master. To be our own master means self-realization. But Mill does not discuss the question of how to be aware that one is master or of how to become one's own master (i.e. how to realize oneself). Kant and the German ideologists refer to the idea of autonomy and the consciousness of the self, while Marx sees force (labor) as the *conditio sine qua non* that makes man autonomous. In other words, to be the master demands, first, self-consciousness and, secondly, the force of self-subsisting and self-developing. But self-consciousness cannot be found in the ego alone, just as a kind of Robinson Crusoe could not happen in our present society. So the insistence on the equality of liberty of all human beings seems to be rather a wish, or a pure idea in the brain of (German) ideologists. Aristotle was not completely wrong when he discovered the existence of the ruling class thanks to slavery. He was, however, wrong because he did not foresee human evolution, thanks to human labor. The master knows how to use effectively his own force and the labor of his slave to realize his good life, while the slave just works for his master and not for himself. Despite his unwillingness to treat the problem from point of view of German philosophers, Mill still regards positive freedom in terms of human self-realization.³⁰

For my purposes here, I will not delve into Mill's arguments, but start with his insight of freedom as a means for and an expression of self-realization. So, the focus of our discussion will be whether self-realization could fulfill the human quest for ultimate happiness (i.e., whether positive

freedom could be humanity's most desired end), and whether such an objective is also that of religion.

The fact that freedom can be understood and appreciated in a certain kind of life, and that human life can be fulfilled thanks to other elements (and factors) relating to life, points to the truth that it is life and not freedom or truth that is the final end of human beings. So, one may argue that freedom makes sense only if it fulfils life, or makes it perfect. If this is so, then the final question for us should be What kind of life is the perfect life? Negative freedom expresses the human aspiration for not being restrained by the conditions which may jeopardize, limit and destroy life. Positive freedom points to the human desire to achieve what we consider as the fulfillment, the perfection of life. In religion, the freedom to fulfill and to perfect life can be termed as a transcendental freedom (*libertas transcendentalis*). The desire of transcending the *status quo* and ascending towards the highest stage (i.e., "being over and above"³¹) the present life is, without doubt, the kernel of any serious religion. It is the religious spirit that motivates human beings to seek a perfect life. Such transcendental freedom is seen in human active participation (or engagement) in the absolute world of God. Thomas Aquinas describes such an act of transcendence as *participatio quaedam infiniti*. Only with this kind of transcendental freedom can negative freedom and positive freedom be understood.³²

CONCLUDING REMARKS

My objection to the claim of freedom-possession is based on my rejection of the claim of truth-possession. Against such claims, I took Heidegger's insight about truth as a self-revelation (i.e., a *free state of self-presentation*) to show that the human pretension of being able to grasp truth in its *totality* is the product of pure imagination. The uncontrolled lust for power, advocated by Nietzsche, seductively pulls human beings into the hallucination of being God or a demi-god. So truth-possession and freedom-possession – the property of the Creator – have been falsely claimed by these "supermen." This absurdity has been the hallmark of many "imperialist" ideologies and cultures. Thus, the source of the "clash of civilizations" (to use Huntington's terminology) is not the difference of races and cultures, but our claim that truth and freedom are for us only.

Reflecting on truth and freedom must, therefore, begin with a deeper reflection on life. Descartes' mathematical truth would not have contradicted the logic of life if he did had not separated life from truth. Kant's plea for freedom in the sense of autonomy would not have contradicted human transcendent nature if he had conducted a more thorough investigation into the limits of reason. However, there is still a difference between Descartes and Kant. Descartes remained content with

his discovered truth, which he did not bother to expand to life *in toto*; Kant, however, put the question of “Was ist der Mensch?” at the center of his investigation.³³ Man cannot be understood in a single, static aspect. It can be apprehended only in a dynamic and infinite process of self-realization.

Whitehead’s insight, at the beginning of the 20th century, of the correlation between mathematical truth and religious truth is striking. One can be a good mathematician and a religious man³⁴ because there exists no internal contradiction between truth and life. The same holds for the relation between truth and freedom. Both are rooted in life. Wittgenstein’s pondering about the origin of mathematics, just as Heidegger’s relentless quest for truth and freedom, lead to a similar conclusion: mathematics is inseparable from life, just as truth and freedom are only the most expressive forms of authentic life. Edmund Husserl’s objection to the so-called “mathematization of the world” (in his *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften*) has forced rationalists to reflect again on the legitimacy of “mighty reason.” Actually, in Husserl’s view, truth would lose its sense if it were separated from life. Truth would reduce the meaning of our flourishing life if it were determined by rational criteria which are fully neutral concerning life.

In short, it is time to rethink truth and freedom in terms of life, and not the reverse. To be truthful means to be loyal to life; and to be loyal means to be faithful (as seen in religious belief). Our faith cannot be demonstrated by a set of criteria built on formal truth, but by our “truest” feelings, by our deepest sense of life. Similarly, to be free does not mean to be completely detached from others, but to strive to fulfill true human nature without restriction or coercion by “untrue” forces. Here, freedom does not mean a completely free state, but rather free from the untrue forces which deform or destroy life. In this sense, Marx’s concept of liberty in the sense of liberation from the (social, economic, political) conditions that make humans alienated (or reified) does not, actually, count against the religious understanding of freedom: freedom means a liberation from the state of slavery, and a condition to restore humanity and well as to fulfill it. It is in religion that one finds freedom in its full sense: a liberation from the negative forces that restrict or hinder human transcendence, and a positive striving for the ultimate purpose.

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NOTES

¹ In the case of socialist countries, Western human rights watchers have cited the lack of a certain freedom of religion as the main offense against human rights.

² “The justice of God must be vast like His compassion. Now justice to the outcast is less vast ... than mercy towards the elect.” Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, tr William Finlayson Trotter (E. P. Dutton, 1940), p. 233.

³ Note that the most ardent critics of Western culture (and religion) are theologians. Among the pupils of Friedrich W. Schelling’s class on religion, one finds the name of Bakunin, Kierkegaard, and Engels. Marx belonged to the “Doktorclub,” the majority of whom were theologians (Bauer, Stirner, Feuerbach, and others). Today, the so-called theologians of liberation remain at the front battling against imperialist suppression and capitalist exploitation.

⁴ Such a paradox has been brilliantly analyzed by Horkheimer and Adorno. See Max Horkheimer & Theodor W. Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, tr. John Cumming. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972).

⁵ The furor of Islamists against Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*, and the recent outrage against Danish cartoons are cases in point. No doubt, both Islamic believers and the cartoonists were certain of their own truth and both appealed to human rights (freedom) to justify their acts and their abusive language defending their truth. In the case of Dan Brown’s *The da Vinci Code*, the question is whether one can abuse the freedom of expression to distort religious truth.

⁶ Following Thomas Kuhn, the author of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962).

⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 44; see especially *Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit* and *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*.

⁸ Hegel, *Vorlesungen ueber Rechtsphilosophie*, Einleitung. “Was vernunftig ist, das ist wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist vernunftig.”

⁹ Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations* (1963).

¹⁰ Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 150-1.

¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Der tolle Mensch, 125. ed. Karl Schlechta (München: Carl Hanser, 1960).

¹² Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche* (Pfullingen: Guenther Neske, 1961), Vol. 2, pp. 31 ff.

¹³ *Sein und Zeit*, 44a.

¹⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Einleitung; Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, (1929); and *Nietzsche* (1961), vol. II.

¹⁵ *Sein und Zeit*, 44b.

¹⁶ In *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit*, Heidegger clearly wrote: “Das Wesen der Wahrheit ist die Freiheit.”

¹⁷ Cf. Karl Rahner, *Geist in Welt* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1939).

¹⁸ See Jacques Derrida, *Writings on Religion* (1992); See also Robert Magliola, *Derrida on the Mend* (1985). A similar idea has been found also in Paul Ricoeur, *Soi-meme comme un autre* (Paris: Seuil, 1990), in the chapter on “Ipseité et l’alterité, pp. 367 ff.

¹⁹ A similar interpretation has been found in the works of Heidegger's pupils. See Karl Rahner, *Geist in Welt*, op. cit., Raimundo Panikkar, *Kultmysterium in Hinduismus und Christentum*, and John Caputo, *Heidegger and Thomas Aquinas*, just to mention a few.

²⁰ Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (1926) (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1960), p. 15.

²¹ See Waldemar Molinski, "Truth" in *Sacramentum Mundi*, ed. Karl Rahner (New York: Herder, 1970), Vol. 6, pp. 308-318.

²² Clement of Alexandria, for example, taught that God is the norm for the truth of beings (*Protrepticus*, VI, PG VIII, col. 173).

²³ Molinski, p. 308.

²⁴ According to Molinski, p. 309, "Boethius refers truth to judgment, while St. Anselm of Canterbury analyses the relation of logical truth to ontological truth. Logical truth is an effect of the *summa veritas*, mediated by created things (*De Veritate*, ch. 19). This means that the ontological connection is under the rule of truth as the *rectitudo sola mente perceptibilis* (ch. 11)."

²⁵ Cf. *Contra Gentiles*, I, 59; *De Veritate* I, 2.

²⁶ Molinski, p. 310: "God is the Transcendental Truth means that being has an intrinsic relation to spirit and hence to the spirit-soul, and also that spirit is ordained to being" (*De Veritate* I, 1). St. Thomas combines the Aristotelian notion that the soul is "all things in a certain fashion" with the notion of the truth of things (Aristotle, *The Soul*, 431: *Metaphysics*, 993 b)

²⁷ Molinski, p. 311.

²⁸ Cf. Max Mueller, "Freedom," in *Sacramentum Mundi*, Vol. 1, pp. 352-361; See also Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 122 ff.: "The Notion of "negative" Freedom."

²⁹ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*. Quoted by I. Berlin, op. cit., p. 127.

³⁰ Actually, the idea of positive freedom has been a mark of the Greek culture. The Greeks refer to the idea of self-possession, being completely present to oneself, total self-sufficiency as *Autarky*, while the Romans understand liberty as *dominium in actu suos, dominium super se ipsum*." Max Mueller, p. 353.

³¹ Mueller, p. 354.

³² Mueller, p. 353.

³³ Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A 804f; B 832f.; Heidegger, *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (1951), p. 187.

³⁴ Whitehead, p. 14. "But as between religion and arithmetic, other things are not equal. You *use* arithmetic, but you *are* religious. Arithmetic of course enters into your nature, so far as that nature involves a multiplicity of things. But it is there as a necessary condition, and not as a transforming agency."

DIALOGUE ENTRE LA PHILOSOPHIE BOUDDHISTE ET LA THEORIE CRITIQUE DE L'ÉCOLE DE FRANCFORT

Véronique Tomaszewski Ramses

Thus philosophy, a thing of the highest utility, flourished in antiquity among the barbarians, shedding its light over the nations. And afterwards it came to Greece. First in its ranks were the prophets of the Egyptians; and the Chaldeans among the Assyrians; and the Druids among the Gauls; and the Sramanas among the Bactrians (“Σαρμαναίοι Βάκτρων”); and the philosophers of the Celts; and the Magi of the Persians, who foretold the Saviour’s birth, and came into the land of Judaea guided by a star. The Indian gymnosophists are also in the number, and the other barbarian philosophers. And of these there are two classes, some of them called Sramanas (“Σαρμάναι”), and others Brahmins (“Βραρμαναι”).

Clement of Alexandria, “The Stromata, or Miscellanies,” Book I, Chapter XV

INTRODUCTION

Comme Clément d’Alexandrie l’a écrit à la fin du deuxième siècle de notre ère dans la citation ci-dessus, les migrations et emprunts entre différentes traditions philosophiques ne sont pas nouveaux. Les bouddhistes Bactriens et les Indiens Gymnosophistes ont eu une influence forte sur la pensée grecque ancienne. Alexandrie elle-même était une ville cosmopolite et multiculturelle qui avait déjà embrassé une vie intellectuelle tolérante et élargie où les Juifs avaient adopté le grec comme langue et les Chrétiens nouvellement convertis essayaient de donner un sens aux vues divergentes sur la vie après la mort. Les historiens ont trouvé des parallèles subtils mais réels entre la pensée grecque ancienne et la pensée orientale. Le feu d’Héraclite d’Héphèse ressemble à l’impermanence bouddhiste. Le logos grec ressemble à la voie du Tao, pour ne citer que ces deux exemples.¹ Pythagore avait introduit l’idée d’une récurrence éternelle dans la pensée grecque, après avoir étudié les écritures égyptiennes. Aristote lui-même avait reçu une influence indirecte et sa philosophie atteste de liens avec les philosophies orientales.² La philosophie aristotélicienne s’est développée ainsi jusqu’au XXIe siècle avec Schopenhauer³, qui influença Nietzsche et les Existentialistes qui à

leur tour ont influencé les penseurs de la première génération de l'École de Francfort présentés ici.

Le Bouddhisme a précédé le Christianisme de plus de quatre cents ans, même si chaque système philosophique et religieux a pris plus de deux cents ans dans chaque cas pour se développer en un système cohérent. Les préceptes moraux promus par le Bouddhisme (depuis le temps du roi Ashoka et de ses décrets) ont influencé les préceptes moraux chrétiens suivants: le respect pour la vie, l'amour et la compassion, la non-violence, le pardon aux pécheurs, la tolérance, la méditation et la prière comme modes éthiques pour cultiver ces préceptes. Les événements de la vie de Bouddha et de Jésus présentent même des parallèles surprenants.⁴ Ces similarités indiquent la propagation des idéaux bouddhistes jusque dans le monde occidental.

C'est donc un autre mouvement du pendule que le travail cross culturel de Robert Hattam représente, un travail par lequel la philosophie bouddhiste engage un dialogue revitalisé avec ses acolytes occidentaux, mais cette fois-ci initiée par des chercheurs occidentaux qui se sont convertis au Bouddhisme.

Depuis les années 1970 et les attaques féministes contre l'éthos scientifique cartésien, amplifiées par la philosophie de l'homme de Michel Foucault, les modèles post-constructivistes développés par J-F Lyotard, J. Derrida, et leurs disciples, la migration des textes philosophiques vers l'Est a atteint une échelle et une profondeur sans précédent. L'ego cartésien, avec les dichotomies et dualismes qu'un tel paradigme philosophique doit maintenir pour survivre, a été révoqué en faveur d'une perspective holistique, non-dualiste, de retour en quelque sorte aux philosophes de la Grèce antique.

Hattam n'hésite pas à introduire sa position comme étant le fruit d'un travail autobiographique original.⁵ Son projet est né de la nécessité, de la part d'un chercheur occidental qui pratique le Bouddhisme, de réconcilier ou du moins d'ouvrir un dialogue entre les deux sensibilités qui se confrontent et s'affrontent à l'intérieur de son propre esprit, de son coeur et de son corps, pour emprunter une métaphore bouddhiste. Au point que, conscient du fait que son esprit est un sixième sens dans la perspective bouddhiste, un chercheur occidental et bouddhiste a besoin d'investiguer et de dissocier de son propre esprit son ego, son soi, en observant et analysant son propre travail intellectuel avec un doute raisonnable inévitable et / ou la distance requise ou encouragée par la pratique méditative. Ce phénomène en lui-même devrait être d'un grand intérêt pour les philosophes de la science et de l'ontologie.

La plupart des chercheurs occidentaux qui pratiquent une forme donnée du Bouddhisme se sont jusqu'à présent spécialisé dans les études religieuses et bouddhistes. Dans ce champ, nous trouvons Robert Thurman à Columbia University⁶, Jeffrey Hopkins qui vient juste de prendre sa

retraite de University of Virginia, Jan Willis, la première chercheuse noire américaine spécialisée en études indo-tibétaines et qui enseigne à Wesleyan University, etc. Au Canada, nous avons Victor Sogen Hori à McGill University et Leslie Kawamura à University of Calgary, pour ne nommer que quelques-uns. Mais Hattam appartient à un autre groupe de chercheurs, un groupe en croissance où les chercheurs occidentaux utilisent leur pratique bouddhiste pour retravailler leurs champs académiques respectifs. bell hooks dans les Cultural Studies⁷, David R. Loy en psychanalyse⁸, et avant eux, bien sûr, Heidegger et Erich Fromm⁹, la contribution de ce dernier étant discutée plus loin.

Le projet de Hattam consiste à attirer l'attention sur un espace de dialogue émergent entre la théorie critique de l'École de Francfort et le Bouddhisme. L'auteur tente dans son livre de tracer les contours d'une carte conceptuelle, et partant de là, d'encourager un plus grand dialogue entre les sensibilités critiques et bouddhistes. Erich Fromm avait emprunté une route semblable avant lui, mais, comme Hattam l'a bien réalisé, Fromm, pas plus que Schopenhauer, n'a réussi à montrer comment telle articulation pourrait prendre place et de fait aider à changer à la fois les esprits et la société. Pour cela, Hattam reste prudent et insiste sur le fait qu'il veut ouvrir un dialogue sous une forme réelle et concrète d'engagement. Ce dialogue a commencé dans l'esprit de Hattam confronté à deux pratiques différentes (celle académique et celle bouddhiste) d'où le titre de son livre: "Awakening-Struggle", montrant que l'éveil spirituel et l'engagement éthico-politique ne sont pas donnés, mais au contraire nécessitent un effort à la fois contemplatif et intellectuel.

Les cinq premiers chapitres du livre de Hattam énoncent des positions philosophiques (celles de la théorie critique, celles de la philosophie bouddhiste de la branche Mahayana). Le sixième et dernier chapitre apporte à la fois de la nouveauté et une ouverture sur ce dialogue que d'aucuns taxeraient de *dialogue de sourds* entre les théoriciens marxistes de la critique sociale et les Bouddhistes (aussi bien philosophes, savants que pratiquants). Nous allons donc revoir brièvement les aspects principaux de la théorie critique de l'École de Francfort sur lesquels Hattam a bâti son espace de dialogue, de même que pour la philosophie bouddhiste de la branche Mahayana. Nous serons ainsi en mesure de contempler les possibilités d'un dialogue tel qu'envisagé par l'auteur. Ceci nous conduit à examiner l'apport d'Erich Fromm, tant pour le Bouddhisme Zen que son application, en rapport avec la théorie critique et à la psychanalyse. Puis nous nous concentrerons sur la contribution personnelle de Hattam pour évaluer dans quelle direction son travail nous emmène sur ce chemin intellectuel engagé. Nous concluons sur la signification de cette migration vers l'Est pour le futur de la recherche en sciences sociales et dans les humanités.

LA THEORIE CRITIQUE DE L'ÉCOLE DE FRANCFORT

Horkheimer a clairement indiqué les pistes de recherche et les bases sur lesquelles l'Institut s'est développé, ce qui en soit était déjà une grande innovation, entre la philosophie et les sciences sociales:

Actualizing some of the most ancient and important philosophical problems: the question of the connection between the economic life of society, the psychological development of its individuals, and the changes within specific areas of culture (sciences, art, religion, but also laws, customs, fashion, public opinion, sports, entertainments, lifestyles,...)...¹⁰

La première génération de chercheurs qui ont défini la théorie critique de l'École de Francfort prit en charge ce programme multidisciplinaire, même si, après tout, ils formaient un petit groupe avec Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno¹¹, Walter Benjamin, Eric Fromm, Leo Lowenthal et Jürgen Habermas. Tous étaient influencés par la reformulation de Marx de l'ancienne problématique et tous essayèrent jusqu'à un certain degré de s'aligner sur leur fondation judaïque ou carrément sur le mysticisme judaïque comme pour Erich Fromm et Walter Benjamin. Mais le religieux en tant que tel n'a jamais été à l'agenda de la théorie critique. Immergés dans le matérialisme dialectique, ces penseurs tentèrent de montrer comment tous les problèmes philosophiques, sociaux, économiques et politiques sont interconnectés, dans la fameuse dialectique historique si bien décrite par Marx. Pour paraphraser Horkheimer, il s'agissait d'actualiser les questions philosophiques les plus anciennes et les plus importantes, celles concernant la relation entre l'économie et la psychologie humaine, et les différentes articulations réifiées de la culture. La question de l'individu, alors, n'était pas tellement de savoir quel degré d'influence chaque individu a sur sa propre vie, mais plutôt combien de poids la société a sur la vie des individus au point de les aliéner.

Au fil des générations, la théorie critique est devenue une sorte de rassemblement théorique avec ses branches, ses noeuds et ses regroupements. Il n'existe pas *une* théorie critique puisque la tradition elle-même est auto-reflexive par nature et emprunte de nombreux cheminements intellectuels différents. Horkheimer a situé la théorie critique entre la philosophie et la science, ce qui a provoqué des débats animés entre Adorno et Popper quant à la validité scientifique de la théorie critique et quant à la nature scientifique d'un objet de recherche historique, c'est-à-dire changeant et pour lequel il est impossible de reproduire le même résultat d'analyse. Alors, entre pensée et expérience, et au delà de la périodisation des trois générations de théoriciens critiques,

Hattam propose de définir la théorie critique en terme de sensibilité néo-kantienne “that proceeds through a variety of transformations as various social philosophers have developed critiques of modernity that were specific for their changing historical circumstances.”¹²

La théorie critique a théorisé l’humain en utilisant toute une variété d’autres théories: existentialisme, phénoménologie, théories psychanalytiques, aussi bien que la généalogie de Foucault, et plus récemment un intérêt renouvelé pour les politiques identitaires. Hattam en conclut que la théorie critique a besoin de méthodologies contemporaines pour s’attaquer à des questions aussi fondamentales que la relation entre l’existence individuelle et la raison universelle, entre le réel et les idées, ou encore entre la vie et l’esprit, le tout adapté à une nouvelle problématique de l’existence humaine dans le monde d’aujourd’hui.

PHILOSOPHIE BOUDDHISTE DU GRAND VEHICULE (MAHAYANA)

Hattam introduit le Bouddhisme en donnant tout d’abord la liste et le nom de ses maîtres, inscrivant sa propre pratique à l’intérieur d’une lignée bouddhiste tibétaine de l’École Gelugpa. Il introduit le concept de Lam Rim¹³ (pratique quotidienne de prise de refuge dans les trois joyaux et autres voeux et de compassion, d’analyse de concepts par la méditation), les Quatre Nobles Vérités¹⁴, et chemine vers la perspective Vajrayana (Véhicule du Diamant) de l’École Gelugpa.

Un chapitre séparé – le plus long de tous – est dédié à la perspective du bodhisattva pour introduire et s’étendre davantage sur le Bouddhisme engagé socialement en tant que nouveau mouvement. Comme Hattam l’a dit: “In the debate about the nature of a socially-engaged form of Buddhism, the meaning of the Bodhisattva vow is central, especially for those who practice within a Mahayana tradition.”¹⁵

Un Bodhisattva est un individu qui fait le voeu, dès le début de son cheminement spirituel, de consacrer sa vie au bien d’autrui à travers toutes les vies à venir. La prise de voeu consiste aussi à exprimer la ferme intention de parvenir à l’Eveil spirituel dans le but d’oeuvrer pour le bien des autres et de les aider à parvenir à l’Eveil pour rompre le cycle de la souffrance terrestre à travers ce cycle interminable des naissances et des morts. Un bodhisattva, donc, peut être une personne laïque et prend des attributs masculins ou féminins selon les cultures et les pays. Ce type de personnalité bouddhiste doit être défini en termes de bodhicitta, d’amour équilibré par la compassion et la sagesse, pour en comprendre la portée. Il y a deux types de bodhicitta: la sagesse relative qui éveille le coeur, et la sagesse ultime qui permet de réaliser la vacuité (sunyata), ou la vérité fondamentale de l’absence d’existence inhérente des choses, des phénomènes et des êtres vivants. La nature propre des choses est qu’elles

n'ont pas de nature propre. Il s'agit ici d'une réalisation profonde, pas d'une connaissance livresque ou d'un entendement intellectuel. Cette réalisation n'est possible que grâce à la méditation, par laquelle l'esprit dépasse l'entendement ordinaire (la vérité conventionnelle) et expérimente la nature co-dépendante de la réalité ultime. Le plus important, donc, est de vivre au présent. Il faut aussi développer un esprit de renonciation à un super ego omnipuissant qui s'accroche à l'idée fausse que le "je", le "moi" existent indépendamment de toutes choses. En d'autres mots, un bodhisattva est une personne qui pratique l'altruisme, la générosité, l'amour et la compassion, articulant le tout en utilisant une méthode précise (la méditation), une discipline de vie et de pensée (consistance, effort et persistance bien dosés sans excès), un amour éclairé et désintéressé (metta), et la sagesse. Un tel bodhisattva est sur le chemin spirituel des six (ou dix) perfections: la charité, la moralité, la patience, l'énergie, la méditation, la sagesse, mais aussi l'action correcte, les vœux pieux, la résolution et la connaissance de la juste définition de tous les dharmas (les lois). Un tel Bodhisattva est sur le Noble Sentier Octuple qui comprend: la compréhension juste, la pensée juste, la parole juste, l'action juste, les moyens d'existence justes, l'effort juste, l'attention juste, la concentration juste. Cela veut dire bien sûr qu'il s'agit d'un idéal à atteindre, une quasi-perfection pour un individu qui a l'esprit clair et suit la Voie du Milieu, loin des extrêmes comme le matérialisme d'un côté et l'idéalisme de l'autre.

Pour résumer, le Bodhisattva est, ou tout du moins, aspire à devenir une sorte de "saint" ou de "héro" sans ego, et qui accepte de renaître sur terre vie après vie pour se mettre au service de tous les êtres et continuer à cheminer spirituellement vers l'état d'Eveil, tout en aidant les autres à cheminer spirituellement aussi. Cet esprit de missionnaire n'est cependant pas assorti du prosélytisme cher aux religions monothéistes.

Pour devenir un Bodhisattva, l'on doit pratiquer la méditation, lire le dharma pour l'approfondir, l'examiner, l'observer et l'étudier. Le pratiquant bouddhiste est requis de développer une connaissance éclairée, pas de proférer un acte de foi aveugle, afin d'établir une croyance profondément ancrée dans une connaissance véritable, ce qui peut en expliquer l'attrait pour de nombreux intellectuels. Seul une compréhension analytique et métaphysique acquise par des heures de méditation permet de réaliser la vacuité et d'étendre sa compassion d'une manière durable et désintéressée envers les autres. L'union entre la pratique intériorisée et la maintenance d'un calme intérieur est fondamentale pour établir un terrain spirituel fermement ancré et sur lequel on peut s'entraîner à devenir un Bodhisattva, une fois l'ego transformé.

Hattam utilise le texte de Nagarjuna qui définit le Bodhisattva, *Ratnavali (Precious Garland)*, pour prouver combien cette pratique concrète de la philosophie bouddhiste est à la fois, simultanément,

personnelle et sociale. Dans ce poème de cinq cents strophes, la nature illimitée de la compassion d'un Bodhisattva est exaltée avec éloquence. Hattam met aussi en évidence comment les deux pratiques (au niveau de la conscience et de la bonté) présentent un caractère social. Dans le Chapitre Quatre, Hattam montre combien le texte de Nagarjuna est significatif pour ce troisième espace de dialogue que Hattam a essayé de circonscrire depuis le début:

The Bodhisattva path is described as a possibility of practicing the Bodhisattva deeds in one's sphere of activity, and that includes the lay householder or even a King, as spiritual attainment is actually both a personal and a social practice. There is no disentangling these two, and hence, a socially-unengaged Buddhism makes no sense.¹⁶

Dans cette veine, de plus en plus d'initiatives sont prises par les groupes bouddhistes à travers le monde pour s'engager sur le terrain et oeuvrer en parallèle ou en remplacement des oeuvres charitatives et de charités.

POSSIBILITES DE DIALOGUE

Hattam décrit avec précaution toute possibilité de dialogue comme étant une possibilité de créer un espace commun, un espace de dialogue, un espace dialoguant d'où l'on peut revoir et repenser la théorie critique. Il s'agit bien d'un troisième espace d'où l'on peut travailler à éliminer la tendance dans certaines recherches occidentales à situer d'autres cultures à l'intérieur de sa propre grille d'analyse. En d'autres mots, à s'éloigner de positions orientalistes qui pourraient placer la théorie critique de l'École de Francfort au-dessus de la philosophie bouddhiste vice-versa.

Hattam ne propose pas non plus une synthèse des deux traditions. Plutôt, c'est l'idée d'une affinité élective qui rend cet espace pensable. Engager un dialogue, oui, mais à condition de développer une sorte de constellation, dans le sens entendu par Walter Benjamin. Hattam nous rappelle qu'un certain nombre de savants ont essayé de développer un paradigme critique post-moderne, aussi appelé "postmodernisme de résistance"¹⁷ visant à déconstruire la manière dont le pouvoir agit à travers les textes. Ce serait un modèle possible pour promouvoir une théorie critique inspirée du Bouddhisme,¹⁸ mais qui prendrait en compte les deux traditions et leurs différences, de la manière dont Hattam lui-même essaie de vivre cette relation triangulaire dans sa propre existence:

My interest in mapping this third space between critical theory and Buddhism is, in the first instance, entirely autobiographical in

nature. I presently understand my life as being at the intersection of critical theory and Buddhism. I am working with the categories and views of these two traditions and having them work on me.¹⁹

Cette simultanéité entre penser, raisonner et vivre les deux traditions à la fois amena Hattam à ce troisième espace d'où il tente de réconcilier les différences et accroître le dialogue:

Critical theory provides me with a map for making sense of what's happening in my own community, my country and globally, and also provides me with an imagining of how things might be and hence a direction for my politics. Buddhism, on the other hand, provides me with a map for making sense of my own existential situation, my own suffering, and my imminent death. In addition, Buddhism provides a map of consciousness/mind. (...) Buddhism also provides an imagining of what life could be like, of the possibilities for this very embodiment and also, I wish to argue, for our social arrangements.²⁰

C'est précisément cette articulation entre le personnel et le social qui a motivé l'auteur à écrire *Awakening-Struggle*, un titre évoquant bien le genre de tension qui soutient toute l'attention de Hattam. Comme il le dit:

The central proposition in this book is the impossibility of disentangling "awakening" and "struggle" if we are to collectively move towards a more socially just society, or if the very possibility of dharma practice is to be sustained [...] To not engage in the practices of "awakening" is to assume naïvely that the path to a socially just society involves merely transformation outside of one's self. [...] How is an enlightened society possible without enlightened people to manifest that enlightenment? [...] To take seriously the interpermeation of "awakening" and "struggle" means redefining the subject of politics and the very notion of politics itself. Awakening-struggle demands [...] that politics be simultaneously about both inner and outer transformation, both about self and society, both mind and social structure.²¹

Un académique spécialisé en éducation, Hattam se demande: How to be a 'good' teacher in an unjust world? Cette question est un cri de ralliement, commun à tous ceux qui enseignent dans des collèges universitaires et ne laisse personne indifférent au modèle que l'auteur développe pour essayer de progresser le long d'une telle quête de réponse.

Hattam a décidé d'appeler ce troisième espace dialogant, un "Bouddhisme engagé socialement"²², ce qui indique clairement que les chercheurs occidentaux pratiquant le Bouddhisme sont aussi socialement engagés, à la fois comme Bouddhistes et comme savants, et essaient de tracer une carte conceptuelle de ce territoire existentiel, de ce Bouddhisme engagé socialement, en développant une conscience sociale critique. Mais qu'est-ce que cela veut bien dire? Etre engagé socialement et bouddhiste? Hattam retourne aux sources et utilise le texte de Nagarjuna, *The Precious Garland*²³, pour justifier une vue et une sensibilité engagés socialement. Il prend aussi des exemples de personnalités bouddhistes vivantes comme le Dalai Lama²⁴, Thich Nhat Hanh²⁵ et Acharn Sulak Sivaraksa²⁶, suivis par Steven Batchelor²⁷ et le mouvement Think Sangha.²⁸ La définition choisie pour définir le Bouddhisme engagé socialement est cependant issue des écrits de Kraft :

Engaged Buddhism entails both inner and outer work. We must change the world, we must change ourselves, and we must change ourselves in order to change the world. Awareness and compassionate action reinforce each other.²⁹

ERICH FROMM ET LE BOUDDHISME ZEN

La vie et la production intellectuelle d'Erich Fromm exemplifient également ce mouvement dialectique entre le soi et le monde, et le projet double qui découle de cette tension dynamique et engagée. Pendant plus de vingt ans, Erich Fromm a enseigné aux Etats-Unis et à Mexico, tout en participant activement au mouvement de libération des Africains-Américains (*The Civil Rights Movement*), ainsi que la lutte pour le désarmement atomique et contre la guerre du Vietnam, sans oublier le mouvement écologique. Progressivement, Fromm a aussi été transformé par la méditation Zen, son esprit s'est modifié et ouvert sur un niveau plus haut de réalisation spirituelle, tout en restant politiquement engagé. Il y avait été bien préparé par ses lectures et approfondissements du mysticisme juif certes, et certainement démontrait dès un jeune âge un penchant naturel pour la vie spirituelle, mais il n'avait pas atteint une telle profondeur quand il rencontra le Bouddhisme Zen. On peut donc dire que la méditation fut l'élément déclencheur qui permit à Fromm, en retour, de vouloir communiquer et intégrer, comme Hattam plus tard, à la fois la théorie critique et la philosophie bouddhiste. Fromm appliqua donc cette nouvelle ouverte d'esprit à une vision dialectique de l'interdépendance sujet / société: l'écriture de livres a pour but d'aider les autres à changer et d'une certaine manière à créer des conditions sociales différentes telle que ces conditions vont continuer à transformer sur le plan

personnel pour en retour créer des changements positifs et durables au niveau sociétal.

Le moins connu de cette première génération de penseurs de l'École de Francfort, Fromm prit ses distances assez rapidement, alors qu'il s'engageait dans une critique de Freud. Il se dissocia donc du reste du groupe, étant particulièrement intéressé à des idées chères à la fois à la pensée bouddhiste et à la philosophie universaliste: "avoir et être"³⁰, "satori"³¹, "logique paradoxale", toutes bien présentes dans le Bouddhisme Zen. Après avoir lu et rencontré D.T. Suzuki, il écrivit avec lui et en collaboration avec De Marino, en 1960, *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*.³²

Les arguments de Fromm s'appuient fortement sur les mystiques judaïques mais aussi sur les maîtres du Bouddhisme Zen. Mais il écrivit des livres dans un style non-académique pour encourager la dissémination de ses idées au-delà de cercles intellectuels plus restreints. Comme Marcuse, Fromm est lu en dehors des campus universitaires. Hattam a noté que Fromm "goes beyond the Orientalism (superiority) approach that dominated the critical edge of the Western philosophical tradition."³³ Il peut donc être comparé à ce niveau à Heidegger, Schopenhauer et Nietzsche qui tous avaient d'ailleurs influencé cette première génération de penseurs. Schopenhauer lui-même avait annoncé qu'il avait donné une sorte de description bouddhiste de la condition humaine, en 1844, après avoir publié *Le monde en tant que volonté et représentation*, c'est-à-dire après avoir découvert la philosophie bouddhiste! Dans un sens, c'est comparable à Monsieur Jourdain, dans *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* de Molière, qui écrivait de la prose sans le savoir.

Quant à Fromm, il étudia sérieusement la méditation Zen et sa philosophie avec D.T. Suzuki. Ce qui fait dire à Hattam que cette implication représente un élargissement et une tension considérables de sa psychanalyse marxiste. Dans *In The Art of Being*, Fromm décrit la méditation bouddhiste et propose de l'intégrer dans la vie de tous les jours, comme pratique et partie intégrante d'une théorie critique de la société. C'est un bond vers l'Est considérable si l'on prend en considération combien le jeune Fromm était influencé par le messianisme judaïque et les idées libérales – voire utopies- qui reflétaient la vie des intellectuels Juifs marquants de son époque, incluant Walter Benjamin, un autre membre de l'École de Francfort. Fromm était plus intéressé à Marx, cependant, qu'au mysticisme judaïque, parce que Marx avait montré combien le Capitalisme déforme les êtres humains et les aliène.³⁴ De Marx à Freud, Fromm relie le groupe à l'individu et regarde notamment les qualités spécifiques du social versus l'organisation libidinale formée par l'expérience familiale, la famille étant envisagée comme un autre groupe. Pour comprendre le modèle marxiste, donc, de base et superstructure, Fromm insiste qu'il faut aussi connaître l'inconscient, c'est-à-dire les

pensées et émotions dont nous ne sommes pas conscients. Fromm extrapole ainsi de Freud la notion d'inconscient pour l'appliquer au social, en définissant un inconscient social, selon Hattam :

We came then, to the conclusion that consciousness and unconsciousness are socially conditioned. I am aware of all my feelings and thoughts which are permitted to penetrate the threefold filter of (socially conditioned) language, logic and taboos (social character). Experiences which cannot be filtered though remain outside of awareness, that is, they remain unconscious.³⁵

Marx et Freud, pour ainsi dire, dirigent notre attention vers ces forces motivantes cachées, qu'elles soient biologiques ou historiques. A cause de ce processus dialectique entre l'individu, le groupe et la société et de leur articulation, il existe une influence interconnectée qui procède à différents niveaux de l'expérience humaine, individuelle ou collective. Comme Hattam le rappelle, Fromm a essayé d'articuler cette dialectique dans ses oeuvres tardives. Il devint plus spirituel, se tourna vers le Bouddhisme et la vie de Bouddha. Dans *Chains of Illusion* (1962) il exposa le besoin pour une dialectique entre théorie et pratique, comme le Bouddha lui-même l'avait exposé. Cela illustre bien l'affirmation Zen qui dit qu'il n'y a pas de connaissance sans expérience directe de la vérité de cette connaissance, sinon l'on n'entretient que l'illusion de savoir et de connaître. Fromm insinue qu'il est nécessaire de pratiquer la méditation pour expérimenter la vérité et pour savoir :

The whole Fromm project becomes then to find the ways in which we could create the social conditions for the spiritual development of people, or for becoming fully human. In other words, to practice the art of well-being.

...

In thinking a critical theory of well-being (Fromm did not use this term himself) Fromm refers to Zen experience of satori, as the state of well-being... To be fully awakened is to see the world in an unmediated, direct experience of being, and hence "can never be conceived intellectually."³⁶

Dans *To Have or To Be?*, Fromm va jusqu'à emprunter des Quatre Nobles Vérités pour dire que l'on peut changer soi-même et ses conditions sociales. Cependant, conclut Hattam, la description donnée par Fromm de la méditation reste superficielle. De plus, Fromm n'a offert aucune explication quant à la manière dont le Bouddhisme comprend les processus mentaux comme l'illusion, l'avidité ou l'attachement au gain, ou même

la haine. Fromm n'a pas décrit comment la méditation bouddhiste conduit effectivement à la lucidité, le détachement et la générosité. Mais était-ce vraiment la tâche de Fromm de le faire, sachant qu'il insistait au contraire sur le fait que les idées de Bouddha, Eckhart, Marx et Schweitzer étaient en soi des formes radicales de protestation humanistes?

CARTOGRAPHIER UNE VIE ETHICO-POLITIQUE AVEC ROBERT HATTAM

Hattam croit que d'un point de vue bouddhiste, la théorie critique regarde du mauvais côté :

Instead of looking towards the inner dynamics of self and, hence, towards a form of intervention that involves personal transformation as the basis for social change, critical theory misconceives the problem and ignores self in favour of socially transformative action.³⁷

Cette citation résume et annonce la structure entière de l'argument développé tout au long du Chapitre Six, la contribution la plus importante de l'auteur à ce débat entamé depuis Schopenhauer. Cette contribution peut se résumer en quelques mots: aucune transformation sociale n'est possible ou durable sans tout d'abord une transformation personnelle, intérieure, de l'individu. La société n'est pas une entité indépendante vivant une vie autonome par elle-même et indépendamment de ses sujets. De plus, la société est une réflexion à l'image de l'esprit humain du fait que les actions sont dictées par les esprits. Donc toute action transformative trouve son origine dans l'esprit. La société est le produit, la somme, des esprits humains qui la composent: "Society is a product of mind" insiste Hattam. Même la modernité est née de l'esprit, du concept de modernité avant de se réifier. Citant Robert Thurman, Hattam rappelle que "We end up with a theory of outer modernity"³⁸, nous arrivons à une théorie externe de la modernité si nous ne situons pas l'origine des mouvements sociaux et des idéologies dans l'esprit:

Modernity itself and its social institutions are in fact derived in large part from a secular coping mechanism against the bearable feeling of lack that has been unleashed since the death of God.³⁹

Hattam base également son approche sur les Quatre Nobles Vérités et introduit une vision bouddhiste du soi comme alternative aux discours contemporains sur les politiques d'identité, "the deconstructed subjectivity that seems to dominate contemporary critical theory."⁴⁰

Utiliser les Quatre Nobles Vérités comme canevas de travail signifie considérer et reconnaître d'abord la peine, l'inconfort et l'insatisfaction constante qui découlent de l'existence humaine. D'un point de vue occidental, cela veut dire comprendre ou ne pas comprendre l'angoisse. La psychanalyse occidentale avec ses approches psychothérapeutiques est le champs principal de recherche et de pratique traitant de cette angoisse et ses manifestations. Cette anxiété primordiale doit être comprise ici comme un malaise fondamental qui tire son origine du fait qu'on doit faire face à la mort un jour ou l'autre et développer des mécanismes de défense pour essayer d'oublier ou d'échapper à notre destin. Comme Loy, cité par Hattam, l'a dit: "Buddhism, existentialism and psychotherapy all point to some form of resolution of death denial that is the way we deal with death-in-life."⁴¹

Sartre et les Existentialistes, d'un côté, parlent de "nausée," la psychothérapie l'appelle "hyper-anxiété" ou peur de la mort. Apprendre à porter le poids d'un univers dépourvu de sens (à quoi bon vivre pour souffrir si un jour on meurt de toute façon?); et justifier son existence à l'intérieur de ce vacuum, de ce vide, est la première étape vers ce que Nietzsche a défini comme étant le "Übermensch" (en anglais: "overman"). Mais ce n'est pas un chemin facile, car les philosophes occidentaux et les Existentialistes en particulier suggèrent que l'on apprenne à vivre avec ce malaise et que l'on devrait ainsi se procurer une raison d'être pour nous-même et par nous-même.

La philosophie bouddhiste, d'un autre côté, explique que notre angoisse originelle est due au fait que la conscience de soi est une construction mentale. La peur de la mort est en réalité une peur de la mort de notre ego, le résultat d'un désir intense de croire que notre soi est réel. La terreur de la mort, donc, est préférable à toute réalisation que le soi ou tout sensation d'être n'ont pas d'existence solide dans le présent. En projetant notre problème dans le futur, nous créons l'illusion que le problème est réel et qu'en conséquence, nous devons nous aussi avoir une base solide, exister concrètement, puisque nous allons rencontrer ce problème plus tard:

It is not that the ego is repressing death but that the sense-of-self that is a fiction, a mental construct, is struggling against its own non-existence, its own emptiness.... The ego cannot resolve its own lack because the ego is a manifestation of that lack.... Buddhist philosophy predicts that the ego can be overcome by an unmediated experience of unconditioned consciousness. The Buddhist path recommends abiding in the anguish with simple awareness: having deconstructed the sense-of-self in an existential sense we realize that there is no lack because these has never been

any inherently existing and autonomous self that is separate from reality.⁴²

Ce que Hattam suggère correspond bien à ce que Fromm lui aussi proposait: une expérience directe de la vacuité, une expérience libératrice, spirituelle, qui permet une connaissance profonde et définitive de la vraie nature de la réalité. Cette réalité ultime est vide d'existence inhérente, ultimement causale, et tous phénomènes, situations et agents co-existent, interdépendants et interconnectés les uns aux autres, sans créateur, de la même manière dont les cellules, les atomes, les particules, les planètes et les galaxies co-originent. Un tel niveau de profondeur de réalisation spirituelle trace la voie à un détachement profond et sincère, à la générosité, à l'amour, car de telles émotions empoisonnantes (attachement, avidité, haine et colère) se dissolvent quand l'ego lui-même explose ou implose pour embrasser cette réalité. La vacuité telle qu'expliquée par Nagarjuna et que Lyotard décrit dans son premier traité sur la postmodernité, *La condition post-moderne*, correspond à un enchevêtrement infini de trajectoires aléatoires et se croisant les unes avec les autres sans intention apparente.⁴³

Comparée à la philosophie bouddhiste, la philosophie sociale critique comprend l'angoisse en termes d'organisation sociale: "A Buddhist perspective does not deny the socially constructed nature of anxiety" continue Hattam, "but wants to distinguish between causes and conditions."⁴⁴ Alors que les théoriciens critiques voient la société comme étant la cause des problèmes sociaux et de l'aliénation, les philosophes bouddhistes préfèrent considérer la société comme une condition à la manifestation du malaise conjoncturel social: "The recent trend in critical theory towards a decentering of the Cartesian ego in favour of a de-essentialised deconstructive subjectivity resonates with this Buddhist view."⁴⁵

Central à ce déplacement conceptuel, cependant, vers une déconstruction, se situe une critique de la pensée dualistique:

Buddhist philosophy pushes this critique still further and argues that dualistic thinking is not just an epistemological or even an ethico-political problem, but ultimately an ontological one, in an existential sense, because we live our lives as though we are independent and autonomous.⁴⁶

La théorie critique, comme la pensée de Fromm, n'a pas non plus réussi à expliquer comment l'on pourrait déconstruire la subjectivité. Hattam retourne vers les Quatre Nobles Vérités pour ré-articuler comment une telle réalisation est possible. La première des Quatre Nobles Vérités,

“being human is a cause of suffering”⁴⁷, doit être comprise comme une vue de l’origine ou jaillissement de la vie co-dépendante:

Our reality is ultimately a manifestation of patterns or circuits of contingency; there is no first cause, only a series of linkages between a number of factors such as cognition, naming, feeling, craving, etc. The factors of experience are sustained by their own interdependence... The Buddha diagnosed a weak link in the chain; an ignorance grasping at true existence. If this ignorance can be overcome, the subsequent linkages can be extinguished, leading to an exit from the cycle of suffering.⁴⁸

La notion bouddhiste de facteurs interdépendants est l’antithèse, bien sûr, de l’esprit cartésien, de l’idée cartésienne qu’il existe une conscience rationnelle, autonome et permanente, le fameux “*Je pense donc je suis*” que Descartes énonça à la fois comme une grande réalisation de l’esprit humain et comme glorification du pouvoir de Dieu par lequel un tel esprit humain était possible. Au contraire, Hattam insiste sur le fait qu’une vue de l’origine co-dépendante de toutes choses est un terrain fertile sur lequel repenser la manière dont la société est un produit humain: “society is a manifestation of mind, of minds that are under the influence of the ignorance grasping at a real self.”⁴⁹

La philosophie bouddhiste a développé un système d’analyse de l’esprit humain dans lequel nous n’avons pas le temps de nous plonger ici tellement il est extensif. Hattam lui-même a concentré son argument sur les trois poisons de l’esprit pour montrer comment la philosophie bouddhiste traite des afflictions humaines et des actions destructives et les causes profondes tirent leur origine de l’esprit. Prenez par exemple, l’ignorance, le désir et l’aversion en tant que causes complexes de souffrances intérieure et sociétale:

Out of ignorance, we harm others through killing, lying, stealing, sexual misconduct, speaking harshly, divisively, coveting others and their property, or wishing others harm. But our actions also leave imprints into our minds and will become causes of suffering in the future.⁵⁰

Les impressions dont parle Hattam sont bien celles de la loi karmique, la loi des causes et effets qui gouverne le flux des actions et réactions, sur cet échiquier de relations et phénomènes postmodernes. Le but de la pratique bouddhiste est bien sûr d’éveiller l’esprit pour briser ce cycle, non pas seulement pour transformer les effets des actions négatives du passé en des conséquences neutres ou positives, mais aussi pour prévenir la formation d’autres actions négatives dans le présent et créer du

karma négatif pour le futur. En tant que telle, la loi du karma est aussi une manifestation de l'interdépendance entre actions et leurs conséquences, mais elle n'est pas déterministe ou fataliste. Actions, pensées et paroles prennent leur origine dans l'esprit humain et toute pratique spirituelle d'éveil aide à transformer les habitudes mentales et les habitudes de vie, de pensées et de paroles qui en découlent.

Puisque la société est un produit de l'esprit, cela veut dire aussi que les empreintes karmiques manifestent aussi dans les institutions sociales, quelles soient négatives, positives ou neutres. Même si une personne est sujette à un karma familial, national, environnemental, cela ne signifie pas que sur le plan personnel, l'individu ne peut pas résister à la pression sociale. Les écrits de bell hooks attestent d'une telle possibilité. Comme Hattam le souligne: "Under a fascist regime, we are not bound to be fascist."⁵¹ En fait, les politiciens et autres acteurs sociaux produisent plus de sous-produits institutionnalisés et structurés de l'extérieur que ce que leur karma individuel comprend quand ils ou elles se lient aux autres ou utilisent ou conquièrent les ressources nécessaires pour arriver à leur fin. Le cas du développement extrêmement rapide de la Chine sur tous les plans est un exemple parmi d'autres. Grâce à son essor économique sans précédent, la Chine investit dix fois plus dans son armement et sa structure militaire que les Etats-Unis. L'idéologie du Parti communiste chinois qui anime telle course à l'armement n'est pas clairement établie bien qu'il soit indéniable que cela découle d'une carte mentale qui dessine les contours et le cheminement nécessaires pour asservir pouvoir, contrôle et hégémonie sur le monde. Une telle réalité ne peut pas s'expliquer simplement en termes de discours.

L'industrie de la publicité est un autre exemple de l'illusion qui sature les esprits de désirs, et notre conscience de promesses que ces produits et services que l'on nous demande de consommer vont nous rendre heureux, comme si le bonheur devait être trouvé à l'extérieur de nous-mêmes, comme si la culture était un train que l'on attrapait en marche. Adorno a critiqué les industries culturelles en prévoyant que le capitalisme allait colonialiser la subjectivité grâce aux industries de la culture.⁵² Nous ne pouvons pas entrer dans le débat à ce stade-ci de notre présentation, mais il faut bien remarquer que la publicité est aujourd'hui une partie intégrante des industries culturelles puisque l'on dissocie de moins en moins la publicité de la culture populaire. Hattam appelle cela de l'avidité institutionnalisée et reproche que l'on ne comprend pas assez le fait que les individus sont "somehow autonomous and separate [...] from the poverty that surrounds them."⁵³ Dans ce sens:

Buddhist philosophy sees Capitalism as not only a system of wealth creation, but also as an historic responses to the existential

fear and frustration that institutionalizes acquisiveness, greed and attachment.⁵⁴

Un raisonnement similaire est appliqué par les savants bouddhistes au complexe industries-armées-prisons aux Etats-Unis. Les prisons sont maintenant aussi importantes que les industries lourdes et les services, car la privatisation des milieux d'incarcération a engendré une industrie à part entière qui génère des bénéfices et des emplois énormes. Hattam rappelle que:

Our mastery of life and death is assured when we control the fate of others and the ultimate expression of this control is through war... through war, we can admire those heroes who struggle for victory over evil, a symbolic form, more abstracted way to try to buy ourselves free from the penalty of dying or being killed.⁵⁵

Ultimement, cependant, les individus engagés n'ont pas besoin de chercher une solution à leurs problèmes sociaux en dehors d'eux-mêmes, ou de trouver quelque moyen mystérieux de les conduire au bonheur. Hattam est convaincu qu'il est futile d'attendre que les conditions sociales soient à point ou que le capitalisme et le militarisme ait pris fin. La seule alternative est présente ici et maintenant. Elle requiert la motivation de faire changer la situation, c'est à dire la force intérieure de renoncer à un ego qui s'entête à croire à son existence distincte, d'abandonner l'illusion confortable qui nous permet de blâmer les autres et la société pour les maux qui nous affligent, dans l'espoir que les législateurs vont structurer notre vie éthico-politique:

Radical social transformation is not the precursor of psychological liberation [...]. Our ego and society condition each other [...]. Liberation involves practices of freedom as an affirmation of the personal as political but only if these practices undermine the ego. A Buddhist reworking of the idea that the personal is political involves unsettling identity altogether in favour of a new form of subjectivity, one that privileges the development of an expansive type of altruism as a precursor to realizing our radical interdependence.⁵⁶

Hattam et le Bouddhisme n'ont pas réinventé la roue. Dans *One Dimensional Man* (1969), Herbert Marcuse avait déjà caractérisé ce retravail comme une pratique nécessitant une coupure d'avec le familier, éloignée de sa propre routine, de sa façon conventionnelle de voir, entendre et comprendre, comme le seul moyen de devenir réceptif au potentiel d'un monde non agressif et non exploitant.⁵⁷ Une déconnexion

de la propagande politique officielle et des discours des media est nécessaire pour entamer ce processus de désenchantement :

The way forward must be to abandon forms of rationality based on dualities [...] human emancipation / freedom involves shifting consciousness, both personal and social in that direction. Ultimately awakening-struggle must be directed towards unlearning a dualistic rationality.⁵⁸

CONCLUSION

Alors que les écoles de pensée Mahayana, et l'art Gréco bouddhiste étaient transmis à travers l'Asie, les concepts centraux de la culture helléniste comme "la vertu", "l'excellence" et "la qualité" ont sans doute été adoptés par les cultures coréennes et japonaises après une longue diffusion à travers les villes helléniques de l'Asie centrale, pour devenir une partie-clé de leur éthique de travail et de guerre. Nous avons vu au début de cet exposé que les Grecs anciens avaient eu même été influencé par leurs contacts avec des penseurs bouddhistes. Ainsi nous savons que cet échange et cet emprunt d'idées et de vues philosophiques, entre l'Orient et l'Occident, avec son influence sur la science, les arts et les valeurs culturelles a existé depuis que les humains ont voyagé et appris à communiquer ensemble.

À l'aube du 21^e siècle, l'on s'éloigne maintenant de l'épistémologie cartésienne et la migration s'opère vers des traditions philosophiques non-occidentales avec une profondeur et une portée sans précédent. Ce double jeu entre politiques identitaires et politiques en tant que tel a délogé le sujet et les déclamations modernistes de la supériorité de l'esprit humain sur ses créations. La philosophie bouddhiste ajoute l'argument selon lequel, pour commencer, l'esprit n'est qu'un sixième sens qui, comme voir ou entendre, est imparfait et prompt aux erreurs. Ensuite, ce que le Mahayana et Nagarjuna nous ont donné, c'est la vision selon laquelle dans un monde de vacuité, samsara et nirvana co-existent, c'est-à-dire manifestent simultanément. Il suffit de changer son état d'esprit pour changer la perception et même la représentation que l'on se fait du monde. Ceci ne veut pas dire qu'il faut tomber dans une forme de relativisme absolu, dans le sens où toute vérité serait bonne à prendre. Plutôt, il faut entretenir un doute fécond et nourrir sa curiosité par une inquisition, un approfondissement de ses croyances pour les transformer en connaissance et atteindre la vérité. Le débat entourant les idées post-modernes de Steven Batchelor attestent de ce mouvement dialectique au sein même d'une philosophie bouddhiste à saveur de plus en plus occidentale sous le titre de 'Bouddhisme sécularisé.'

Entre la fin de l'hégémonie de l'esprit humain et sa libération de certitudes aliénantes, quel abîme! Si la société n'est qu'une manifestation de l'esprit, il en découle la possibilité évidente de concevoir la réalité sociale soit comme un milieu hostile, soit comme un milieu fécond. Dans ce monde perceptuel, l'esprit est le seul qui peut se jouer des tours. L'autodétermination spirituelle est de rigueur, d'où l'importance accordée par le Bouddhisme à la valeur d'une vie humaine. Il n'y a eu qu'un Hitler, un Gandhi et un Marx. Mais chacun a réussi à imposer sa vision dévastatrice ou rédemptrice d'une manière marquante et durable. D'autres personnalités vont marquer le développement de la civilisation humaine, ce qui ne signifie pas que l'on peut regarder l'histoire comme auto-générée et autosuffisante, surtout pas après l'exposé convainquant de la généalogie de Michel Foucault. De même, l'épistémologie bouddhiste jette un doute profond sur le concept hégélien de l'esprit omnipotent et omnipuissant. Dans ce sens, l'art (toute comme les sociétés) ne peut mourir; il se transforme au gré des manifestations changeantes de l'esprit humain et des illusions changeantes ainsi créées.

Les illusions ne doivent pas être considérées comme des phénomènes sociaux ou individuels. Elles ont des origines plus profondes qui peuvent se déraciner pour rapprocher philosophiquement et spirituellement la vraie nature du soi de la vérité ultime de la réalité. Cela ne devrait pas pour autant être un exercice pénible. En utilisant une méthode comme la méditation (ou du moins en faisant l'effort de calmer l'esprit pour le laisser respirer), et en se soumettant à une discipline (c'est-à-dire en s'engageant à appliquer la méthode comme une pommade à intervalles réguliers), l'on peut réaliser en profondeur la vacuité de l'existence et se libérer du poids des contradictions existentielles. C'est la voie du bodhisattva, un cheminement où le temps et l'espace arrêtent leurs effets ravageurs et dont le flot lumineux conduit vers l'éveil total, transcendantal, permanent pour le bien de tous et toutes.

Le livre de Robert Hattam est un témoignage vivant qu'un tel engagement vers la vérité change les capacités intellectuelles de tout aspirant, et ouvre des horizons conceptuels et des cheminements autrement impossibles à envisager, encore moins à suivre. De plus en plus de savants occidentaux s'engagent d'ailleurs dans ces pratiques méditatives et contemplatives pour la libération complète de cet inconfort existentiel que la théorie critique de l'École de Francfort et autres Marxistes cherchent si ardemment à soulager.

La lutte pour s'éveiller de Robert Hattam, cet "awakening-struggle" doit donc être présentée à un public plus large. Cet article est né du besoin non seulement de réfléchir à la migration des traditions philosophiques vers l'Est, mais aussi d'élargir la portée de ce phénomène à un dialogue fructueux et transformant.

Dans les années 1960, de nombreux Nord-Américains avaient déjà tenté de s'imbiber de spiritualité orientale. Le mouvement Hippies en atteste. A cette époque, Chögyam Trungpa avait avancé le terme 'matérialisme spirituel' pour caractériser ce mouvement par lequel les jeunes quittaient le Christianisme et le Judaïsme, et expérimentaient avec des hallucinogènes, se gavant de philosophies, religions et mysticismes orientaux. Trungpa avait annoncé que tout cheminement spirituel commence avec notre propre névrose et continue avec son élimination par la méditation. Le point essentiel de toute pratique spirituelle, avait dit ce Lama Tibétain qui apportait une étude plus sérieuse du Bouddhisme en Amérique, consiste à sortir de la bureaucratie de l'ego. C'est-à-dire: "to step out of ego's constant desire for a higher, more spiritual, more transcendental version of knowledge, religion, virtue, judgment, comfort, or whatever it is that the particular ego is seeking."⁵⁹ Ce "matérialisme spirituel"⁶⁰ est un piège que Hattam a réussi à éviter et qui rend sa lutte et son dialogue pour s'éveiller d'autant plus universels. Il nourrit l'espoir que les milieux académiques occidentaux vont eux aussi s'ouvrir à une vie éthico-politique.

Ce fut pendant longtemps la tâche des humanités et des sciences sociales enseignées dans les collèges d'études libérales que d'entériner la mission humaniste des universités. Faire route avec Hattam consiste donc à renouveler cette vision humaniste pour sortir du barbarisme engendré par le matérialisme éducatif. Cela nécessite, pour commencer, une vision bien ancrée dans la nécessité d'encourager une éducation libre pour tous. Puis il s'agit d'aider cette éducation à se libérer de sa matérialité pour percer à travers l'illusion de son institutionnalisation et offrir une ouverture vers l'éveil, un étudiant, une étudiante à la fois.

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NOTES

¹ Le feu fait partie de la cosmologie d'Héraclite qui réfute l'identité et croit au contraire que le monde est créé et détruit pour se reconstruire ensuite, dans un retour éternel. Ce feu est le logos universel par lequel la transformation des choses est due à la lutte des contraires et des opposés, en un devenir perpétuel.

² Aristote était le tuteur d'Alexandre le Grand qui lui-même avait cheminé au retour de son périple avec un érudit Indien (et bouddhiste) qui était devenu l'un de ses amis et conseillers (Sasigupta pour certains auteurs, Calanus pour d'autres, ou encore Sphines pour Plutarch). Il n'est pas clair, bien sûr, si Aristote avait écrit ses livres avant ou après avoir été en contact avec cet Indien bouddhiste.

³ Arthur Schopenhauer a écrit que si l'on devait considérer les résultats de sa philosophie comme étant des standards de vérité, alors l'on devrait considérer le Bouddhisme comme étant la plus raffinée de toutes les religions. Schopenhauer, après avoir été son oeuvre majeure, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* en 1818, considérait ce livre comme étant une expression pure de la sagesse enseignée par Bouddha, and s'appelait lui-même "un Bouddha-iste." Voir Peter Abelson, ("Schopenhauer and Buddhism," *Philosophy East and West*, 43 [1993]: 255-278.)

⁴ Saint Jerome (4eme siècle de notre ère) mentionne la naissance de Bouddha qui était sortie du côté d'une vierge.

⁵ Robert Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle: Towards a Buddhist Critical Social Theory* (Flaxton, Australia: Post Pressed, 2004).

⁶ Voir R. Thurman, "Nagajurna's guidelines for Buddhist social activism," dans *The Path of Compassion: Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism*, sous la direction de F. Eppsteiner (Berkeley, CA: Parallax, 1985) et *Essential Tibetan Buddhism* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1995).

⁷ Bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: education as the Practice of Freedom* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁸ Voir, par exemple, articles de David R. Loy dans *Philosophy East and West*, 55 (2005) et *Lack and Transcendence: The Problem of Death in Psychotherapy, Existentialism, and Buddhism* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996), et autres livres et articles publiés par cet auteur prolifique. *Psychoanalysis and Buddhism: An Unfolding Dialogue* (2005), édité par Jeremy D. Safran, est un bon départ pour évaluer la portée de ce champs.

⁹ Voir Erich Fromm, *The Art of Being* (New York: Continuum, (1992), *The Art of Loving* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1976), *Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics* (New York: Henry Holt, 1974).

¹⁰ M. Horkheimer, *Between Philosophy and Social Science: Selected Early Writings* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), p. 11.

¹¹ T. Adorno & M. Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (London: Verso, 1972).

¹² Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 8.

¹³ Lam Rim (étapes du cheminement) est une série d'exercices créés par Atisha (le moine Indien qui amena le Bouddhisme au Tibet), destinés à entraîner l'esprit à expérimenter l'impermanence. C'est un cheminement progressif, dévotionnel, analytique et méditatif, par opposition au tantrisme qui est une ascension individuelle accélérée.

¹⁴ Les Quatre Nobles Vérités (Pali, "cattari ariya saccani") sont la connaissance essentielle et le fondement même de la philosophie bouddhiste. Le prince Gautama devint le Bouddha Shakyamuni (aussi appelé le Bouddha historique), après avoir réalisé la cause de la souffrance (insatisfaction) humaine et un remède pour mettre un terme à cette souffrance ou difficulté d'être. Les Quatre Nobles Vérités étaient le sujet de son premier sermon juste après avoir réalisé l'Éveil. Il donna ce sermon aux ascétiques avec lesquels il avait commencé son cheminement spirituel dans l'austérité. Les quatre vérités ou principes sont les suivant: 1) Dukkha: tous les êtres souffrent et la vie est impermanente. 2) Samudaya: Il existe une cause à cette souffrance, c'est notre

attachement et nos désires incessants (*tanha*). 3) Nirodha: Il existe une solution à ce problème ontologique qui consiste à se défaire de nos attachements et désires non raisonnables. 4) Magga: Le chemin qui mène à la cessation de la souffrance est la Voie Octuple ou l'Octuple Noble Sentier, selon les traductions.

¹⁵ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 171.

¹⁶ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 174.

¹⁷ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 4.

¹⁸ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 5.

¹⁹ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 5.

²⁰ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 5.

²¹ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 275.

²² Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 164.

²³ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 171.

²⁴ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 166: “the Dalai Lama is clearly arguing that a world-rejecting or world-denying Buddhism would be contradictory.”

²⁵ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 166: “Thich Nhat Hanh argues that even meditation is not an ‘escape from society’.”; Hattam p. 168: “he wants to contemplate how can we bring meditation out of the meditation hall and into everyday life, or alternatively, how can we rethink the nature of dharma practice in a way that removes the barrier between so-called ‘practice’ and ‘non-practice’. It is this deconstruction of the binary practice/non-practice that is central to the debate about socially-engaged Buddhism.” Voir: Tich Nhat Hanh, *Love in Action: Writings on Nonviolent Social Change* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax, 1993).

²⁶ Acharn Sulak Sivaraksa est l'un des fondateurs du International Network of Engaged Buddhists. Lui-même est un pionier du Bouddhisme engagé en Thaïlande et est considéré comme un exemple vivant d'un Bouddhisme tourné vers l'aide humanitaire, sociale et écologique. Voir : Sulak Sivaraksa, *Socially-Engaged Buddhism for the New Millenium* (Bongkok: Sathirokoses-Nagapradipa Foundation & Foundation for Children, 1999).

²⁷ S. Batchelor, *The Faith to Doubt: Glimpses of Buddhist Uncertainty* (Berkeley: CA: Parallax Press, 1990).

²⁸ Voir “Think Sangha Mating: Towards a methodology for intellectual-activists-practitioners of Buddhism.” www.bpf.org/papers.html.

²⁹ Kraft, *The Wheel of Engaged Buddhism: A New Map of the Path* (New York & Tokyo: Weatherhill. 1999), p. 10.

³⁰ Erich Fromm, *To Have or To Be?* (London: Abacus, 1978), p. 34.

³¹ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 223.

³² D.T. Suzuki, E. Fromm & R. De Martino, *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* (London: Souvenir Press, 1960).

³³ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 213.

³⁴ “aliénation” ici doit être comprise comme étant à la fois morale et psychologique: elle corrompt autant qu'elle pervertit toutes les valeurs humaines.

³⁵ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 227.

³⁶ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 233.

- ³⁷ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 248.
- ³⁸ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 264.
- ³⁹ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 264.
- ⁴⁰ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 248.
- ⁴¹ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 248.
- ⁴² Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, pp. 253-254.
- ⁴³ Voir Jean-François Lyotard, *La condition post-moderne* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1979).
- ⁴⁴ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 254.
- ⁴⁵ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 254.
- ⁴⁶ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 254.
- ⁴⁷ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, pp. 248, 250, and 255.
- ⁴⁸ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 256.
- ⁴⁹ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 256.
- ⁵⁰ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 258.
- ⁵¹ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 259.
- ⁵² T. Adorno, *The Culture Industry* (London: Routledge, 1991).
- ⁵³ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 261.
- ⁵⁴ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 261.
- ⁵⁵ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 262.
- ⁵⁶ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 270.
- ⁵⁷ Voir Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1964).
- ⁵⁸ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 279.
- ⁵⁹ Hattam, *Awakening-Struggle*, p. 279.
- ⁶⁰ Voir Chögyam Trungpa, *Cutting through Spiritual Materialism* (Boston & London: Shambala, 1987).

AMBIVALENCE AND REBELLION: YODER AND HAUERWAS ON DEMOCRACY

Anthony G. Siegrist

Jeffery Stout has said that Stanley Hauerwas has done more than any other theologian to “inflame Christian resentment of secular political culture.”¹ Stout also says that Hauerwas is the most “influential theologian now working in the United States.”² This seems a rather scintillating reputation for one person to bear. Stout’s claims about Hauerwas are certainly open for debate, but what is indisputable is that Hauerwas has significantly influenced theological conversations about the nature of Christian faithfulness in a society said to be governed “by the people for the people.” Hauerwas is appreciated and disdained, envied and ignored, sometimes in the same mind.

It is difficult to talk of Hauerwas’s work without discussing another theologian equally implacable in his defense of Christian pacifism, John Howard Yoder. Much energy has been spent engaging the often controversial thought of Hauerwas. His thought is often linked – both by himself and by those who find such links instructive – to Karl Barth, Alasdair MacIntyre, Reinhold Niebuhr and Stanley Fish. As important as these four have been, Yoder, the implacable Mennonite theologian just mentioned, has also been an important influence upon Hauerwas. It is this connection which I intend to explore in this essay. While others have explored the Yoder-Hauerwas connection at length, my intentions are rather narrow.³ In this essay I will compare the views of Yoder and Hauerwas on democracy.

Hauerwas’s self-professed debt to Yoder is widely known. Hauerwas’s intellectual interests have ranged far beyond Yoder’s. In particular, Hauerwas is more conversant in the literature of political philosophy than Yoder ever was. The two theologians share important commonalities, among which their emphasis on the priority of the church in ethical discourse, pacifism, and a preference for presenting their theology in essay format immediately come to mind. Hauerwas has affirmed many of Yoder’s basic theological moves and has pointed many grateful theology students to Yoder’s work. There are differences between the two of course; Hauerwas is generally more Roman Catholic than Yoder, and Yoder more clearly wears the mantel of the Radical Reformation. It is not often noticed, however, that Yoder and Hauerwas differ critically in their approach to democracy. While Yoder’s position boils down to a studied ambivalence, Hauerwas is intent on exposing the shortcomings of liberal democracy.⁴ In this essay, I will attempt to outline the important contours of this difference.

Both Yoder and Hauerwas have written a great deal. The challenge of mastering the full Yoder-Hauerwas corpus is further complicated by their shared preference for the essay genre. As a result, my argument in this essay is somewhat tentative. I will focus my analysis on two essays: “The Christian Case for Democracy” by Yoder⁵ and “The Church and Liberal Democracy: The Moral Limits of a Secular Polity” by Hauerwas.⁶ Although I will make reference to the broader work of each of these theologians, I believe that these two essays are fair representatives demonstrating the divergence between them. My analysis will follow a straightforward format. To initiate the discussion I will sketch the argument of each essay and make several comments to help situate these essays within the authors’ wider work. I will then describe several key moves shared by both theologians; I am not arguing that Yoder and Hauerwas are totally at odds. I will then in some detail describe points at which they differ. I will conclude this essay by offering my own thoughts about the importance of this divergence.

“THE CHRISTIAN CASE FOR DEMOCRACY”

I begin with Yoder’s essay because it was written first. Although the version I am referring to was published as part of a collection of essays in 1984, Hauerwas’s essay – part of a collection published in 1981 – cites an earlier version of Yoder’s “The Christian Case for Democracy,” published in 1977.⁷ It makes sense to follow the original chronology and to consider Yoder’s essay before Hauerwas’s. This should also remind us that, prior to Hauerwas’s writing of *A Community of Character*, he had been significantly influenced by Yoder’s work. Hauerwas’s encounter with Yoder’s theology began when he read Yoder’s critiques of Karl Barth and Reinhold Niebuhr⁸ and, for a period of time, both Hauerwas and Yoder lived and worked in relative proximity in northern Indiana.

The tone of Yoder’s essay is set by this statement: “The glorification of democracy as a new form of government categorically separate from the frailties of other forms is observable not only in the wars we fight in its name but also in our peacetime missionary stance.”⁹ Yoder says that, just when the West has stopped exporting its religion, it has begun to export its politics. Instead of questioning the appropriateness of democracy, most discussions now center around either making the system work better or taking credit for its genesis.¹⁰ Yoder, however, wants to take up the fundamental question again:

I suggest that we might have a better handle on the problems of our time if we were to pick up the big question again. We might have a more realistic perspective on the struggle among the realistic elites, and a more prophetic understanding of the real

contribution of the utopians (from the Libertarians on the one side to the Students for a Democratic Society on the other) if we were to keep the question open about whether and why (or when or where) democracy is really the best form of government.¹¹

Yoder revisits the question with two evaluative tools in hand, which take the form of two “realisms”: first, “a New Testament realism about the nature of governmental power, as exemplified in the political choices of Jesus and the apostles,” and second, “a free-church realism about the ambivalence of ‘Christendom,’ as this doubt has been exemplified in debates within the Protestant Reformation.”¹² The core deconstructive work of Yoder’s realisms is intended to demonstrate that when we ask, “What is the best form of government?” we are already making distinct Constantinian assumptions. This quest implies that we are in – or intend to claw our way into – social positions in which we can take steps to make our political ideals reality from the top down.¹³ This is a position that early Christians, as well as many oppressed Christians throughout the world today, cannot even pretend to hold.¹⁴

In this essay, Yoder extends what might be called a cow path in his theology – his argument against Constantinianism. Yoder describes the “Constantinian moral paradigm” as constructed with several interlocking assumptions: 1) the “axiom of generalizability” which assumes that normative ethical propositions must be tested against the ability of the whole society to fulfill them, 2) that normative ethical propositions must pass the test of asking what would happen if the ruler took such a position, and 3) that moral norms must be tested against a pragmatic question, asking what would happen if the whole society did abide by the ethical proposition. As with the question concerning the best form of government, none of these tests would have made sense in the moral reasoning of the early Christians.¹⁵

To dissect the Constantinian moral paradigm and thereby expose its hidden anatomy to the light of the gospel, Yoder uses the tool of his first realism, that of the New Testament. To do this, Yoder explores the upper room conversation as recorded in the Gospel of Luke. The realism of the New Testament is captured in Jesus’ statement: “The rulers of the world lord it over them.” Yoder interprets this statement as not being given normative weight by Jesus. Similarly, Jesus is not suggesting that the rulers should not do as they are doing. Jesus is simply describing the situation as it is. Jesus then says, “Those who exercise authority let themselves be called benefactors.” Again, this is not an evaluative statement by Jesus, but rather is descriptive. The nature of the rhetoric changes when Jesus says, “But it shall not be so among you; you shall be servants because I am a servant.” According to Yoder, “After having described realistically both the fact of rule and the fact of value claims

being made for that rule, Jesus locates himself and his disciples in a different ethical game.¹⁶ Jesus' statements display the facts of dominion, the rhetoric of beneficence, and the radically different ethic of servanthood.

Yoder argues that since the time of Constantine, these three levels (the facts of dominion, the rhetoric of beneficence, and the radically different Christian ethic) have been confused and melded. This synthesis Amixes the descriptive and prescriptive, interweaving the language which justifies coercion with that which guides voluntary discipleship. Since Constantine, when talking about government we have assumed [as Jesus did not] that we are talking about government "of Christians and by Christians."¹⁷ Untangling these three levels has several important benefits. It helps Christians to stop dreaming of a past, or future, ideal situation in which they are a powerful majority. Such an untangling allows Christians to hold the political leader accountable to his rhetoric of beneficence even though the leader's "language of moral claims is not the language of discipleship"¹⁸ Yoder, then, is less concerned with idealist theorizing than he is about the way Christians live in their particular contexts. If, by chance, the situation that Christians find themselves in is one in which their government claims to govern with their consent, the Christians will gladly Ause the language of democracy.¹⁹ This leads Yoder to a crucial claim:

Of all the forms of oligarchy, democracy is the least oppressive, since it provides the strongest language of justification and therefore of critique which the subjects may use to mitigate its oppressiveness. But it does not make of democracy, and especially it does not make of most regimes which today claim to be democracies, a fundamentally new kind of sociological structure.²⁰

Yoder is clear that the language and standards of governmental authority are radically distinct from those of the church. He says, "Leaders in the Kingdom will promise not bread and circuses but a mixture of the blessings of voluntary community and the cost of the cross."²¹

Many Christian traditions try to explicate their theology of social engagement through the development of paradigmatic models. For Yoder, developing a paradigmatic model of Christian engagement in the world is not a matter of adding qualifications to the mandate of the ruler, as is common; it starts in another place entirely. Christian engagement in the world starts not with the ruler but with the subject – with the servant instead of the elite – and qualifies that position with respect to social context and Christian doctrine. For the Christian, discipleship will "cast light on the vocational decisions of persons committed to Kingdom ethics

as they decide how to be active in the wider society: their preference will not be for dominion roles but for servant roles.”²² Yoder is clear that his suggestion – that we might learn from the separation of the three levels in the upper room discourse – does not necessarily imply a “systemic abstention from modern society, or even from ‘government.’”²³

In Yoder’s mind, his “negative case for democracy” is not a charge leveled uniquely at this style of government. His evaluation using the realism of the New Testament applies to all governments everywhere. For Yoder what is at stake is not “for the *demos* to be able to *rule* but rather for other entities, first of all faith communities, and then by implication other voluntary associations and household structures, to pursue their own ends without any more central management, by the *demos* or anyone else, than the peace of the total community demands.”²⁴

Yoder is not convinced that the *demos* necessarily can, or ever actually does, rule itself, but he does propose that Christians should contribute to “democratization either by using the tyrants’ legitimation language against them, or by the ripple effect from faith community forms.”²⁵ Yoder insists that his position has the merit of starting from within the Christian community and being based on what it knows about its own calling instead of being held captive to “whatever secular consensus seems strong at the time.”²⁶

Yoder concludes his essay by briefly engaging the work of John Rawls. He finds Rawls’s work to be too detached from reality to be very helpful. We cannot start from scratch – the “original position” has never been a viable option.²⁷ The bottom line for Yoder is that the church must know what language it should use to critically engage the oppressive structures of the world. That said, Yoder concedes that “the least oppressive form of government is what our custom calls ‘rule by the people.’ That is a better statement of the case for democracy than are claims rooted in ‘nature’ or ‘contract.’”²⁸

“THE CHURCH AND LIBERAL DEMOCRACY”

Like Yoder, Hauerwas sets out to describe the challenges that liberal democracy presents for Christians. Democracy, he insists, challenges Christian social ethics in ways we have seldom understood.²⁹ Although many Christians have begun to rediscover the social significance of their faith, they assume that involvement in government, because of its inherent justice, is the best way to bring about such change. Hauerwas sees it differently: It is my contention, however, that Christian enthusiasm for the political involvement offered by our secular polity has made us forget the church’s more profound political task.³⁰ Christians have been fooled by liberalism into thinking that a just society and polity are possible

without just people. In response, Hauerwas says that the challenge for Christian social ethics is no different now than it ever was or will be:

It is always the Christian social task to form a society that is built on truth rather than on fear. For the Christian, therefore, the church is always the primary polity through which we gain the experience to negotiate and make positive contributions to whatever society in which we may find ourselves.³¹

A central point in Hauerwas's argument is that a secular liberal society is neither neutral nor particularly advantageous to the church.³² He argues that many Christians, while placidly agreeing that our society has problems, fail to question the basic foundation upon which the American way of life rests. Hauerwas denies that Christians "have a stake in America's extraordinary experiment to create a free people through the mechanism of democratic government."³³

Hauerwas deepens his critique of America – it cannot be denied that beneath all the layers of Hauerwas's political critique he has America in mind – by looking to Solzhenitsyn. From Solzhenitsyn he posits that a society or system of government should be judged by the kind of people it creates. It is of no great surprise that both Hauerwas and Solzhenitsyn find America wanting under this analytical light.³⁴ The competitive materialistic impulse assumed within the liberal polity has left many in American society empty and depressed (although this is often masked). In making freedom an end in itself, Americans have created "an excessively legalistic society," for, without virtues, all that keeps order is the legal code.³⁵ The crux of the argument is that the "moral insufficiencies Solzhenitsyn finds so destructive about our society are necessarily built into the founding assumptions of America and have been reinforced by our best political practices and philosophy."³⁶ It is then the case that this moral deficiency cannot be separated from liberalism itself, and that the American liberal impulse cannot be decontaminated.

Liberalism also fails in its attempt to move beyond history: "Our (American) assumption has been that, unlike other societies, we are not creatures of history, but that we have the possibility of a new beginning. We are thus able to form our government on the basis of principle rather than the arbitrary elements of a tradition."³⁷ Hauerwas also charges that liberal society and its system of government are built on self-interest. Indeed, public duty and public policy are unavoidably reduced to self-interest. Public policy is birthed from a "coalescence of self-interests that is then justified in the name of the greatest good for the greatest number (but too often turns out to be the greatest good for the most powerful)."³⁸ Through its presumption of self-interest, liberalism produces more self-interest. Americans have no idea what it means to be a "good people";

they simply act on the assumption that it is right for them to pursue the satisfaction of their wants and needs. They have no idea what they *ought* to do with their freedom.³⁹ “It is often pointed out that there is a deep puzzle about the American people, for in spite of being the best off people in the world, their almost frantic pursuit of abundance seems to mask a deep despair and loss of purpose.”⁴⁰ In America, liberalism has transformed “unlimited desire” into a virtue.⁴¹ Hauerwas’s indictment continues as he explores trust. He relates his point with more than a hint of sarcasm: “The very genius of our society is to forge a political and social existence that does not have to depend on trusting others in matters important for our survival.”⁴² Coupled with the adoration of desire-fulfillment (as outlined above), America’s competitive spirit has fostered a deep distrust among its people. Subsequently lacking in community and cooperation, Americans are forced into a reliance on what they do have – abundance and technology.⁴³

But where are people to learn these virtues which Hauerwas believes will offer a way out of the contemporary American futility? In the church, of course. And for this to be possible, the church must recognize that its true duty as a part of society is to “be herself.”⁴⁴ This means that for the church to adequately serve the larger society, it must be concerned with its own well-being. Liberalism promises freedom but enslaves; in its offer of starting from scratch, it takes Christians out of their story and places them within its own. In place of the tyranny of the monarch, it offers the tyranny of the people. Hauerwas admits that the church is democratic in a sense, in its value of discussion and recognition of the plurality of gifts. However, the church neither believes that its members should have equal authority nor that its individuals necessarily have an equal understanding of truth.⁴⁵

This essay, like most of Hauerwas’s work, arrives at the conclusion that the church is to be a contrasting society. It must witness to the reality that God’s story is true, and that within it a community can be formed based on trust, not fear. This need not imply withdrawal from the world or a rejection of it (as is often charged). This vision of the church is a confession “that the church must serve the world on her own terms. We must be faithful in our own way, even if the world understands such faithfulness as disloyalty.”⁴⁶ It is, then, not the purpose of the church, even in a liberal democracy, to provide the government with theories of legitimacy. It is in this context that Hauerwas cites Yoder’s claim that it is more important for the church to know what kind of language to use to critically engage state-backed oppression, than to provide alternative theories of governance.

In sum, Hauerwas believes that, relative to democracy, the church is helpful in that it trains its members in the Christian virtues and gives them the opportunity to experience trust. He says, “A truthful politics is

one that teaches us to die for the right thing, and only the church can be trusted with this task.”⁴⁷ Hauerwas’s call is “for Christians to exhibit confidence in the lordship of Yahweh as the truth of our existence and in particular of our community. If we are so confident, we cannot help but serve our polity”⁴⁸ Such a call contains an inherent yet radical critique of the church, and as such it should be clear that Hauerwas’s antagonism toward liberal society is not an endorsement of a complacent church.

TWO ANABAPTIST THEOLOGIANS

It is true that there is a deep similarity between Yoder and Hauerwas. However, this deep similarity is usually discussed broadly, as though there are no important differences. It is common for Hauerwas and Yoder to be labeled “narrative theologians,” “virtue ethicists,” or “pacifist theologians.” Groupings are helpful in survey textbooks and in pedagogical typologies, but in reality none of these labels fit either Yoder or Hauerwas well. Yoder and Hauerwas hold their methodological commitments loosely, making it difficult to categorize them in this way. Before outlining the important differences between these two theologians, we must give some attention to the similarities.

Both Yoder and Hauerwas are concerned with what Yoder calls a “glorification of democracy.” Neither is interested in propping up this or any other form of government at the expense of the church. It is not uncommon in America to find Christian thinkers who, unlike Yoder and Hauerwas, seek to give democracy further theological and philosophical legitimation hoping in the end to export this form of government worldwide. These would-be exporters of democracy fail to recognize its possible shortcomings relative to the Christian faith. Both Hauerwas and Yoder want to check this easy affirmation of a polity which fails to embody the fullness of the kingdom of God.

Both Yoder and Hauerwas focus much of their theological work on the church. On the surface, this seems hardly worthy of note since theologians are generally known for attending to the church.⁴⁹ What makes their position interesting, however, is that they both observe a fundamental tension between the individual’s national citizenship and membership in the Body of Christ. For both Yoder and Hauerwas, a Christian’s ethical obligation is fundamentally shaped by his or her membership in the Body of Christ. In other words, a Christian’s primary office is that of a disciple; the demands of any other office (whether civil, political, or familial) must be submitted to the rule of faith and be commensurate with their participation in the Christian community. This abstraction gains content when we remember that, for both Yoder and Hauerwas, pacifism is central to the Christian faith. A typical

Hauerwasian statement is that “the church is always the primary polity.”⁵⁰ Both Yoder and Hauerwas are convinced that Christian faithfulness can be aided through a careful differentiating of the claims of liberal democracy from those of the church. And so, despite their reputation as polemicists, they both share a strong constructive impulse with regard to the church. I will show later that this similarity cannot be pressed too far; here, though, it is important to recognize that both Yoder and Hauerwas want the church to be aware of its own calling, of its own language. This awareness will make it possible for the church to offer true criticism of the current political order, and as odd as it sounds, this criticism is a gift that the church brings to the wider society.

Many critics fail to recognize that both Yoder and Hauerwas admit that democracy and the church are in some ways related polities. Hauerwas does this when he points out that the church’s belief in the plurality of gifts and the necessity of dialogue bears a resemblance to democratic deliberation.⁵¹ Yoder makes the connection more explicit when he says that what is really at stake in the debate over democracy is the ability of entities other than the state, “first of all faith communities, and then by implication other voluntary associations and household structures, to pursue their own ends without any more central management, by the *demos* or anyone else, than the peace of the total community demands.”⁵² In a section under the title “In Favor of Holy Experiments”, Yoder discusses the connection between democracy and religious groups in both England and the American colonies. For all his hedging, Yoder states that a “positive correlation between the free church under friendly skies and the viability of a generally dialogical democracy needs repetition, for it is easily forgotten under the cheaper Enlightenment rhetoric of autonomous human dignity.”⁵³ Yoder even proposes that elements of the anti-authoritarian impulse of the Enlightenment were in some sense outgrowths of genuine Christian sentiment. In order not to make more of Yoder’s affirmations than we should, it must be pointed out that he likely would make similar statements about certain varieties of communism. Just because there is a “positive correlation” between elements of democracy and Christianity and because democracy is generally less oppressive than other forms of government, it does not follow for Yoder that Christianity should give democracy the kind of unique endorsement it so often does.

While Yoder is less conversant in political philosophy than Hauerwas, both these two articles contain a short discussion of the work of John Rawls. Hauerwas argues that Rawls fails to realize that justice can only be properly understood underneath a fuller “good.”⁵⁴ While Yoder is also critical of Rawls, he is so for a different reason. Yoder is not convinced that Rawls’s “original position” is a helpful concept. For Yoder there is no such sterile place in which to speculate about how the political

order should be designed. Likewise, he also takes issue with the implied idea that every citizen is in some way sovereign or responsible for the political system. Despite singling out Rawls, neither Yoder nor Hauerwas make him out to be the villain of the story of liberal democracy, but they both recognize that his thought is representative of a position they disagree with.

A SUBSTANTIVE DISAGREEMENT

Despite the several important similarities, there is a clear divergence of Yoder's and Hauerwas's approaches to democracy; Hauerwas takes a stronger position against liberal democracy than does Yoder. While Yoder's position can be fairly described as a *studied ambivalence*, Hauerwas's might be better characterized as a *rebellion in favor of virtue*. In what follows, I wish to describe each position, showing how the two are distinct. It is worth repeating, though, that this is largely an 'intra-family' distinction.

While Hauerwas appears to have read more widely across academic disciplines than Yoder, I would claim that Yoder's work represents a greater awareness of the world outside the United States. This is not to say that Hauerwas is not well traveled; rather, that Yoder, to a greater extent, sees his work against a global background. This may be due to Yoder's training as a historian (his doctoral research was done on the Radical Reformation), his international experience, or some other factor harder to pin down. Yoder spent his formative years in Europe working for Mennonite agencies in humanitarian relief and missions. He briefly taught in South America and was involved in the World Council of Churches.⁵⁵ Again, it is difficult to know to what extent Yoder's wide-ranging experience affected the substance of his theology, but it seems indisputable that some such experience or conviction widened the context of his thinking.

This is demonstrated clearly in "The Christian Case for Democracy." In this essay, Yoder makes reference to Christians throughout history who have lived in environments drastically different from twentieth-century America. He reminds his readers that many Christians even today cannot ask Constantinian questions. The following statement, which we have already visited in part, seems to have been shaped by this broader awareness:

Of all the forms of oligarchy, democracy is the least oppressive, since it provides the strongest language of justification and therefore of critique which the subjects may use to mitigate its oppressiveness. But it does not make of democracy, and especially it does not make of most regimes which today claim to be

democracies, a fundamentally new kind of sociological structure.⁵⁶

Here we see the two sides of Yoder's position. While the positive case is given first in the above quotation, the negative assessment is foundational. It is important to see that there are two sides to his position. Even though democracy is not the ultimate salvation story it sometimes pretends to be, Yoder clearly realizes that there are forms of government more conducive to oppression and less conducive to civil peace.

This positive side of Yoder's ambivalence toward democracy (if ambivalence can have two sides) is one of the differentiating factors between him and Hauerwas. Yoder is committed to a non-Constantinian version of Christianity, but he does not write as though he has a stake in a radical critique of liberalism. Although he does annotate the "Enlightenment rhetoric of autonomous human dignity" as a "cheaper" rhetoric in favor of democracy, Yoder chooses not to mount a frontal assault against it, its cost/value ratio notwithstanding.⁵⁷ In making the same point from a different perspective, although Yoder like Hauerwas intends his work to be catholic, he does not attempt a full-scale critique of either Western or American society. Yoder says, "I object only to the way in which in the Constantinian tradition [certain ways of ethical reasoning have been] used to set Jesus aside." In Yoder's view, the church, once it finds its own language with which to engage the world, need not undertake a head-on battle with the assumptions of democratic liberalism. This implies a prophetic critique, but it need not take the form of an obsession with the philosophical foundations of any given society. While Yoder's underlying assumption, what he might call the lordship of Christ, and his end goal, faithful discipleship in service of God, are not radically different from Hauerwas's, his intermediary step is. Yoder is *For the Nations* in so far as it aids the transforming the peoples of the world into the people of God.⁵⁸

The tools Yoder uses to critique an overzealous Christian legitimation of democracy are distinct from Hauerwas's as well. Where Hauerwas leans heavily on the philosophy of Alasdair MacIntyre and Stanley Fish, Yoder constructs his critique based on the "realism" of the New Testament. As described above, Yoder uses Luke's account of the upper room discourse to describe the fact of dominion, government's inevitable claims of beneficence, and the alternative polity of the gospel. This is indicative of Yoder's entire life's work. Yoder's most well-known book, *The Politics of Jesus*, is a particularly poignant example of this approach.⁵⁹ Subsequently, it should not be surprising that Yoder's arguments (including his political critique) are particular in nature. Yoder's whole project is an attempt at using the biblical witness to radically critique the powers of the world. Broadly speaking, this makes

Yoder's work less accessible to the uninitiated, and it is no coincidence that many have discovered Yoder through Hauerwas. Arguing from texts based in the first century inherently makes Yoder's engagement with contemporary society non-congruent, that is, Yoder engages society on a plane of discourse radically different from the language of the marketplace – even of the academy. That is why many of his readers are surprised at the way he engages issues from previously unconsidered angles. It is also why Richard Hays pays Yoder the following compliment:

Yoder's hermeneutic represents an impressive challenge to the church to remain faithful to its calling of discipleship, modeling its life after the example of the Jesus whom it confesses as Lord. As Christian theologians increasingly are forced to come to grips with the demise of Christendom and to acknowledge their minority status in a pluralistic world, Yoder's vision offers a compelling account of how the New Testament might reshape the life of the church.⁶⁰

To say that Yoder is ambivalent about democracy is not to say that he does not care about justice, peace, or civility. Indeed, Yoder cares a great deal about these things, it is just that he chooses to define them in a particular way.⁶¹ He is certainly not convinced that the best way for Christians to realize these goals is by taking control of their governments. In fact, Yoder is worried at the character of divine-infused politics:

The state of nature and social contract language lead us seriously astray when they give the impression or support the argument that if Christians don't take over the government we shall fall into anarchy. We are more likely to fall into international anarchy (i.e., war) or into domestic war when people do take over the government with too strong a sense of divine calling to set things right, with the national order as instrument.⁶²

Christians pursue justice, peace, and civility. They do this within whatever political structure they find themselves in. If they happen to be in a setting where their voice is presumed and even requested, then they will not waste the opportunity regardless of what kind of philosophy the political structure may be based on.⁶³

REBELLION AND VIRTUE

I now wish to distill Hauerwas's approach to liberal democracy into two important theological moves which clearly distinguish it from the approach of Yoder. The first is Hauerwas's unavoidably rebellious tone,

and the second is its focus on virtue. The following section will be anchored by these two facets of Hauerwas's thought.

Both Yoder and Hauerwas have a reputation of being strong polemicists. Both writers possess an almost acidic tone, muted not at all by their pacifism. While Yoder's vitriol is directed toward all things Constantinian, Hauerwas's critical tongue finds its chief target in liberalism.⁶⁴ True, Hauerwas also rejects what Yoder calls "Constantinianism", but his critique is extended further than Yoder's to an attempt at chastening political liberalism in its own world. As Jeffery Stout has noticed, Hauerwas pairs the theological lessons he has learned from Yoder with philosophical lessons learned from Alasdair MacIntyre.⁶⁵ This enables Hauerwas to hammer away at political liberalism in a mode that can be appreciated by those unconvinced by Yoder's scripture-based evaluation.⁶⁶ Conversely, it also allows more people to feel the sting of Hauerwas's relentless attacks. This means that, should Hauerwas ever let go of his Christian faith, his antipathy toward liberalism could remain unaffected. Hauerwas's approach to democracy rests on its connection to Enlightenment liberalism, and in the sprawling and multifarious house that is liberalism, Hauerwas finds many monsters lurking.

In "The Church and Liberal Democracy," Hauerwas argues that when Christians engage in politics on the terms set by democracy, they acquiesce "to the assumption that a just polity is possible without the people being just."⁶⁷ Hauerwas proposes that the church is to be a "school for virtue."⁶⁸ Here we see something of his appreciation for MacIntyre's Aristotle. This certainly is distinct from Yoder. While Yoder does borrow from sources outside the Christian scriptures, there is nothing in his thinking quite like Hauerwas's use of Aristotle. For Hauerwas, virtue represents, in part, a way of conceiving Christian ethics that avoids some of the hollowness of the quandary ethics so prevalent in our modern conversations.

Hauerwas's rebellious tone has another striking facet. He rebels more strongly and more specifically against American society than does Yoder.⁶⁹ This has the effect of tying his theology tightly to his context. This is one of the reasons for the way James McClendon differentiates between the ethics of Yoder and Hauerwas. In the first book of McClendon's systematic theology, he uses Yoder to represent an approach to ethics oriented toward eschatology, while he uses Hauerwas to represent an approach oriented toward the social world.⁷⁰ It is easy to make more of McClendon's characterizations than he intended, so we must be careful. The fact that Hauerwas's work is occasional is no different than Yoder's; however, his deep critique of political liberalism is different, as is his constant use of America as a foil. It might not be an exaggeration to say that what the monarchy was to someone like Thomas Paine, America itself is to Stanley Hauerwas.

Since this essay is focused on democracy, it is worth wondering how Hauerwas might respond to a form of democracy that was not dependent upon liberalism. It is likely that for him such an arrangement would be impossible; nevertheless, the question brings up another part of Hauerwas's critique – one which he emphasizes more than Yoder. Hauerwas strongly denounces the implicit rejection of authority that lies at the heart of liberalism. This criticism does double duty as a backhanded way of chastening the church, which Hauerwas believes is guilty of the same mistake. Saints, Hauerwas believes, are those who have a “more complete appropriation of the truth.”⁷¹ The existence of such persons in the church's history implies that a modern rejection of authority within the church is really a misappropriation of the liberal democratic notion of inalienable equality. Like Yoder, Hauerwas has no particular opposition to the act of the citizenry voting. But to a greater extent Hauerwas believes that this act is symbolic of a deep level of moral contradiction.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

What are we to make of this difference? We can leave this discussion with several helpful ideas in hand.

First, reading Hauerwas is not reading Yoder. This exploration has shown that Yoder and Hauerwas are not of one mind. It is true that they both energetically defend Christian pacifism and strongly criticize nationalism, but Hauerwas's antipathy toward liberalism is not something that he learned from Yoder. This antipathy may not contradict Yoder's work, but it is not obviously a logical extension.

Second, this distinction is especially important for Anabaptists. Of course, no one has the last word about Anabaptist theology. Yoder, though, is a giant in this arena and must be heard – but he has left work unfinished in relating Anabaptist theology to the contemporary American context. Anabaptists must continue to discern their place in society and the relationship between their tradition and political liberalism.⁷² Hauerwas has carried Yoder's theology forward in one direction. There may be other directions worth considering.

Third, Hauerwas should continue to be discussed beyond theological circles. He asks important questions of those committed to democracy, particularly of those who call themselves Christians. This alone should demand that his critique of liberalism be taken seriously; Jeffery Stout has recently done this at length.⁷³

Finally, Yoder's more profound recognition of a world beyond America lends greater credence to his less negative account of democracy.

Hauerwas deserves our attention, for his prophetic voice is both timely and incisive. His call to Christians – and to Christians in America – is a cold shower on a cold morning. It should make the church more alert

and aware of the challenges it faces in what too often is mistaken for a friendly environment. But Hauerwas is unavoidably American and, as such, his criticisms may ring truer in America than they do elsewhere. For all the philosophical shortcomings with which Hauerwas diagnoses liberalism, democracy remains, as Yoder suggests, a polity less oppressive than most, and if we avoid the temptations of a Constantinian view of democracy, “we may find the realistic liberty to foster and celebrate relative democratization as one of the prophetic ministries of a servant people in a world we do not control.”⁷⁴

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NOTES

¹ Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 140.

² Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*, p. 140.

³ Arne Rasmussen explores this connection and gives one of the best summaries of Hauerwas’s thought in *The Church as Polis: From Political Theology to Theological Politics as Exemplified by Jürgen Moltmann and Stanley Hauerwas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).

⁴ Throughout most of this essay I will simply use the term “democracy” to refer to the subject that Yoder and Hauerwas approach differently. At several important junctures, I will discuss “liberalism”, which – especially for Hauerwas – is a more loaded term.

⁵ In *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 151-171.

⁶ In *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), pp. 72-86.

⁷ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 85. Hauerwas cites the version of Yoder’s essay published in *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 5 (1977): 209-223.

⁸ William Cavanaugh, “Stan the Man: A Thoroughly Biased Account of a Completely Unobjective Person,” in *The Hauerwas Reader*, eds. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 21.

⁹ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 151.

¹⁰ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 152.

¹¹ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 152.

¹² “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 153.

¹³ This is aptly demonstrated by American evangelical institutions like Patrick Henry College and Liberty University, which seek to prepare their graduates to carry out theo-cultural warfare from the highest possible political positions.

¹⁴ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 154.

¹⁵ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 155.

¹⁶ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 156.

¹⁷ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 157.

¹⁸ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 158.

¹⁹ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 158.

²⁰ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 159.

²¹ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 161.

²² “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 162.

²³ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 165.

²⁴ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 167. David Novak uses social contract language to advocate a similar position in “Human Dignity and the Social Contract,” in *Recognizing Religion in a Secular Society*, ed. Douglas Farrow (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), pp. 51-68.

²⁵ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 168.

²⁶ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 168.

²⁷ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 170.

²⁸ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 171.

²⁹ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 72.

³⁰ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 73.

³¹ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 74.

³² Stephen Macedo’s advocacy of a sort of “moderate hegemony of liberalism” might help to illuminate Hauerwas’s claim. “Transformative Constitutionalism and the Case of Religion: Defending the Moderate Hegemony of Liberalism,” *Political Theory*, 26 (1998): 56-80.

³³ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 74.

³⁴ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 74. It is worth considering that America has had something to do with the creation of Stanley Hauerwas. I doubt that Hauerwas would deny this, but I am not sure how this reality affects his argument other than by injecting a sense of irony.

³⁵ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 75.

³⁶ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 77.

³⁷ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 78.

³⁸ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 79.

³⁹ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 80.

⁴⁰ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 79. Ronald F. Thieman is also concerned about the morality of Americans. His concern, however, translates into support for an unapologetic pluralist democracy. “Public Religion: Bane or Blessing for Democracy?” in *Obligations of Citizenship and Demands of Faith*, ed. Nancy L. Rosenblum (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 73-89.

⁴¹ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 83.

⁴² “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 81.

⁴³ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 82.

⁴⁴ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 83.

⁴⁵ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 85.

⁴⁶ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 85.

⁴⁷ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 86.

⁴⁸ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 86.

⁴⁹ The Yoder/Hauerwas emphasis on the church becomes more distinct when contrasted with other Christian thinkers whose political philosophy deals primarily with the nation. For a particularly thoughtful contrasting example, one that shares a rejection of liberal neutrality, see Jonathan Chaplin’s “Rejecting Neutrality, Respecting Diversity: From ‘Liberal Pluralism’ to ‘Christian Pluralism,’” *Christian Scholars Review*, 35 (2006):143-175. Good collections of each theologian’s more ecclesial writings exist. See Hauerwas’s *In Good Company: The Church as Polis* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); and Yoder’s *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical*, ed. Michael G. Cartwright (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998).

⁵⁰ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 74.

⁵¹ It should be noted that in this comparison Hauerwas uses the term “democratic.” This is tangential to the basic thrust of his argument which is directed against “liberalism” (p. 85). It might be argued that, since Hauerwas uses the term “democratic” here, his larger argument against liberalism may be directed against something other than the “democracy”, which Yoder engages. This is true in a basic sense, but is not detrimental to my argument. The phrase Hauerwas uses in his title “liberal democracy” asserts a connection between liberalism and democracy that he fleshes out in the rest of the essay. However, the claim that Yoder and Hauerwas are addressing different entities holds true to the extent that it shows Hauerwas’s overwhelming concern with liberalism. Such a take on democracy is precisely the kind of difference from Yoder that I am arguing is important to pay attention to.

⁵² “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 167.

⁵³ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 168

⁵⁴ “The Church and Liberal Democracy,” p. 83.

⁵⁵ The best biographical piece I have come across is Mark Thiessen Nation’s “John H. Yoder, Ecumenical Neo-Anabaptist: A Biographical Sketch,” in *The Wisdom of the Cross*, Stanley Hauerwas, Chris K. Huebner, Harry J. Huebner, and Mark Thiessen Nation, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), pp. 1-23.

⁵⁶ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 159.

⁵⁷ “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 168.

⁵⁸ John Howard Yoder, *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1997). In a footnote in the same book, Yoder notes that Hauerwas “maximizes the provocative edge” of his position with a title such as *Against the Nations* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992).

⁵⁹ *The Politics of Jesus: Behold the Lamb! Our Victorious Lamb* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, rev. 2d ed., 1994).

⁶⁰ Richard Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1996), p. 253.

⁶¹ For an example of Yoder’s tendency to parse ideals consider his description of the many varieties of pacifism in *Nevertheless: Varieties of Religious Pacifism*, rev. ed. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1992).

⁶² “The Christian Case for Democracy,” p. 159.

⁶³ Yoder's *The Christian Witness to the State* (Scottsdale, PA: Faith and Life Press, 1964; repr., Herald Press, 2002) is an important example of how he works this out.

⁶⁴ Max J. Stackhouse says, "Stanley Hauerwas hates liberalism. He hates liberal theology, liberal ethics, liberal churches, liberal politics, liberal economics and liberal democracy." "Liberalism Dispatched vs. Liberalism Engaged," *Christian Century* (Oct. 18, 1995), p. 962.

⁶⁵ Stout, pp. 141-161.

⁶⁶ Richard Hays, in *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, describes an important distinction in hermeneutical approaches: "Whereas Yoder maintains that a right reading of the New Testament's portrayal of Jesus must provide the norms for the life of the church, Hauerwas characteristically puts the matter the other way around: the church must be a truthful and peaceable community in order to be able to read the New Testament's portrayal of Jesus rightly (p. 254)." While Hays overdraws this distinction somewhat, his distinction is not entirely unwarranted.

⁶⁷ "The Church and Liberal Democracy," p. 73.

⁶⁸ "The Church and Liberal Democracy," p. 83.

⁶⁹ Douglas Harink has noticed that when Hauerwas refers to the "nation," he inevitably has America in mind whereas Yoder is thinking of a more generic plurality of institutions and structures. "For or Against the Nations: Yoder and Hauerwas, What's the Difference?" *Toronto Journal of Theology*, 7 (2001): 167-185.

⁷⁰ *Systematic Theology: Ethics* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1986), pp. 62-73.

⁷¹ "The Church and Liberal Democracy," p. 85.

⁷² A recent effort in this direction is Ted Grimsrud's "Anabaptist Faith and American Democracy," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 78 (2004): 341-362.

⁷³ Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*. Hauerwas responds in a postscript to his book *Performing the Faith*. Here, Hauerwas claims that his "ire is not against liberalism, but against Christians who have confused Christianity with liberalism." While this may be Hauerwas's intent, his work does not always make this clear. *Performing the Faith: Bonhoeffer and the Practice of Nonviolence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2004), p. 232.

⁷⁴ "The Christian Case for Democracy," p. 166.

COSMOPOLITANISM, STOICISM, AND LIBERALISM

Doug Al-Maini

In recent political philosophy, there has been growth in interest in cosmopolitanism. In the current era of globalization, nationalism, and multiculturalism, perhaps such a focus is to be expected, but the concept of cosmopolitanism itself is very old.¹ This paper will investigate how the ancient and modern theories differ, and whether original formulations of cosmopolitanism might be of service to their modern counterpart.

Liberal foundations by and large provide the theoretical basis for current work on cosmopolitanism, but the ancients who minted the term did not have that dominant background influencing their thinking. Because of its liberal background, this paper will argue, modern cosmopolitanism is open to criticism from environmentalism: the resources required for a successful adoption of cosmopolitanism as understood today are unavailable. Such a criticism is fatal, so far as it locates modern cosmopolitanism firmly in the realm of impractical utopias. But the ancients, with their different route to and understanding of cosmopolitanism, may be of service to our contemporaries. The Greeks and Romans interested in cosmopolitanism operate in a conceptual environment of Cynicism and, especially, Stoicism. Once these differences between ancient and modern versions of cosmopolitanism have been sketched out, we can move on to the question of how ancient cosmopolitanism can be of service in combating the environmentalist challenge.²

THE AIMS AND FOUNDATIONS OF MODERN COSMOPOLITANISM

A number of recent authors have turned to the modern version of cosmopolitanism in order to develop a theoretical basis for just conduct in a world of international integration. Kwame Anthony Appiah, in his recent and popular book *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, notes the degree of interconnection in the modern world, coupled with the differences that still exist between cultures, communities, and individuals. Humans are increasingly able to have drastic effects on the lives of others (and especially those in far off places), both for better and for worse. “Each person you know about and can affect is someone to whom you have responsibilities: to say this is just to affirm the very idea of morality.”³ What is necessary in such circumstances is a “rubric” of ensuring that one’s behaviour does not have a negative impact on others

(and again, the unseen and far off are of special concern), but rather benefits them.⁴ For Appiah, cosmopolitanism is that rubric. Appiah's cosmopolitanism is a blend of two principal convictions:

One is the idea that we have obligations to others – obligations that stretch beyond those to whom we are related by the ties of kith and kind, or even by the more formal ties of a shared citizenship. The other is that we take seriously the value not just of human life but of particular human lives, which means taking interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance. People are different, the cosmopolitan knows, and there is much to learn from those differences. Because there are so many human possibilities worth exploring, we neither expect nor desire that every person or every society should converge on a single mode of life. Whatever our obligations are to others (or theirs to us) they often have the right to go their own way.⁵

This dual notion of the content of cosmopolitanism – universal obligations coupled with universal tolerance – can be found again and again in modern versions of cosmopolitanism. For examples of the obligatory nature of cosmopolitanism, we may turn to Louis Cabrera:

My central claim is that full acknowledgement of the demands of moral cosmopolitanism also should commit us to strong institutional cosmopolitanism, specifically, to the creation of a network of strong democratic institutions above the state. The fully integrated institutional form would be a democratic global government capable of ensuring that any person born anywhere can lead a decent life.⁶

Gillian Brock and Harry Brighouse hold a similar view:

As a thesis about responsibility, cosmopolitanism guides the individual outwards from obvious, local obligations to distant others. Contrary to a parochial morality of loyalty, cosmopolitanism highlights the obligations we have to those whom we do not know, and with whom we are not intimate.⁷

Compare also Kok-Chor Tan:

From the cosmopolitan perspective, principles of justice ought to transcend nationality and citizenship, and ought to apply equally to all individuals of the world as a whole.⁸

These views on obligations are invariably coupled with a need to be sensitive to the differences that exist among the citizens of the world. Tan's book, for example, is an attempt to show that this "cosmopolitan" ideal of universal justice need not contradict feelings of special preference to one's family, culture, and nation. Christine Sypnowich also tries to combine concerns for universal well-being with cultural compassion, and explains our obligations in terms of providing the conditions necessary for human flourishing:

We live in a world characterized by enormous disparities of wealth and property, of health, self-respect, and the development of human potential. The moral worldliness of contemporary arguments for cosmopolitanism must be paired with cultural worldliness to give scope to the non-material aspects of human flourishing and sensitivity to the diversity that culture presents.⁹

Finally, David Held, while championing the obligatory side of cosmopolitanism, sees those obligations working hand in hand with the notion of tolerance:

The principles of cosmopolitanism are the conditions of taking cultural diversity seriously and of building a democratic culture to mediate clashes of the cultural good. They are, in short, about the conditions of just difference and democratic dialogue.¹⁰

This kind of analysis is dominant in the literature.¹¹

In this brief survey we see how clearly liberalism has left its mark on the concept of cosmopolitanism. We see this clearly in the content of the obligations mentioned; cosmopolitanism turns out to be the business of promoting world-wide liberalism: we have a *universal* duty to respect the freedom of others to participate in ways of life different from our own as well as the obligation to provide less fortunate people with the means to actualizing their potential. While the varieties of liberalism are many, these two moral precepts are foundational. The classic formulation of the principle of respect for the freedom of others to do as they will comes from Mill:

That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinion of others, to do so would be wise, or even right...The only part of the conduct of

anyone, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns him, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.¹²

Mill presents his case at the individual level, whereas current cosmopolitans tend to voice their concerns in terms of respecting national and cultural rights to independence – but the basic emphasis on liberty is consistent. For liberals, the concern with individual liberty is often joined by the observation that having freedom means little to those without the material wherewithal to enjoy it, and hence the urge to justify positive duties to others. Indeed, the idea is as old as Solon. As Plutarch tells us concerning Solon's reforms,

The remission of debts was peculiar to Solon; it was his great means for confirming the citizens' liberty; for a mere law to give all men equal rights is but useless, if the poor must sacrifice those rights to their debts, and, in the very seats and sanctuaries of equality, the courts of justice, the offices of state, and the public discussions, be more than anywhere at the beck and bidding of the rich.¹³

Solon does not go so far as promote actual positive duties on the part of the wealthy to help to ensure the flourishing of the less fortunate, but the idea that poverty subtracts from a person's liberty is present, and this idea is central to the thought of social liberals such as T. H. Green and L. T. Hobhouse, who call for state intervention to create the conditions necessary for the flourishing of human freedom. If liberals are committed to egalitarianism, then it seems that some form of obligation to ensure such an equality is required. It is true that classical liberalism places much more emphasis on protecting individual freedoms, and is wary, even, of the positive duty to help provide the means for others to accomplish happiness,¹⁴ but this is an old discussion in liberalism – it is telling that the same debate comes up in the literature on cosmopolitanism – and few liberals today would hold that we have no obligation to help promote opportunities for others to achieve happiness.

Working with the general understanding of contemporary cosmopolitanism as the promulgation of social liberalism on the world stage (with an added sensitivity to cultural as well as individual liberty), we can now move on to outline an important challenge implicit in this view. Societies based on liberal foundations have been criticized for consuming resources at an unsustainable rate,¹⁵ and one possible explanation of this fact lies in the need for resources to actualize freedoms. As noted, the liberal tradition includes theorists (such as Hobhouse and

Green, and even, in a prototypical way, Solon) who point out that it does no good to be given freedom without also receiving the material resources necessary for expressing that freedom. Liberalism, particularly social liberalism, has a history of understanding freedom in a strongly materialistic sense, and it is this materialistic facet of liberalism to which the environmental critique is largely directed. For the cosmopolitan, the environmental critique has particular bite, since the cosmopolitan is looking to expand social liberalism to the entire world. An environmentalist would counter that the world is already over-burdened in providing the material means for social-liberal societies; expanding the scope of social liberalism to include all nations simply courts disaster. What the modern cosmopolitan needs is a response to this challenge that allows for the expansion of liberal ideals without overwhelming the environment. With this challenge before us, we can move on to investigating the roots of cosmopolitanism.

ANCIENT COSMOPOLITANISM

Did the first cosmopolitans worry about the freedom of others? Were they egalitarians? And if not, what did cosmopolitanism mean to those who first used the term? The original cosmopolitan was Diogenes the Cynic. The story we get of the term's initial use does not go very far in promoting liberal concerns: "Asked where he came from, he said, 'I am a citizen of the world [*kosmopolites*]'."¹⁶ This is the barest of statements, and extracting a full theory of cosmopolitanism from it goes beyond what the text warrants. At worst, the aphorisms surrounding this pithy saying are unrelated to it; more charitably, they, like it, depict how the original Cynic behaved, possibly in an attempt to outline Cynicism by example. If we take the stance that the saying is to be fit into the general confines of Cynicism, we find little room to read liberalism back into it. Rather, the saying fits well with the Cynics' known penchant for disregarding social niceties and holding that they are meaningless to the good life. By claiming citizenship of the universe, Diogenes places himself beyond the differences found between the cities of the Hellenistic world, and in league with the universal concerns of virtue. The saying can most comfortably be read as a part of the general Cynic objection to being concerned with values that are culturally relative to the particular polis in which they are found.¹⁷

As far as we know, the concept of cosmopolitanism received its first sustained theoretical treatment in the hands of the Stoics. This should not be surprising, given the degree to which Stoicism is informed by Cynicism; Zeno of Citium, the founder of Stoicism, first studied with Crates, the leading Cynic in the generation following Diogenes, and Zeno's philosophy showed the influence of Cynicism in various ways.

When considering the Stoics' explicit treatment of cosmopolitanism and its use to the modern context, two passages come to mind. First, Seneca:

Let us take hold of the fact that there are two communities – the one, which is great and truly common, embracing gods and men, in which we look neither to this corner nor to that, but measure the boundaries of our state by the sun; the other the one to which we have been assigned by the accident of our birth.¹⁸

Second, Clement:

The Stoics say that the universe is in the proper sense a city, but that those here on earth are not – they are called cities, but are not really. For a city or a people is something morally good, an organization or group of men administered by law which exhibits refinement.¹⁹

Both passages conjoin the notion of the moral goodness we naturally associate with a city with that of the whole universe, affirming that the universe is in fact a more true expression of the goodness of which we sometimes find an image in the city. This last point bears emphasis: both passages make clear that the city – our participation in which provides the basis for our concept of citizenship – is in fact inferior in its citizenship-sense of goodness to the entity that is the entirety of things. This judgment echoes the above interpretation of Diogenes' original complaint, and we can hypothesize that Stoic cosmopolitanism remains constant to its Cynic roots in devaluing the limited concerns of particular communities. Such an approach allows us to point to a continuity between Diogenes' Cynicism, Zeno's agenda of removing the arbitrary and sometimes contradictory rules concerning conduct that are manifest in different cities, and the concerns of Seneca and Clement for the "truly common."²⁰ The Stoics go beyond the Cynics' negative evaluation of common cities, in proposing some positive content to the universal city which possesses goodness in virtue, and Clement indicates that this lies in the universe being an organization of "men administered by law which exhibits refinement." A comment reinforcing this position on law comes from Arius Didymus:

The world is like a city consisting of gods and men, with the gods serving as rulers and men as their subjects. They are members of a community because of their participation in reason, which is natural law; and everything else is created for their sake.²¹

These comments indicate that the Stoic notion of cosmopolitanism rests on the more celebrated Stoic doctrine of natural law: there is a law that rules, is universal in scope, will benefit those who follow its precepts, and will punish those who attempt to work against it.²² A good way of understanding this natural law-infused cosmopolis is to continue with the analogy with politics that the word “cosmopolitan” invokes: there is an authority in the community (and, in the Greek world, this would be made up of the citizen body) that determines the laws which are to be obeyed by the members of that community. It is important to note that even those members of the community who have no part in determining the law are constrained to obey it. Stoic cosmopolitanism asserts that there is a law of nature as well, a set of rules by which affairs are to be conducted, and this law is a product of the authority of nature itself. For Didymus, humans, while not given the creative faculty of forming the content of natural law, are still beholden to understand and obey it because of their rationality – this, in the same way that non-citizen members of a polis are required to obey the law of that polis even though they have no legislative power. To push the analogy further, for Didymus the *gods* are given some formative power over the constitution of natural law, just as citizens are in the city. Continuing with the analogy to social circumstances, we can further explain Didymus’ and Clement’s reference to law in terms of flourishing and suffering. There are laws of the community defining criminal behaviour that are to be obeyed, and obedience carries both positive and negative connotations. In the community, punishment is a normal outcome of disobeying the law, and conversely, the flourishing of the individual citizen normally flows from obeying the law. So too in the universe: if one acts contrary to the natural law, one will suffer because of it, and if one acts in accord with the natural law, benefits will follow.

Furthermore, this natural law lends an organizational structure to the universe, just as laws lend structure to a political community. As Clement notes, its organization is a positive value of the universe. Similarly Aristocles:

The nexus and succession of these [all the causes] is fate, knowledge, truth, and an inevitable and inescapable law of what exists. In this way everything in the world is excellently organized as in a perfectly ordered society.²³

Things with organization are rational structures – i.e. they are understandable on some level – and, for the Stoics, this is a key component of their having value. Similarly, arrangements without organization (if such things are ever fully possible) are faulty or defective in some way, and such a lack of integrity can be the cause of suffering or dissolution. The term “cosmopolitanism” does a good job of making this

relationship explicit, as one of the earliest meanings of the word *kosmos* is “order”: it is used in this sense in the *Iliad*²⁴, and it is only later that philosophers take it up and use it to designate the world – or, indeed, in its earliest philosophical use, “world-order”.²⁵ Viable translations of the term ‘cosmopolitan’ would include phrases like “citizen of the world-order”, or even “citizen of the order”.

With this natural law background in place, the other half of the term *kosmopolites* presents the philosopher with a problem of coherence. There is an argument to be made that at this point the Stoic concept of cosmopolitanism has in effect left the field of political philosophy altogether, as it is no longer concerned with policies governing behaviour that humans can enact or repeal. Rather, Stoic cosmopolitanism crosses over into something else that grounds ethical conduct on criteria external to human influence. For a liberal, the concept of citizenship necessarily entails a political validation of the autonomy of individuals. Lack of such self-determination undermines the concept of liberal citizenship, but the Stoic notion of the *kosmopolites* seems to do just that (i.e., it greatly reduces autonomy), and so we are left with the problem of discerning in what sense Stoics could call themselves “citizens” of the cosmos, should such citizenship consist in merely obeying natural law.

One possible response to this problem would be to assert that Didymus is operating outside of mainstream Stoicism (and hence is not crucial to coming to an understanding of Stoic cosmopolitanism). After all, on the issue of the gods, Didymus’ passage runs counter to Stoic theology which is generally understood as being monotheistic and imminentist. However, we see the same position reflected in other texts on Stoicism, and these in the context of discussions of the cosmic city. So Cicero:

In the first place the universe itself was created for the sake of gods and men, and the things it contains were provided and contrived for the enjoyment of men. For the universe is as it were the common home of gods and men, or a city that belongs to both.²⁶

Elsewhere Cicero states that “the Stoics hold that the world is governed by divine will: it is as it were a city and state shared by men and gods, and each one of us is a part of this world.”²⁷ Dio Chysostrom also makes reference to a plurality of separate gods when discussing the cosmopolis:

This is the only constitution or indeed city one should call purely happy: the community of gods with one another – even if you include also everything that is capable of reason, counting in men

with gods, as children are said to partake in the city along with men, being naturally citizens not because they understand and perform the duties of citizens nor because they share in the law, being without comprehension of it.²⁸

The last two comments in particular indicate that our anxiety concerning the expressly political nature of the cosmopolis are on the right track, as the comparison between adults in community and gods to children in community and citizens makes clear. The force of the comparison rests on the fact that children do not participate in the formation of the city's laws, nor are able to understand it to the degree that adults do; nevertheless children are still obliged to follow that law. The comparison shows that a similar situation exists for adults when those adults are considered simply as constituents of the entire universe: they have no control over the makeup of the law of nature and are only able to comprehend that law vaguely. Nevertheless, adults must try to understand natural law as best they can and, in any event, are forced to comply with its dictates. This conception of citizenship (at least for humans) is virtually disconnected from autonomy. For Dio, citizens of the universe are citizens in the sense that children born to Athenian parents are citizens of Athens. It is a freer use of the term, and one somewhat at odds with the usual understanding of "citizen", which, for a liberal, implies autonomy, but it has the virtue of being more consistent with the Stoic analysis of freedom and causation than a notion of citizenship overflowing with materially-based self-determination.

Still, we can go somewhat further in theorizing how the Stoics justified calling themselves citizens of a self-determining sort in a universe that demanded their obedience to natural law. Dio's account of citizenship seems to be reducible to the claim that one must abide by the law, but the Stoics did try to preserve a sense of autonomy for the individual, even in the face of their revelations over the nature of causality and determinism. While here is not the place to give a detailed account of those Stoic insights, we do know that Chrysippus countered worries centred on the fate-driven collapse of personal autonomy by emphasizing the degree to which character or personal nature is responsible for actions taken.²⁹ One can never be free of one's own nature, and that nature is the most proximate cause to the effect:

He resorts to his cylinder and spinning top: these cannot begin to move without a push; but once that has happened, he holds that it is thereafter through their own nature that the cylinder rolls and the top spins . . . assent, just as we said in the case of the cylinder, although prompted from the outside, will thereafter move through its own force and nature.³⁰

As a further example of this kind of thinking we could say that I am the cause of my typing this essay because it is my nature to be a thing that types. Other things may have “pushed” me into typing it, such as a discussion I heard that critiqued cosmopolitanism, but any explanation of my typing that does not include a description of my nature leaves out the most obvious cause of the typing – and, of course, without my nature being present, no typing would occur. When coupled with the observation that humans have a rational nature which is the condition for active assent to living in accord with nature, this view of responsibility elicits the position that cosmopolitans are free citizens.³¹ Thus, as we see in the second half of the text above by Cicero: assent to behaving in a natural fashion is for Chrysippus the content of the notion of autonomy. These Stoic cosmopolitans can themselves be said to be the authors of that behaviour and, indeed, in some proto-Kantian sense, the legislators of the law under which they live (in the sense of validating the legislation they see before them). One recognizes the value of living according to nature, and so one chooses to do so. Epictetus writes,

You are a citizen of the world and a part of it, not one of the underlings but one of the foremost constituents. For you are capable of attending to the divine government and of calculating its consequences.³²

The citizenship referred to here relies on this rational faculty and, in line with Chrysippus’ reasoning above, we can connect citizenship with rationality by positing the ability of Stoics to assent to the world-order as they see it unfolding, and indeed to actively take up their role in that process. Assent, or the process of embracing fate, requires the rational faculty insofar as assent requires knowledge of the nature of the proposition being assented to. Assent also indicates some degree of autonomy, minimal though it may seem to the liberal, and so preserves a sense of the citizen being self-determining. Ancient cosmopolitanism then, restricts the extent of a citizen’s true freedom to the internal world and the ability to embrace fate. In stark contrast to this, modern cosmopolitans consider freedom to be expressed through the ability to manipulate and control the external world.

COSMOPOLITANISM, FREEDOM, AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRITIQUE

If this is a fair description of what it means for a Stoic to be a cosmopolitan, then substantial similarities and differences between ancient and modern cosmopolitanisms are apparent. In terms of similarities, both ancients and moderns are agreed concerning the extent of the political

community; neither accepts citizenship as being co-extensive with the scope of the nation or state. Furthermore, both are broadly egalitarian (although in different ways). Recall Hierocles's famous image of the concentric circles in which all people are arranged. Those closest to us are placed in the interior circles, and others are placed in outer circles corresponding to the closeness (or the distance) of their relation to us. The point for Hierocles is to bring those in the outer rings into the centre, so that all people are treated with equal fairness, and love.³³ As evidenced by the passages cited at the start of this paper, modern cosmopolitans are deeply concerned with treating distant people in a similar fashion.

A clear difference between old and new cosmopolitanisms comes when we consider the extent of personal freedom that each is willing to embrace. Modern cosmopolitans, building on their liberal foundations, necessarily operate in an environment where personal liberty has a wide scope and great value. This is done by appealing to the convictions that liberal values should be universal in scope, and that any view of autonomy as being largely indexed to national origin is simply unjustifiable. Ancient cosmopolitanism is not saddled with our liberal agenda, and so is not politically oriented in the sense that modern cosmopolitanism is: the Stoics did not go out of their way to promote a world state which would protect the liberty of individuals. While, in the ancient world, Stoic cosmopolitanism might have been pressed into the service of those who were seeking to create a world state – and thereby providing the theoretical justification for the creation of such a state³⁴ – this was clearly *not* an explicit political goal of the Stoics themselves. We know this because of the goal that Stoicism *is* explicitly devoted to: to explain and even show by personal example how happiness is available to everyone, no matter what station one has in life, be it slave or emperor. Hardships that infringe upon one's seeming liberty are truly no impediment at all, being "things which contribute neither to happiness nor unhappiness, as is the case with wealth, reputation, health, strength, and the like."³⁵ Stoics believe that, even without these external goods, an individual can become happy, wise, and therefore free in the truest sense of assenting to one's lot in life. Thus Stoics are able to conceive of a happy life which does not demand much in the way of external resources to support it, and indeed, is even indexed to relative freedom unlike the view of the liberal.

It is tempting to assert that this difference between the two cosmopolitanisms indicates that the moderns have little to learn from the Stoics, so long as the agenda remains the kind of emancipation mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this essay.³⁶ Modern cosmopolitanism, with its background of materially-based human freedom, must allow for humans to be whatever they wish to be, and then deal with the fact that material circumstances curtail that freedom, possibly relegating some to a status of being less-than-human, because of a lack of freedom. For the

modern cosmopolitan, resource-curtailment implies at the very least a loss of the ability to participate in the rights and benefits that go with the status of citizen. There is a basic rejection here of the Stoic notion that happiness is possible without external goods. One result of such a stance in relation to external goods is that some may devote substantial energy towards increasing their complement of external goods, with the goal of facilitating a greater degree of liberty and therefore happiness. Thus we have an objection to a liberal-based cosmopolitanism from the direction of the environmentalist movement – one based on the claim that the environment simply cannot sustain the amount of wealth required for this type of autonomy. Such an ‘environmental’ restraint forces the modern cosmopolitan to recognize limits on human freedom. If the modern cosmopolitan remains firm in the belief of the ultimate value of a freedom understood in terms of external influence, and if the environmental critique holds, then a concomitant belief in an egalitarian and universal citizenship must be abandoned.

However, if modern cosmopolitans are to prioritize that kind of citizenship – in other words, if they are to be cosmopolitans first, and liberals second – then it becomes necessary to confront the issue of how personal happiness and fulfillment might be achieved without the amount of freedom a contemporary cosmopolitan might expect. The question of how citizenship can be preserved with a reduced level of freedom is a major issue for cosmopolitans, and a Stoic answer to this dilemma entails reconfiguring our conception of freedom to include an expanded role for the interior world. As we have seen, Stoicism offers a path to cosmopolitanism that requires much less in the way of external goods. Unencumbered with the question of how much material wealth is enough, the Stoics are also able to move directly to questions concerned with the nature of humanity. A more Stoic brand of cosmopolitanism would not be susceptible to the criticism of environmentalism, because the version of citizenship that arises there is based on rational character rather than material freedom. Thus, Stoic cosmopolitanism entails a far lighter drain on resources than its liberal counterpart while still maintaining the importance of citizenship. A kind of freedom, connected to the concept of citizenship, remains – but it does not rest on the ability to alter or make use of external resources. Since freedom here means the ability to properly embrace one’s own nature, it becomes crucially important to generate an understanding of what that nature consists in; we find even at an early stage of Stoicism a rich analysis of human nature, especially human psychology.³⁷ Ultimately, the Stoics reach their cosmopolitanism through an analysis of human nature that comes from the realization that each individual has a necessary role to play in the history of the universe, and is a constituent of that universe. In actively endorsing that role, individuals become citizens of the universe. It remains to be seen whether modern

cosmopolitans can accept this altered understanding of the freedom attendant upon citizenship. But again, if the environmental critique is sound, they may be forced to.

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NOTES

¹ For a brief analysis of how these three factors contribute to the rise in interest in cosmopolitanism, see Carole A. Breckenridge et al., eds. *Cosmopolitanism* (London: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 2-7. For a longer treatment, see Walter Mignolo, "The Many Faces of Cosmopolis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism," in Breckenridge et al., pp. 157-87.

² Indeed, the project of bringing the ancient conception of cosmopolitanism into the service of modern political discussion is having something of a renaissance; thus Martha Nussbaum's famous essay, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," *Boston Review* 19.5 (Fall 1994), and Thomas Pangle, "Socratic Cosmopolitanism: Cicero's Critique and Transformation of the Stoic Ideal," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 31 (1998): 235-62. See also Appiah, below.

³ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2006), p. xiii.

⁴ Appiah, p. xiii.

⁵ Appiah, p. xv.

⁶ Louis Cabrera, *Political Theory of Global Justice: A cosmopolitan case for the world state* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 2.

⁷ Gillian Brock & Harry Brighouse (eds.), *The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 3.

⁸ Kok-Chor Tan, *Justice Without Borders: Cosmopolitanism, Nationalism and Patriotism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 1.

⁹ Christine Sypnowich, "Cosmopolitans, Cosmopolitanism, and Human Flourishing," in Brock & Brighouse, p. 74.

¹⁰ David Held, "Principles of Cosmopolitan Order," in Brock & Brighouse, p. 16.

¹¹ For further examples, see Ulrich Beck, *The Cosmopolitan Vision* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006); Thomas Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights: Cosmopolitan Responsibilities and Reforms* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002); Pheng Chea, *Inhuman Conditions: On Cosmopolitanism and Human Rights* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006).

¹² John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1980), p. 13.

¹³ Plutarch, *The Comparison of Poplicola with Solon*, p. 3.

¹⁴ The most famous statement of the relationship between positive and negative liberties, and the classical liberal's wariness of positive liberty, is

found in Isaiah Berlin's "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 118-72.

¹⁵ The problem is given legitimization at the cosmopolitan (or at least the "Gaia-political") level, through the publication of *Our Common Future*, the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, in 1987. The Commission was convened by the United Nations in 1983.

¹⁶ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, VI 63.

¹⁷ For an engaging reconstruction of Diogenes' attitude towards social niceties along the lines given above, see Luis E. Navia, *Diogenes the Cynic: The War Against the World* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2005).

¹⁸ Seneca, *On Leisure* 4.1.

¹⁹ Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, or *Miscellanies*, IV 26.

²⁰ Zeno famously recommends sweeping social changes in his *Republic*. Diogenes Laertius, 7.32-3:

"Some people, including the circle of Cassius the Sceptic, criticize Zeno extensively . . . for his doctrine set out in the *Republic* concerning community of wives, and his prohibition at line 200 against the building of temples, lawcourts and gymnasia in cities. They also take exception to his statement on currency: 'The provision of currency should not be thought necessary either for exchange or for travel', and for his instruction that men and women should wear the same clothes and keep no part of the body completely covered."

Chrysippus' exhortation to intercourse with family members, cannibalism, and temple pollution (Plutarch, *On Stoic Self-Contradictions*, 1044f-1045a) can be read in this vein as an elaboration on a Stoic project originating with Zeno, but in truth extending back to Diogenes.

²¹ Didymus, in Eusebius, *Evangelical Preparation*, 15.15.4-5.

²² The classic formulation outlining all of these qualities of natural law is Cicero, *De Republica* 3.33.

²³ Aristocles, in Eusebius, *Evangelical Preparation* 15.14.2.

²⁴ *Iliad*, 10.472.

²⁵ According to Diogenes Laertius, 8.48, it is Pythagoras or Parmenides who first uses the term in the sense of "world-order".

²⁶ Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, II 3.154. Cf. Cicero, *De Legibus*, I.23.

²⁷ Cicero, *De Finibus*, 3.65.

²⁸ Dio Chrysostom, *Orationes*, XXXVI 23. Dio Chrysostom's reliability as a source for Stoicism has been questioned; the charge is that it is too difficult to separate authentic Stoic doctrine from his own theorizing. But on his reliability here, see Malcolm Schofield, *The Stoic Idea of the City* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 57-64.

²⁹ For an in-depth analysis of Stoic views on fate, see Susanne Bobzien, *Determinism and Freedom in Stoic Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). For a shorter synopsis, Dorothy Frede, "Stoic Determinism," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003) pp. 179-205.

³⁰ Cicero, *De Fato*, 42-43.

³¹ For the Stoic doctrine that happiness consists in living in accord with nature, see Stobaeus 2.77, 16-27; Diogenes Laertius 7.87-9; and, especially for our purposes here, Seneca, *Letters* 76.9-10.

³² Epictetus, *Discourses*, 2.10.

³³ See Stobaeus, 4.671,7-673,11

³⁴ For an example of this use of Stoic cosmopolitanism, see Plutarch's *On the Fortune of Alexander*, where Alexander is presented as accomplishing in reality what the Stoics only dreamed of.

³⁵ Diogenes Laertius, 7.104.

³⁶ There is of course the further problem, central to liberalism itself, of the inherent tension between the two principles that Appiah outlines and which we may take as basic to modern cosmopolitanism. A tension exists between the need to provide universal standards which we would be willing to enforce on others, and the need to respect the liberty of foreign cultures and nations. How stoic cosmopolitanism might be of service in addressing this issue is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is worth mentioning that there is nothing preventing a Stoic from being a democrat or even a liberal, given the Stoic resolution to "the Lazy Argument" – which refutes the claim that Stoicism is a brand of fatalism, so that the Stoic does not act in the world; see Cicero, *De Fato* 28-30 – and the recognition of current democracies and our participation in them being the natural result of fate.

³⁷ See Margaret Reesor, *Nature of Man in Early Stoic Philosophy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989).

ACCIDENTAL DEMOCRATS? CALVINISM'S AMBIGUOUS CONTRIBUTION TO MODERN DEMOCRATIC IDEALS

James Gerrie

Calvinism's relationship to the development of democracy has been widely discussed. Some supporters have been immensely generous when describing its influence. Abraham Kuyper, for instance, in his famous lectures on Calvinism at Princeton University, says "only he who personally stands before God on his own account, and enjoys an uninterrupted communion with God, can properly display the glorious wings of liberty."¹ Most commentators recognize a more humble, but still significant, role for the wing of the reformation nurtured by John Calvin. In the following, I argue that Calvinism has added much less to the mix of key concepts that form the core of modern democratic ideals than has been claimed by its most ardent supporters. I examine what I believe to be five of the most important of these ideals: popular suffrage, egalitarianism, the separation of church and state, the social contract, and individualism.

I will argue that the mechanisms of voting and public debate are really the gifts of ancient Greece. Egalitarian notions about the need for popular suffrage are a legacy of the practical necessity of the Protestant emphasis on education, and the sense of the inherent dignity and worth of all people that is a generic legacy of the monotheistic tradition as a whole. The separation of Church and state might seem a good candidate for a democratic notion that can be distinctively laid at the feet of Calvinism, but even here, a more likely candidate would be the Anabaptist tradition's doctrine of "soul freedom." Finally, even the notion of covenant and the idea of the limitation of state power in the face of the absolute sovereignty of God, is more a distinctive intellectual legacy of ancient Israel than of the political thought of Calvin. There is only one aspect for which I think an unambiguous claim can be made for Calvinism's unique contribution to modern democratic ideals. It is in the special value of the individual in his or her distinctiveness. I will argue that the notion of predestination is a historic cornerstone of the fundamental belief in the moral importance of unique individuals.

CONTRADICTORY CLAIMS ABOUT CALVINISM'S CONTRIBUTION TO DEMOCRACY

As Christopher Elwood notes, "another of those persistent ideas about Calvin's influence is the notion that somehow he profoundly affected modern politics."² Edward McNall Burns and Philip Lee Ralph comment

that “no religion has fostered a more abundant zeal in the conquest of nature, in missionary activity, or in the struggle against political tyranny.”³ But there has always been a pall of skepticism that has hung over such effusive claims. Such skepticism has ranged in degree. At one end of the scale, there are those like Mueller who simply note a certain level of discord about Calvin’s influence, for example, when he mentions that “many Anglo-American interpreters of modern history since the reformation are convinced that while Calvin did not favour democracy as such, he nevertheless set influences to work which in time led to the consolidation of personal liberty and the establishment of democracy.”⁴ At the other end of the scale, others, such as William Collins, observe that “one of the most damaging accusations made against Calvin is that he was a political tyrant.”⁵ Portrayals of Calvin as “the dictator of Geneva”⁶ have always elicited equally strong rebuttals.

How could someone inspire such contradictory impressions? In part, such disparate conclusions could be due in part simply to a failure to differentiate between idealist and materialist interpretations of the concept of “influence.” It is often unclear whether commentators are referring to the impact of Calvin’s ideas or whether they are referring to the inevitable cultural impacts that any new social movement will have as its followers interact with existing social structures. For example, there is no doubt that Calvinism had a profound effect on the societies into which it penetrated in terms of encouraging the development of the practice of tolerance. As is widely recognized, the “splintering of Christianity into rival factions was, indirectly at least, a source of some good to man. It worked in the long run to curb ecclesiastical tyranny and thereby to promote religious freedom.”⁷ The simple reality of the breaking of the monopoly on the religious adherence of many European nations created the practical necessity for the exercise of tolerance and the creation of principles of toleration. The Edict of Pskov is good example of such a necessity in the highly divided kingdom of Poland/Lithuania.⁸

However, such practical necessities do not necessarily have anything to do with the thought of Calvinism as such. Therefore, in a dispassionate analysis of Calvinism’s intellectual influence on democracy such unavoidable cultural side effects should be discounted from one’s assessment of its contribution. If the intellectual impact of a religious movement is to be properly assessed, such practical cultural side-effects must be separated from social and political developments that can be traced directly to recommendations that flow from its defining ideals.

PROBLEM OF THE LOGICAL PARADOX OF FREE WILL

I will argue that once such cultural impacts have been put aside, one will discover that Calvinism’s perceived impact on the development of

democracy is much less than has been implied. This impact reduces primarily to being a disruptive force in the intellectual culture of Europe that just happened to allow powerful political ideas already in the culture to emerge more fully. At the core of Calvinism's intellectual influence is its ability to make logically ambiguous deductions from the paradoxical implications of the doctrine of predestination. I will argue that since these deductions are fundamentally ambiguous and ultimately reliant on political ideas not intrinsic to Calvinism itself, they should also, like the non-intrinsic cultural impacts, be discounted when it comes to the proper assessment of the intellectual influence of Calvinism on democracy.

The problem of the paradox of freedom and religious determinism that comes with the doctrine of predestination haunts Calvinism to this day. To be fair, anyone with even a faint understanding of the history of philosophy knows that the paradox of free will and determinism is unavoidable for anyone who wishes to think deeply about freedom. The idea of free will is paradoxical to its core, whether one believes in a radically libertarian, thoroughly deterministic, or compatibilist view as did Calvin. None of these avenues, as yet, has been recognized to have fully worked out the fundamental logical conundrums that attend the notion of free will.

However, as is well understood by formal logicians, if one begins with a set of theoretical axioms that contain a contradiction, one of the consequences of such a situation is that one can validly deduce any conclusions that one likes.⁹ As Irving Copi puts this point: "we see that if a set of premises is inconsistent, those premises will validly yield *any* conclusion."¹⁰ This might not be a problem for many areas of human thought, for the basic principles that a person might typically draw on to derive decisions will not rely directly on claims relating to any of the paradoxical notions about free will. And besides, as Ernst Troeltsch notes: "The present-day world does not live by logical consistency, any more than any other."¹¹

However, when it comes to judging Calvin's influence on democracy, it is impossible to avoid addressing his views on freedom directly, since the notion of freedom is at the core of democratic thought and the notion of determinism is at the core of Calvin's thought. While, as Diarmaid MacCulloch notes, "it is a mistake to see predestination as the dominant idea in Calvin's thought"¹², nonetheless one must always also recognize that "predestination made more than one connection for him; it was also intimately linked to his theology of the Church, [and] to his worries about Anabaptists [i.e. the question of church and state]."¹³ Calvin, perhaps more than any other religious thinker since Augustine, considers the possibility of determinism and its relation to freedom and makes this consideration a cornerstone of his theological work. We cannot overlook this facet of his thought because, as John Todd notes of Calvin,

“his concern was to build a system.”¹⁴ It is important, therefore, for us to understand this system, which means we must consider the critical role that the doctrine of predestination plays in it.

If one systematically embraces a fundamentally compatibilist position like Calvin does, one is always left with the following logical implication for one's discussion of questions that directly engage one's understanding of human freedom:

1. F (We have free will)
2. Not F (We do not have free will) / Therefore M (i.e., any position you like)¹⁵

So, when it comes to tracing the intellectual influence of a unified body of theory, it is reasonable to ask whether certain conclusions attributed to it flow from its non-contradictory core claims, or from additional independent lines of justification added to it by way of its contradictory elements. If certain lines of reasoning have been able to be added to it simply because the core outlook contains a contradiction, it would be prudent to question whether such lines of reasoning can be truly said to represent a distinctive intellectual legacy of that outlook.

Such additions might typically occur for two practical reasons. First, opponents might seek to highlight the contradictory conclusions of the outlook and point to further unacceptable conclusions that can be drawn from such contradictions. The response of defenders of the outlook, drawing on the ability to validly add whatever lines of reasoning needed, will often be to simply add whatever defenses are necessary to show how their outlook need not (in their eyes) lead to such unacceptable conclusions. Second, in the face of contradictory practical recommendations derived from the contradiction, the defender of the outlook might feel compelled to draw on some independent line of reasoning that presents a clearer position on the issue, such as a common-sense or utility-based defense. As Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey note, in the face of highly abstract questions, Calvin was quite capable of drawing on a “canny empiricism.”¹⁶ Thus, when it comes to discussing the intellectual influences of Calvin's theological outlook, we must consider which of the preceding two dynamics is what is really going on.

AMBIVALENCE ABOUT DEMOCRACY

There is a well-recognized ambivalence in Calvin's thought about the best form of government. Any form of government, whether popular or authoritarian, seems acceptable to him as long as it follows God's basic moral demands. However, Calvin does, on occasion in his writings, express his own preferences. He observes, for example, that “I shall by no

means deny, that either aristocracy, or a mixture of aristocracy and democracy, far excels all others.”¹⁷ However, despite this preference, Calvin still insists that “for private men, who have no authority to deliberate on the regulation of any public affairs, it would surely be a vain occupation to dispute which is the best form of government in the place where they live.”¹⁸ Such ambivalence on Calvin’s part about the role of ordinary citizens in the process of government has been widely discussed. Some commentators have sought to demonstrate in one direction or another where Calvin’s thought conclusively falls. Others have sought to explain his ambivalence in historicist terms as being simply a by-product of the age in which he lived. What all these explanations overlook is the possibility that an ambivalent attitude about the best type of government might simply be an intrinsic part of the contradictory nature of predestination at the heart of Calvinism.

In the following synopsis of the argument presented by Calvin for his preference for a mixed democratic and aristocratic form of government, we can discern the signs of the kind of deduction from a contradiction that I have outlined above. Compatibilists can argue whatever they like regarding the necessity for the exercise of an ordinary person’s political will. If one wants to argue, as Calvin often does, that private citizens should not challenge their political leaders because these leaders have been set in place by God, then one can argue such. But if one wants to argue that leaders of government can be challenged if they fail to choose to follow the will of God, one can also argue such and still consider one’s conclusion to be compatible with an essentially Calvinist perspective. Calvin himself even skirts close to arguing for the popular right to agitate for his favoured form of mixed aristocracy and democracy. He states about those lucky enough to find themselves living under such a form of government, that “if they exert their strenuous and constant efforts for its preservation and retention, I admit that they act in perfect consistence with their duty.”¹⁹ As Troeltsch notes of Calvinism: “Generally speaking, its State-adaptation of the Law of Nature is at bottom also conservative, though where it has open to it the possibility of the free choice and constitution of new authorities, it prefers a modified aristocracy.”²⁰ In other words, Calvinism allows one to argue as follows:

If we are not free (i.e. God has established every political system)
then “it is our duty to be obedient to any governors whom
God has established over the places in which we
reside.”²¹

We are not free

Therefore, “it is our duty to be obedient to any governors whom
God has established over the places in which we reside

When it comes to his own preferred type of government, Calvin mounts what is essentially a pragmatic defense of mixed democracy/aristocracy, based on his experience of the existing system of Geneva. But when this raises the question of revolution and whether people have a right or even a duty to seek such a government, Calvin demurs to his own well known “fear of chaos and disorder.”²² He instead mounts a pragmatic argument that the risks of revolution do not out-weigh the general benefits of peace secured by God’s varied ordering of governments throughout the world. He states: “Even if we compare the different forms [of government] together, without their circumstances, their advantages are so nearly equal, that it will not be easy to discover of which the utility preponderates.”²³ And elsewhere, “If we limit not our views to one city, but look round and take a comprehensive survey of the whole world, or at least extend our observations to distant lands, we shall certainly find it to be a wise arrangement of Divine Providence that various countries are governed by different forms of civil polity.”²⁴ Yet, after mounting such pragmatic arguments, Calvin can still state that “all these remarks, however, will be unnecessary to those satisfied with the will of the Lord.”²⁵ At this point, we come face to face with the ability of Calvin to deduce whatever practical recommendation he likes by drawing on the contradiction at the heart of predestination. It would remain for those following Calvin to choose the alternative route, based on Calvin’s emphasis on human freedom, to argue more strenuously as follows:

If we are free then we ought to strive for a “government in the hands of the many”, which “may act as censors and master to restrain the ambitions of kings” that best promotes God’s justice.²⁶

We are free.

Therefore, we ought to strive for a “government in the hands of the many”, which “may act as censors and master to restrain the ambitions of kings” that best promotes God’s justice.

So when Mueller makes the following observation about an apparent ambiguity in Calvin’s thought, he is really observing two things. First, he is observing the power of the doctrine of predestination to allow for incompatible practical conclusions about the expression of popular will, and second, the necessity for a pragmatic line of reasoning to provide some clarity about this question:

It may be argued that Calvin’s uncompromising assertion of the divine ordering of all civil authority might have encouraged absolutism in government. But that would be a misinterpretation

of Calvin's deepest intentions and an uncalled-for misapprehension. The history of Calvinism, moreover, definitely disproves any charge that might be made against Calvin and his system of politics in this regard.²⁷

My conclusion – that Calvin's political thought is rooted in contradiction and pragmatic reasoning that holds no theoretically necessary relation to Calvin's theological outlook – does not imply that Calvin's views did not indeed have a profound cultural effect on the Western civilization and its democratic development. The "history of Calvinism" certainly deeply influenced Western society. But it did so, not by the direct influence of its ideals, but by simply freeing people to think new thoughts. By bringing the doctrine of predestination to the fore and putting it into the minds of so many ordinary people, Calvin's theology acted like a form of cultural dynamite that could destroy the logjam of the mass of pre-existing political thought. Its practical need for the addition of lines of thought to resolve its logical ambiguities is what encouraged consideration of the more radical elements of medieval political theory.

In his own lifetime, Calvin was able to defend the status quo, both in his own city, and in the political units immediately influenced by his ideas, until such a time that the other side of the paradox of predestination could be exploited by others to defend revolution. For example, Francis Hotman and the authors of the *Vindiciae contra Tyrannos* would in "a few years after Calvin's death ... frame doctrines of resistance that were to be vastly influential in the practical world."²⁸ So an even better analogy than dynamite might be to say that he planted a ticking time bomb in Western civilization that would eventually explode in defenses of the need to expand suffrage.

AMBIVALENCE ABOUT EGALITARIANISM

It has been felt by many that the Reformation was a critical influence for the growth of the ideal of egalitarianism in Western societies. Douglas Hall, for example, has commented that

the formula of the Reformation is not 'justification by faith,' as is so often misleadingly stated, but 'justification by grace through faith.' This is a merciful doctrine, not only in its recognition of the graciousness of God, but also in its refusal to rank human worth on the basis of achievement. Justification theology has a leveling, democratizing effect in the church just for this reason.²⁹

And Bouwsma notes of the particular influence of Calvinism that "worldly ambition is precluded by recognizing that all callings are equal before

God.”³⁰ Charles Taylor also argues that the unique Protestant notion of vocation has a highly egalitarian thrust when he mentions that “whereas in Catholic Cultures, the term ‘vocation’ usually arises in connection with the priesthood or monastic life, the meanest employment was a calling for the Puritans, provided it was useful to mankind and imputed to use by God.”³¹ However, these commentators are unclear how the Protestant belief in the equality of callings translates into a general notion of entitlement to equal treatment before the law.

It is clear why, from a Calvinist perspective, differences in social standing can have no bearing on one’s standing before God. Such a conclusion flows easily from the belief in predestination and something like the following line of reasoning:

If one is not free, then one cannot choose to do anything to improve one’s standing before God, so differences in social standing do not really matter when it comes to one’s standing before God.

One is not free.

So differences in social standing do not really matter when it comes to one’s standing before God.

Such a position clearly undercuts the justification for drawing spiritual distinctions between people. But such an egalitarian spiritual outlook did not prevent Calvin from defending the status quo when it came to distinctions in social standing, such as the long established differential voting privileges of the bourgeoisie of Geneva. As Bouwsma notes:

Calvin’s shift, in thinking about society, from cosmic idealism to practicality is notable in his attitude to hierarchy. He did not reject it; he thought hierarchy useful for some purposes and under some conditions. He attributed to God the elevation of ‘princes, aristocrats, nobles, and all the ranks of magistrates and rulers’ since ‘it is necessary that there should be some order among us.’³²

Calvin also could proclaim that “riches in themselves and by their nature are not at all to be condemned; and it is even a great blasphemy against God to disapprove of riches, implying that a man who possesses them is thereby wholly corrupted. For where do riches come from, if not from God?”³³ And elsewhere he states: “Wherefore magistracy is a calling not only holy and legitimate, but far the most sacred and honourable in human life.”³⁴

So if seeking wealth, being member of higher social rank, or a ruler is not intrinsically to be avoided or sought, what should believers do? Essentially Calvin’s response is based in a pragmatic understanding of

human psychology as it relates to work: “A heart not exercised in some honest labour works trouble out of itself.”³⁵ Another basic formula was that “a central feature of any valid calling was that it be of benefit to humans.”³⁶ As Bouwsma notes of Calvin, “His doctrine of the calling contributed in various ways to the efficiency of work, notably as it promoted the division of labour.”³⁷ However, such an approach to the importance of work must be tempered by the possible threats of becoming a workaholic,³⁸ and also the possible corrupting influences of wealth for “honor, wealth, and rank.”³⁹ Thus, in the end, Calvin expresses something like the following general argument:

If one is free, then one should do the best one can with the gifts and talents that God provides (“God loveth adverbs”).

One is free.

Therefore, one should do the best one can with the gifts and talents that God provides.

Calvin was also able to hold the generally abstract principle of the spiritual equality of human beings, but this was always coupled with a pragmatic acceptance of usefulness of recognizing distinctions among people.

Clearly, the Protestant revolution appealed first and foremost, in practical terms, to those with an ability and interest to become literate enough to read the scriptures. In practical terms, this was the growing bourgeoisie. It is not surprising, then, that premises about the practical necessity of work and the essential spiritual equality of all vocations would appeal to this new class with its increasing sense of its own importance in the rapidly evolving social order. What needs to be observed in all this is that it is the practical psychological and economic arguments that are doing all the real theoretical work, along with the practical possibilities for greater political involvement that would come with increasing levels of education. Geneva, for example, had opened its first public school in 1429.⁴⁰ It is these influences that helped support a shift to equality of treatment and opportunity before every aspect of the law and civil life. But such a shift was not demanded by the core ideas of Calvinism. Under Calvinism we have a defense of the equality of spiritual demerit, not the equality of citizenship.

AMBIVALENCE ABOUT SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

The contradiction of pre-destination also means one can argue for different conclusions about the question of religious toleration and the separation of church and state. However, unlike the two democratic ideals

discussed so far, the arguments presented by Calvin in regard to the question of tolerance are more one sided. As Richard Muller cautions:

This issue is not one that falls naturally within the bounds of a sixteenth- or seventeenth century theological system given the nature of the theological topic of sin as governed largely by the thematic structure of Romans, the context of polemic over merit, and the general lack of knowledge about and contact with the great eastern non-Christian civilizations.⁴¹

However, it is not the case that Calvin had no knowledge of the issue of toleration or of non-Christian civilizations. He was obviously aware of the persecution of his own followers in France and “he emphasized the danger of the Turks to Europe.”⁴² However, about the fact that he shared with the vast majority of his fellow citizens the assumption that the question of pluralism was not really worthy of deep consideration, there can be little doubt.

In the section of *The Institutes* where Calvin directly addresses the question of the state’s use of coercion in defense of religious conformity, he proceeds by noting the universal belief in the necessity of such. The section begins with a reference to the fact that even “heathen writers” argued for the need for the enforcement of religious conformity:

Here is it necessary to state in a brief manner the nature of the office of magistracy, as described in the word of God, and wherein it consists. If the Scripture did not teach that this office extends to both tables of the law [religious and legal], we might learn this from the heathen writers; for not one of them has treated of the office of magistrates, of legislation, and civil government, without beginning with religion and Divine worship.⁴³

The fact that Calvin begins his discussion with a reference to heathen thought is striking. It speaks to his assumption that the issue is hardly worthy of serious consideration. He goes on to state about the enforcement of a state religion by temporal rulers: “We have already shown that this duty is particularly enjoined upon them by God; for it is reasonable that they should employ their utmost efforts in assertion and defending the honour of him, whose viceregents they are, and by whose favour they govern.”⁴⁴ Such conservative political views combined with his admonitions to his French compatriots to remain strong in their reformed faith in the face of state persecution suggest something like the following argument:

If people are not free, then it doesn't matter if the state uses coercion because God will always preserve true believers in their beliefs and the state's actions will simply be an expression of God's will.

People are not free.

Therefore, it doesn't matter if the state uses coercion, because God will always preserve true believers in their beliefs and the state's actions will simply be an expression of God's will.

It would remain for the followers of Calvin, after gaining a fuller experience of the suffering that intolerance could release in societies, to become more sensitive to the possibility of alternative lines of argument. The first of these Calvinist critics was Zurkinden, who would argue to the contrary that "excess severity" risked "cutting off through excessive haste a soul that might become an ornament to the Church after having been its scourge."⁴⁵

We can see the fuller development of the contradictory possibilities implicit in Calvinism in regard to toleration in the historical development of its attitudes towards the relationship between church and state. With an essentially ambiguous position on toleration, other more practical considerations could determine the matter, such as the pragmatic defenses provided for something like the Peace of Augsburg in which each prince was allowed to choose the religion for his people so that civil chaos could be avoided. That Calvinist princes such as Frederick III, the Prince-Elector of the Palatinate, acted on these terms indicates their fundamental ability to accept such arguments.⁴⁶

However, since Calvinist churches also found themselves in religiously diverse societies, they also tended not to support church establishment in the places where they could not form majorities. Yet wherever they did form majorities, they were quite happy to return to establishment. As Micheline Ishay notes, "the first Puritan colonies of Plymouth and Boston, as in Calvin's Geneva, the church was an integral part of the state."⁴⁷ And where clear pluralities did not exist, Calvinists were willing to experiment with novel practical solutions. As Balmer and Fitts note of one American state: "Indeed Presbyterian leaders in the Hannover Presbytery became so worried about the waning influence of religion that they supported a bill calling for a new version of established religion on a multi-denominational basis."⁴⁸ However, despite this observation, Ishay can still observe that Protestantism calls for "separation between church and state."⁴⁹ One can square such disparate observations through an appreciation of the ambiguous nature of Calvinist political beliefs. The notion of the separation of church and state is obviously highly related to notions about the right to freedom of conscience. It is quite clear that Calvin defends a certain notion of the freedom of

conscience or “Christian liberty,” but in the end he is quite adamant about the essential role that the state must play in the public maintenance of religious conformity.

One reason for the slow shift to a greater emphasis on individual religious conscience is probably that Calvinists came increasingly into contact with Anabaptist defenses of religious freedom. Calvin himself had rejected such notions, because he also rejected the apolitical conclusions that typically attended defenses. Some Anabaptist groups did not just argue for the free expression of individual religious conscience but also for complete withdrawal from the world, especially the world of politics. Calvin completely rejected such notions. As Ford Lewis Battles notes “In asserting with Paul, and with an Augustine emancipated from Manichaeism, a doctrine of the goodness of creation, he sensed in the flight from the world of politics and law by Anabaptists an underlying dualism, which he explicitly relates in his critique to ancient Manichaeism.”⁵⁰ But such radical apolitical notions were not universal among Anabaptists. For more moderate groups, the main issue with the state was simply the preservation of individual conscience before God. So, as Mueller notes:

The moderate Anabaptists of Switzerland and Southern Germany clearly saw in Luther's own day the evil consequences of establishment. They opposed this system without evasion, establishing their own congregations on the basis of the strict separation of church and state. It was only logical that a century later the early British and American Baptists should advocate the doctrine of soul freedom: the competence of each man or woman to decide for or against God without interference from ecclesiastical or civil authorities.⁵¹

Over time Calvinists realized that the defenses of religious conscience and those of withdrawal could be separated. Thus, they could become increasingly open to defenses of the idea of religious conscience and the rejection of the idea of the state as a legitimate preserver of religious belief. So when Kuyper came to make his speeches on Calvinism at Princeton in the late nineteenth century, he could easily endorse something like the Anabaptist claim that religious belief should be left completely to the individual. As he states: “Religion for the sake of God inexorably excludes every human mediatorship.”⁵² This change in the Calvinist attitude toward the state as a legitimate custodian of religion represents a move to an endorsement of Anabaptist voluntarism and its argument that:

If individuals are free, then religious beliefs should only be chosen by individuals.

Individuals are free.

Therefore, religious beliefs should only be chosen by individuals.

Such an intellectual journey indicates the ability of Calvinism to allow for the defense of multiple positions on an issue touching so closely on the doctrine of predestination. However, it should also serve as a warning to Calvinists of the dangers inherent in their theological outlook to the possible lure of alternative pragmatic and scriptural-based defenses of intolerance and the erosion of the divisions between Church and state. As Jay Newman reminds us “In our own age, fundamentalist Protestants, along with their counterparts in other faiths, are among the most militant critics of religious and other freedoms.”⁵³

AMBIVALENCE ABOUT CONSTITUTIONAL LIMITS TO STATE SOVEREIGNTY

In our discussion so far, we have already touched on many of the questions at the heart of the issue of the proper limits to state sovereignty. And again we find contradictory recommendations coming from Calvin. He fundamentally concludes about human individuals “that they are exempt from all human authority.”⁵⁴ However, we have already seen how such a conclusion does not lead him to adopt an Anabaptist position on political involvement. Instead, he states that “this distinction does not lead us to consider the whole system of civil government as a polluted thing, which has nothing to do with Christian men.”⁵⁵ But neither does the assertion of our absolute moral duty to God give individuals the right to overthrow immoral government. We find instead that Calvin reasserts the authority of the state over individuals.

However, this authority is not absolute but is ultimately contingent on the predestining will of God working through the historical actions of human beings “even when they know it not.”⁵⁶ As Calvin says: “But whatever opinion be formed of the acts of men, yet the Lord equally executed his work by them, when he broke the sanguinary sceptres of insolent kings, and overturned tyrannical governments. Let princes hear and fear.”⁵⁷ God can use whomever he wishes to bring down immoral governments, even unconstitutionally sanctioned people, such as foreign heathen kings.⁵⁸ This conclusion suggests an argument something like the following:

If we’re not free (i.e., it is God’s will to use our actions as a non-constitutional means to remove an immoral king from power), one’s non-constitutional actions to remove an immoral king from power can be the will of God.

We’re not free.

One's non-constitutional actions to remove an immoral king from power can be the will of God.

Yet immediately after suggesting such an argument, Calvin reverses himself by saying:

But in the mean while, it behooves us to use the greatest caution, that we not despise or violate that authority of magistrates, which is entitled to the greatest veneration, which God has established by the most solemn commands, even though it reside in those who are most unworthy of it, and who, as far as in them lies, pollute it by their iniquity.⁵⁹

This caution suggests an argument like this:

If we're free (i.e. not commanded by God), one's non-constitutional actions to remove an immoral king from power cannot be the will of God.

We're free.

One's non-constitutional actions to remove an immoral king from power cannot be the will of God.

As Calvin goes on to state: "For though the correction of tyrannical domination is the vengeance of God, we are not, therefore, to conclude that it is committed to us, who have received no other command than to obey and suffer. This observation I always apply to private persons."⁶⁰ Why should we simply assume that God would not choose private persons to be instruments of his will for justice? Why does God only will that such people should receive no other command than to "obey and suffer"? Here we return to Calvin's arguments against popular sovereignty. As he states: "But if those, to whom the will of God has assigned another form of government, transfer this [decision] to themselves so as to be tempted to desire a revolution, the very thought will be not only foolish and useless, but altogether criminal."⁶¹ The foolishness and uselessness mentioned here probably refers, in part, to the arguments already discussed about the high risks of revolution and the potential benefits of the providential variety in governmental forms. Or, as John McNeill puts Calvin's position: "To induce anarchy is to violate charity; obedience to magistrates is a great part of charity."⁶²

So what should a Calvinist do? Once again, Calvin hedges. He asserts that where people find themselves under political constitutions that make no provision for the removal of tyrants, they must simply suffer under them. He draws on biblical precedent to help support this position when he states:

But, if we direct our attention to the word of God, it will carry us much further; even to submit to the government, not only of those princes who discharge their duty to us with becoming integrity and fidelity, but of all who possess the sovereignty, even though they perform none of the duties of their function.⁶³

The use of the word “none” here clearly indicates that for “Calvin there is absolutely no room for any kind of social contract or notion of popular sovereignty.”⁶⁴ Even if the state fails to perform any of its duties, the most one can do is simply refuse to comply with it.

However, he suggests that his own preference is for those systems in which there are constitutionally established agents charged with the role of curbing despotism. He alludes to the institution of “Ephori of the Lacedaemonians, or the popular tribunes upon the consuls among the Romans, or the Demarchi upon the senate among Athenians; or with power such as perhaps is now possessed by the three estates in every kingdom when they are assembled.”⁶⁵ For all these forms of limitation on the power of kings, it is clear that Calvin finds an important precedent in the attitudes towards kings found in the practices of ancient Israel. For them, God is “the King of kings”, and so Calvin observes:

On this principle Daniel denied that he had committed any crime against the king in disobeying his impious decree; because the king had exceeded the limits of his office, and had not only done an injury to men, but, by raising his arm against God, had degraded his authority.”⁶⁶

Calvin’s fear of social chaos here seems to blind him to the possibility for individuals of conscience outside of a constitutional framework to do more to curb the injustice of unjust rulers, including some stark examples of such in the Bible. Again, it would fall to others in the Calvinist tradition to bring forward such biblical defenses of the ascendancy of a moral conscience touched by God and a more confident appraisal of the ability of private persons to exercise an appropriate level of “caution.” As McNeill points out about these passages, they “gave suggestions to the British seventeenth-century political prophets, Rutherford, Sydney, and Locke. It was no less but more influential in that it came at the end of a discussion that is anxiously conservative.”⁶⁷ In fact, one can wonder if part of the early success of Calvinism was made possible by its ability to speak simultaneously to power of its complete loyalty, while at the same time harboring within its outlook hidden opportunities to support a more radically republican outlook for a latter time.

CALVINISM'S DISTINCTIVE PERSPECTIVE ON THE SPECIAL VALUE OF INDIVIDUALS

Political individualism is the belief in the maximization of the freedom of individuals under the law. The following discussion deals with the metaphysical underpinnings of the justification of individual liberty. It is widely suggested that “within the Christian religion individualism is closely associated with Protestantism and the belief in the human capacity for personal contact with God rather than the necessity of instruction through a hierarchy.”⁶⁸ However, I would like to discuss an alternative support of the deep sense of respect for individuals and the need for providing them with the objective conditions necessary to express their individuality. According to Taylor, there are two components to the “nascent modern individualism” that gives rise to the modern sense of the importance of personal freedom: “self-responsible independence” and “recognized particularity.”⁶⁹ As regards the first criterion, it should already be clear that Calvinism holds an ambivalent attitude.

In his book, *Sources of the Self*, Taylor discusses at length how a sense of “In interior hominem habitat veritas” (truth lies within), has become a major component of the modern sense of selfhood. He argues that this sense of the deep connection of individuals to ultimate reality is a product of the 19th century Romanticism. But I would argue that there is a critical contribution from Calvinism to this sense. The doctrine of predestination has an important implication besides the ambiguous conclusions that can be deduced from it concerning perennial political questions. It implies that unique human lives matter and that they matter absolutely. This is because the metaphysical picture painted by Calvinism is one that can embrace a deterministic picture of the universe. An important implication of this possibility is that whether one is a member of the elect or not, one can believe that one’s unique self is still essential to God’s plane for creation. The “best of all possible” worlds must contain each of us, is an implication of Calvin’s doctrine of predestination. In terms of our past and future actions, one must assume that such actions are thought by God to be compatible with, if not constitutive of, the world he chooses to make.

This distinctive outlook on individualism can avoid the problem of ambivalence that besets the other ideals examined so far because it does not proceed in its line of reasoning directly from either of the contradictory claims of compatibilism but is, instead, based on the recognition that either might be true. In other words, it implies a constructive dilemma like the following:

The existence of human freedom implies that the individual matters.

The non-existence of human freedom implies that the individual matters.

Either human free will exists or it does not.

So, in any event, the individual matters.

This means that Calvinism, unlike theological positions that assert either determinism or libertarianism, presents both a logically coherent and multi-layered defense of the special value of individuals.

We find expressions of this robust sense of the importance of the individual in the numerous references made about Calvinism's encouragement of a sense of self-confidence in ordinary people. As Edward Burns and Philip Ralph note:

Doubtless the reason [for such an effect] lies in the Calvinist's belief that as the chosen instrument of God he must play a part in the drama of the universe worthy of his exalted status. And with the Lord on his side he was not easily frightened by whatever lions lurked in his path.⁷⁰

Or as Troeltsch comments:

Calvinism, however, more and more made this doctrine [predestination] the focus of its system, and in its great historical conflicts drew thence the strong support of the consciousness of election; sacrificing for this, however, rationality and universal love as elements of its conception of God. . . . The consciously elect man feels himself to be the destined lord of the world, who in the power of God and for the honour of God has it laid on him to grasp and shape the world.⁷¹

The "heroic," "iron element," or even "fanatical" quality mentioned by so many commentators on Calvinism, might be a result of a certain commonality it shares with ancient heroic ideals born of pagan fatalism.

Clearly, though, the distinctive Christian elements of Calvinism prevent it from being fully compatible with fatalism. The ancient cyclical notions of history contrast with the perfectionist morality of monotheism to imbue the heroism of Calvinists with a less tragic and more earnest outlook. From the perspective of this outlook, the believer and sinner are both a part of a unique cosmic drama and not an ultimately pointless repetition. As Douglas John Hall puts this distinction, it is "a matter of vocation. To the extent that one does it at all, this calling incorporates an awareness (in Paul's language) of a certain inexorable *necessitas*.... The word for necessity in Greek is *anangke* – literally, destiny, even fate."⁷²

Hall goes on to note that “the other side of this sense of destiny, this drivenness, however, is a wonderful freedom.”⁷³

The doctrine of predestination was meant to strongly dispute the notion that election was based in God’s “foreknowledge of merit.”⁷⁴ Salvation is, for Calvin, purely gratuitous gift of grace, for all human beings lack true merit. However, the doctrine of predestination also suggests that the universe that God chooses to create must include oneself. Although Calvin rejects that we have the ability to fully understand God’s reasons for the creation of the world, a perfectly moral God would obviously not create a world that was fundamentally evil. As Battles notes, Calvin asserts instead “a doctrine of the goodness of creation.”⁷⁵ That is, God must have a good reason for creating the world that he does, and thus, even though one lacks the power to achieve any kind of moral greatness, one’s unique existence is nonetheless somehow an essential part of God’s ultimate inscrutable plan for the good.

Such a conclusion flows naturally from Calvin’s doctrine of the inherent goodness of creation. He obviously experienced great pleasure and even awe in the experience of nature. As he states:

But you cannot at one view take a survey of this most ample and beautiful machine in all its vast extent without being completely overwhelmed with its infinite splendor. Wherefore the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews elegantly represents the worlds as the manifestation of invisible things for the exact symmetry of the universe is a mirror in which we may contemplate the otherwise invisible God.⁷⁶

This sense of beauty extends from the macro world of the wild to the micro world inside ourselves:

And therefore some of the philosophers of antiquity have justly called man a microcosm, or world in miniature, because he is an eminent specimen of the power, goodness, and wisdom of God, and contains in him wonders enough to occupy the attention of our minds, if we are not indisposed to such study.⁷⁷

Calvin was not afraid to use aesthetic terminology to describe God’s work. For example, when he rejects a purely naturalistic explanation of the origins of the world, he does so by emphatically stating: “Just as if the world, which is a theatre erected for displaying the glory of God, were its own creator!”⁷⁸ Or when he speaks of “this very beautiful theatre of the world.”⁷⁹

So when Calvin refers to the beauty of the individual it is clear that he is not simply referring to the ordinary standards of physical beauty or mental agility bequeathed by nature. As Bouwsma points out:

for Calvin, unlike Erasmus, one's calling has no necessary correspondence to one's talents or 'nature.' Here as elsewhere he preferred to dispense with nature – in this case human nature – as mediator between God and the world: for Calvin, God gives directly to the elect whatever is needed to play the parts he is assigned. In this understanding of the calling, one does not play oneself but, like an actor on the stage, whatever roles one is assigned.⁸⁰

The beauty of one's life can only be discerned by appreciating one's life in its entirety and despite the effects of particular flaws or weaknesses. Instead, Calvin asserts that “Our calling is not always confined to its ordinary duties because God sometimes imposes on his servants new and unusual roles [personas].”⁸¹ It is not the specific faults that matter, but the entirety of the “performance.” Others such as Troeltsch have commented on this aesthetic aspect of Protestant thought, such as when he states that “the aesthetic glorification of the world and cult of individuality, tends towards ideas and feelings which are radically pantheistic, pessimistic, or, again, absolutely revolutionary, aiming blindly at producing some change or other.”⁸² In his doctrine of divine “special providence,” Calvin also suggests that nothing is fortuitous or merely contingent, including “the agency of the impious.”⁸³

At the core of this view of the cosmic “drama” is Calvin's sense of special providence and his understanding of the role the spirit plays in guiding this performance. As Battles notes:

Now, to embrace the totality of God's activity in the cosmos, Calvin envisions a sort of ‘ladder’ of two stages. The lower stage moves from the Spirit's tending of the as yet shapeless mass on the first day of creation to the highest stage of intelligent, good, heroic, but unregenerate man. The upper stage of the ladder has to do with the rungs of man's redemption. *All is the work of the Spirit.* We may call the first the more general of ‘lower’ work. But all these activities are inseparable from one another and equally essential for God's creation.⁸⁴

According to Battles, “the divine playwright stages the ongoing drama of creation, alienation, return, and forgiveness for the teeming audience of humanity itself.”⁸⁵ The writer and director of the play is clearly God for, as Calvin asserts: “why does he [Moses] relate that God, in the creation of

each of his works, said, 'Let this or that be done,' but that the unsearchable glory of God may resplendently appear in his image?"⁸⁶ This imagery suggests that a significant awareness of God can be found though an appreciation of his works.⁸⁷

Given this powerful emphasis on the life of human individuals as a potential source for a limited understanding of the work of God, is it surprising that Taylor mentions that "in New England, it would appear, 'almost every literate Puritan kept some sort of journal.'"⁸⁸ He ascribes this novel preoccupation to the need to both "descry the signs of grace and election" and to "bring his thoughts and feelings into line with the grace-given dispositions of praise and gratitude."⁸⁹ However, I suspect that another reason is that, in taking up Augustine's doctrine of predestination and following it to its absolute extreme, Calvin made God's transformation of the will through grace an aesthetic work worthy in itself to behold. Taylor calls this budding focus on the "intimate thoughts and feelings" of "quite ordinary" men and women the beginning of the turn to inwardness. For Taylor, the strange habits of Puritans are simply a foreshadowing of the later developments of the Romantic period that would usher in the modern emphasis on "inner nature."⁹⁰ But one can wonder whether such a later development would really have been possible without the essential metaphysical underpinnings of a widespread outlook like Calvinism.

Of course, defenders of libertarian claims about the necessity of free moral choice for the proper judgement of human value will be unimpressed by deterministic pictures of the unique value of individuals described here. It portrays a picture of detached aesthetic appreciation of one's life and not a moral judgement of a truly free being. However, this perspective provides a much less secure foundation for belief in the moral value of individuals, for if free will does not exist then neither does individual human worth. Nor is such worth rooted essentially in God's will. It is such a fundamental difference between Anabaptist and Calvinist perspectives that is perhaps what can account for Calvin's frequent use of a theatrical metaphor. Acting, as an art, is a unique combination of the individual interpretation of an actor who is, yet, fundamentally constrained by the demands of a script. Such a fundamentally aesthetic outlook on human life also explains Calvin's frequent references to the sculptural allusion of Paul: "Will what is molded say to the one who molds it, 'Why have you made me like this?' Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one object for special use and another for ordinary use?" (Romans 9:20-21, NRSV).

Taylor is right to suggest that it is among the most deeply held beliefs about the connection between individuals and ultimate reality that an explanation can be found for the high esteem with which Westerners hold individuality. "To thine own self be true!" is a phrase that could only

come from an Elizabethan author deeply aware of the ideas of Calvinistic pietism.⁹¹ And the ubiquitous exhortations in the children's television programming of today to "be yourself" require a deeper explanation than a dull utilitarian defense of the social benefits that individual liberty can provide. Such convictions are more likely grounded in deeply held metaphysical assumptions, which only a pervasive religion, like Calvinism, could make widespread. Perhaps it is only such an outlook that can explain the sense of so many historical commentators that the most potent support of individual liberty emerged first in those societies touched by Calvinism. Perhaps it is only the influences of such an outlook that can explain why Puritans would engage in such intimate self-examination. If Calvinists were indeed looking at their lives as unique works of art made by God, they would no doubt be deeply interested discerning whether they were molded for special or ordinary use.

CONCLUSION

The first practical conclusion we can draw from this analysis of Calvin's possible influence on democracy is that we should have a greater appreciation of the circuitous and contingent route that has brought our civilization to the practice of democracy. In a paradoxical way, such an appreciation adds weight to Calvin's assertions about God's arbitrary grace, for it indeed seems very provident that our society came to its favourable conclusions about democracy given its cultural resources for defending alternatives. There is another practical lesson in all this: Philosophy matters. Putting aside Calvin's own frequently stated reservations about philosophizing⁹², we can see that he was someone who took abstract problems like that of free will and determinism seriously. This perennial philosophical conundrum was central to his whole outlook on life. And in making such a powerful case for his theological outlook, he was able to bring to life an abstract philosophical issue for many ordinary people. In so doing, he also, perhaps inadvertently, opened their minds to the possibilities of considering other new ways of thinking. So, the story of Calvin's ambivalent influence on democratic politics teaches us how religion and philosophy are not irrelevant to everyday political discourse. Deeply held metaphysical beliefs can have far reaching positive and negative effects, whether we are fully aware of the nature and logical implications of such beliefs or not. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to make sure public discourse about such "abstract" issues continues to take place.

The other main conclusion to be drawn from this analysis is of use only to those who still consider themselves a part of the Calvinist tradition. The observation about the ambiguous nature of the doctrine of predestination allows us to understand more clearly where the most useful

criticisms of the Calvinist tradition lie. So, for example, when Calvinism is criticized for supporting intolerance in our own time, one can suggest that such criticism may be pointing to a perennial danger but also a non-intrinsic aspect of this tradition. Thus, both Calvinists and their critics would do better to look to other influences when it comes to understanding the sources of intolerance in our time. On the other hand, if a criticism engages Calvinism's unique picture of the individual, there is hope that something truly novel can be learned by Calvinists. George Grant and Charles Taylor have both argued that the doctrine of predestination, at least in how it has traditionally been interpreted, has had some pernicious effects on Western civilization in regard to excessive atomism and ecological irresponsibility. Such criticisms are ones that contemporary Calvinists must be sure to address, because they engage Calvinism's unique contribution to the ideals of modernity.

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NOTES

¹ Abraham Kuyper, *Calvinism: The L. P. Stone Lectures for 1898-1899* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1899), p. 57.

² Christopher Elwood, *Calvin for Armchair Theologians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), p. 149.

³ Edward McNall Burns and Philip Lee Ralph, *World Civilizations: Their History and Their Culture*. 5th Edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), pp. 561-562.

⁴ William Mueller, *Church and State in Luther and Calvin* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1954), p. 159.

⁵ Ross Williams Collins, *Calvin and the Libertines of Geneva*. Edited by F.D. Blackley (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company, 1958), p. 206.

⁶ Burns and Ralph, *World Civilizations*, p. 562.

⁷ Burns and Ralph, *World Civilizations*, p. 570.

⁸ Michael Ostling, "Be Kind to the Antichrist: Millenarianism and Religious Tolerance in the Edict of Pskov," *Studies in Religion*, 30 (2001), p. 268.

⁹ By using the principle of addition and whichever contradictory conclusion one requires, one can add whatever additional proposition (or compendium of propositions) one needs to get to certain desired conclusions.

¹⁰ Irving M. Copi, *Introduction to Logic*, (New York: Collier Macmillan, 7th ed. 1986), p. 334.

¹¹ Ernst Troeltsche, *Protestantism and Progress: A Historical Study of the Relation of Protestantism to the Modern World*. Translated by W. Montgomery (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1912), p. 39.

¹² Diarmaid. MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Viking, 2003), p. 236.

¹³ MacCulloch, *The Reformation*, p. 237.

¹⁴ John M. Todd, *Reformation: Origins Development and Twentieth Century Outcome* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), p. 285.

¹⁵ The formal proof of the validity of this argument is:

1. F v M by Addition to 1
2. If not F then M from 3 and Material Implication
3. M from 4,2 by Modus Ponens

¹⁶ Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, *History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago: Rand McNally, , 2nd ed. 1963), p. 311.

¹⁷ John Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, ed. and Intro. John T. McNeill (New York: The Library of the Liberal Arts. 2nd ed. 1950), IV .viii. Chapters III and IV of John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559) in *Joannis Calvini opera selecta*, ed. Peter Barth; tr. John Allen (Munich 1926).

¹⁸ Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, IV. Viii.

¹⁹ Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*,, IV. Viii.

²⁰ Troeltsche, *Protestantism and Progress*, p. 113.

²¹ Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*,, IV. viii.

²² Tadataka Maruyama, *The Ecclesiology of Theodore Beza: The Reform of the True Church* (Droz, 1978), p. 102.

²³ Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, IV .viii.

²⁴ Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, IV. viii.

²⁵ Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, IV. viii.

²⁶ Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, IV .viii.

²⁷ Mueller, *Church and State in Luther and Calvin*, p. 143.

²⁸ John T. McNeill, Introduction to Calvin, *On God and Political Duty* (New York: The Library of the Liberal Arts, 2nd ed. 1950), p. xix.

²⁹ Douglas John Hall, *Bound and Free: A Theologian's Journey* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 2005), p. 111.

³⁰ William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 181.

³¹ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 223.

³² Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, p. 194.

³³ Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, p. 196.

³⁴ Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, IV. iv.

³⁵ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 225.

³⁶ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 225.

³⁷ Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, p. 199.

³⁸ Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, p. 199.

³⁹ Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, p. 195.

⁴⁰ Collins, *Calvin and the Libertines of Geneva*, p. 73.

⁴¹ Richard A. Muller, Foreword to *John Calvin and the Will: A Critique and Corrective* by Dewey J. Hoitenga (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), p. 10.

⁴² Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, p. 28.

⁴³ Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, IV. ix.

⁴⁴ Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, IV. ix.

⁴⁵ Joseph Lecler, *Toleration and the Reformation*, tr. T. L. Westow (New York: Associated Press, 1960), Vol 1, p. 336.

⁴⁶ Lecler, *Toleration and the Reformation*, pp. 277-278.

⁴⁷ Micheline Ishay, *The History of Human Rights: From Ancient Times to the Globalization Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 79.

⁴⁸ Randal Balmer and John R. Fetscher, *The Presbyterians* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 1993), p. 41.

⁴⁹ Ishay, *The History of Human Rights*, p. 77.

⁵⁰ Ford Lewis Battles, *Interpreting John Calvin*, ed. Robert Benedetto. With Introductory Essays by John Hesslink and Donald K McKim (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), p. 174.

⁵¹ Mueller, *Church and State in Luther and Calvin*, p. 166.

⁵² Kuyper, *Calvinism*, p. 56.

⁵³ Jay Newman, *On Religious Freedom* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1991), p. 51.

⁵⁴ Calvin in John Leslie Dunstan, *Protestantism* (New York: George Braziller, 1962), p. 65.

⁵⁵ Calvin in Dunstan, *Protestantism*, p. 67.

⁵⁶ McNeill, Introduction to Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, p. xvii.

⁵⁷ Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, IV. xxxi.

⁵⁸ McNeill, Introduction to Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, p. xvii.

⁵⁹ Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, IV. xxxi.

⁶⁰ Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, IV. xxxi.

⁶¹ Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, IV. viii.

⁶² McNeill, Introduction to Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, p. xviii.

⁶³ Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, IV. xxv.

⁶⁴ Strauss and Cropsey, *History of Political Philosophy*, p. 310.

⁶⁵ Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, IV. xxxi.

⁶⁶ Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, IV. xxxii.

⁶⁷ McNeill, Introduction to Calvin, *On God and Political Duty*, p. xix.

⁶⁸ Lincoln Allison, "Individualism," in *The Concise Dictionary of Politics*, ed. Iain McLean (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 240.

⁶⁹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 185.

⁷⁰ Burns and Ralph, *World Civilizations*, p. 562.

⁷¹ Troeltsche, *Protestantism and Progress*, p. 63.

⁷² Hall, *Bound and Free*, p. 129.

⁷³ Hall, *Bound and Free*, p. 130.

⁷⁴ John Calvin, *On The Christian Faith: Selections from the Institutes, Commentaries, and Tracts*, ed. John T. McNeill (New York: The Library of the Liberal Arts, 1957), p. 92.

⁷⁵ Battles, *Interpreting John Calvin*, p. 174.

⁷⁶ Calvin, *On The Christian Faith*, p. 12.

⁷⁷ Calvin, *On The Christian Faith*, p. 14.

⁷⁸ Calvin, *On The Christian Faith*, p. 18.

⁷⁹ Calvin, *On The Christian Faith*, p. 35.

⁸⁰ Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, p. 181.

⁸¹ Calvin in Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, p. 194.

⁸² Troeltsche, *Protestantism and Progress*, p. 184.

⁸³ Calvin also suggests that nothing is fortuitous or merely contingent including “the agency of the impious.” (Calvin, *On The Christian Faith*, p. 41).

⁸⁴ Battles, *Interpreting John Calvin*, p. 170.

⁸⁵ Battles in Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, p. 177.

⁸⁶ Calvin, *On The Christian Faith*, p. 34.

⁸⁷ Calvin even comes very close to a kind of pantheism when he cautions his reader:

“I confess, indeed, that the expression, that nature is God, may be used in pious sense by a pious mind; but, as it is harsh and inconsistent with strict propriety of speech, nature being rather an order prescribed by God, it is dangerous in matters so momentous and demanding peculiar caution to confound the Deity with the inferior course of his works” (Calvin, *On The Christian Faith*, p. 18).

⁸⁸ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 184.

⁸⁹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 184.

⁹⁰ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 185.

⁹¹ Todd, *Reformation*, p. 329.

⁹² Battles, *Interpreting John Calvin*, p., 174.

THE ANALYTIC – SYNTHETIC DISTINCTION IN AN INDIGENOUS AFRICAN LANGUAGE

Francis Offor

INTRODUCTION

Philosophers of African decent have at various times pointed out that much of what leads to philosophical problems in western European languages does not necessarily lead to problems when applied to most indigenous African languages. Using the Akan language as a foil, the Ghanaian philosopher, Kwame Gyekye has challenged the position of dualist philosophers who inferred the existence of the mind from the existence (in English) of mentalistic or psychological expressions. Gyekye's study revealed that mentalistic expressions in the English language, when translated into Akan, actually refer to the body or some organs of the body.¹ The implication of his findings is that certain philosophical issues such as the mind-body problem, as formulated in the English language, do not have a place in the Akan conceptual scheme.

Also relying on the conceptual resources of the Akan language scheme, Kwasi Wiredu, faulted Descartes' methodological skepticism in which the quest for certainty is intertwined with that of infallibility.² According to Wiredu, the skeptical problem of Descartes is simply that, as long as knowing is subject to the possibility of error, it is uncertain. Conversely, certainty for Descartes means the impossibility of error (which means the same as infallibility) – thus making the quest for certainty a quest for infallibility. Wiredu's work revealed that words and phrases about certainty in the English language do not have the slightest tendency to invoke any intimations of infallibility when translated into the Akan language. And so, the issue (in the English language) of determining grounds for infallibility, under the putative search for grounds for certainty, has no place in a language like Akan.

In short, both scholars concluded that many philosophical puzzles and problems which arise when expressed in English language may turn out not to be problems when presented in indigenous African languages. It is on the strength of such a conclusion that Wiredu provides the following advice concerning such puzzles and problems:

Try to think them through in your own African language and on the basis of the results, review the intelligibility of the associated problems, or the plausibility of the apparent solutions that have tempted you when you have pondered them in some metropolitan language.³

The present essay attempts to respond to this call. Our objective here is to examine the analytic-synthetic distinction within the linguistic framework of the 'Bini' people whose spoken dialect is 'Edo,' with a view not only to ascertaining the intelligibility of such a distinction, but also to ascertaining the extent to which this distinction may serve as an adequate characterization of statements within the Bini linguistic categories. The Bini are a minority group in the Mid-Western part of Southern Nigeria.

THE ANALYTIC-SYNTHETIC DISTINCTION

Although the terms 'analytic' and 'synthetic' were used and popularized by Kant, they were (to use Quine's phrase) 'fore-shadowed' in the works of earlier philosophers like Hume, Leibniz and, to some extent, Locke. Hume, for instance, spoke about a distinction between (statements concerning) relations of idea and (those concerning) matters of fact. To Hume, the truth or falsity of propositions asserting relations of idea depends on the meaning of the terms employed, while the truth or falsity of propositions asserting matters of fact depends on experience. Hume held to his distinction and argued that any proposition that does not come under either of these categories should be committed to the flames. This is how Hume puts it:

When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume of divinity or school metaphysics for instance, let us ask: Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matters of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.⁴

Leibniz also spoke of what he calls 'truths of reason' and 'truths of fact.' To Leibniz, a truth of reason is a necessary proposition which is self-explanatory, or at best reducible to a self-evidently true proposition, while a truth of fact is a contingent proposition whose truth or falsity depends on matters of fact and experience.

Although Kant seems to have taken a cue from Hume and Leibniz in his discussion of 'analytic' and 'synthetic' statements, he however narrowed his definition of analytic and synthetic statements to subject-predicate propositions, in which the relation of a subject to the predicate is thought. This relation according to Kant is possible in two different ways:

- i. Either the predicate 'B' belongs to the subject 'A' or
- ii. The predicate "B" lies outside the concept of the subject 'A'

This first instance is what Kant categorizes as ‘analytic,’ while the second is an example of a ‘synthetic’ proposition. According to Kant, if in a proposition, the predicate says something already contained in the notion of the subject, then such a proposition is analytic, as an analysis of the predicate would yield what is already affirmed by the subject. For example, the statement ‘A bald man is a man’ is, Kant, ‘analytic,’ because the predicate (man) is already contained in the notion of the subject (bald-man) and can be obtained by ordinarily analyzing the subject.

On the other hand, if in a proposition what is affirmed in the predicate is not already contained in the notion of the subject, then such a proposition is, according to Kant, synthetic.’ In other words, a proposition is taken as synthetic if the predicate adds to our understanding of the subject – i.e., that the proposition expresses an idea not already contained in the subject. The proposition, “the straight line between two points is the shortest” is, in the opinion of Kant, synthetic, because “the concept of shortness is wholly an addition and cannot be derived from the concept of the straight line.”⁵ While the truth of an analytic statement depends solely on an analysis of the words in the sentence expressing it, synthetic statements are founded on experience (i.e., facts), which determine their truth or falsity.

By these definitions of ‘analytic’ and ‘synthetic’ statements, Kant thereby introduced a distinction between statements which are analytic (on the one hand) and those which are synthetic (on the other hand), and this alleged distinction has attracted mixed reactions in intellectual circles.

W.V.O. Quine, in his “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,” argued extensively against Kant’s bifurcation of statements into ‘analytic’ and ‘synthetic.’ The main points of Quine’s attack are (1) that Kant limits his analysis to statements of subject – predicate type, (2) that Kant’s appeal to the notion of self containment is left at a metaphorical level and is therefore not clear, (3) that there is circularity involved in Kant’s definition of analyticity since the notion of analyticity itself can only be explained in terms of other notions whose meanings overlap and (4) that the line dividing statements is too blurred to warrant compartmentalizing them into ‘analytic’ and ‘synthetic.’⁶

Quine explains that the notion of analyticity is itself a member of a family of expressions such that if any one member of the family could be taken to be satisfactorily explained or understood, then other members of the family could be taken to be satisfactorily explained in terms of it. He enumerates other members of the family to include ‘synonymy,’ ‘self contradiction,’ ‘semantical rules,’ ‘meaning,’ ‘definition’ and so on. Unfortunately, according to Quine, each member of the family is in as a great need of clarification as any other, and the meaning of each of the terms requires an understanding of the meaning of another term which itself depends on yet another term for its meaning. For instance, Quine

writes that an attempt to use the notions of ‘meaning’ and ‘self-contradiction’ in explaining analyticity will fail because ‘meaning’ itself is embedded in the notion of synonym and that self-contradiction stands in exactly the same need of clarification as does the notion of analyticity itself. Quine explains further that one way of explaining the notion of ‘synonym’ is to rely on the notion of ‘definition,’ but this approach will be unavailing because definitions themselves rest on the pre-existing notion of synonym which itself is in need of clarification.

Now, if the plausibility of the analytic-synthetic distinction depends on our being able to have a satisfactory notion of synonym, then the demonstration by Quine that the notion of synonym has not been defined in any meaningful way renders the distinction suspect. Quine outlined the problem involved in explaining analyticity in this manner:

Analyticity at first seemed most definable by appeal to a realm of meaning. On refinement, the appeal to meaning gave way to an appeal to synonymy or definition. But definition turned out to be a *will-o-the-wisp*, and synonymy turned out to be best understood only by dint of a prior appeal to analyticity itself. So we are back to the problem of analyticity.⁷

The above analysis by Quine substantiates his claim that the line dividing words in our language is blurred since words are interconnected with one another in a vast network. Consequently, words get their meanings from their relations with other words in this network. It becomes therefore difficult to differentiate those connections in the network that establish meanings of theoretical terms from those that present empirical findings. A consequence of this position is that there is no sharp contrast between the so-called ‘analytic’ and ‘synthetic’ statements since “a boundary between them simply has not been drawn.”⁸ Quine therefore recommends that the said distinction be discarded.

Grice and Strawson however see Quine’s denial of this distinction as absurd. To them, extreme skepticism about the analytic – synthetic distinction is not justified merely by criticism of philosophical attempts to clarify it, since there are many distinctions drawn in philosophy and even outside of it, which still await adequate philosophical elucidation, but which few would want, on this account, to declare as illusory.⁹ They therefore see a strong presumption in favour of the existence of the distinction, and argue that this presumption is not in the least shaken by the fact that the distinction in question has not been adequately clarified.

Hilary Putnam supported the above view by noting that the existence of the distinction is not even a matter of philosophical argument because, he holds, “there is as gross a distinction between [the analytic statement] ‘All bachelors are unmarried’ and [the synthetic statement]

‘There is a book on this table’ as between any two things in the world.”¹⁰ To Putnam, there is an analytic-synthetic distinction, but this distinction has been so radically overworked that it has become less of an error to maintain that there is no distinction at all, than it is to employ the distinction in the way it is being employed by most analytic philosophers.¹¹

The present paper, however, is not intended as a contribution to the debate over whether or not there are ‘analytic’ as distinct from ‘synthetic’ statements in the English language, rather, it is meant to explore the intelligibility of such a distinction within the linguistic framework of an indigenous African language, and to ascertain the extent to which this may serve as an adequate characterization of statements in the language.

THE PROBLEM OF CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY

Before we discuss the analytic-synthetic distinction within the linguistic framework of the Bini people, there is the need to highlight one major problem a study of this sort might encounter. This is the problem of translation across culture, especially with regards to terms and concepts that are theoretical and metaphysical in nature. Theoretical and metaphysical claims involve beliefs, worldviews, and social values, and there is the tendency for the meaning attached to such concepts in the language of a group to be defined by the totality of the culture of that group in question. And just as the meaning of concepts in the language of a group is defined by the totality of the culture of that group, so also is language the vehicle through which the cultural beliefs of any group are transmitted. In view of this intrinsic link between language and culture, Quine has argued, in his “Indeterminacy of Translation,” that the original meaning of concepts is always difficult to retain in a translated one. Translational problems across languages are mostly encountered when rendering a word-for-word equivalence. For example, there are words in the English language whose equivalence in the Bini language cannot be given in one word. By the time an English concept (represented by a word) translates into a phrase in Bini, for instance, the original meaning of the concept stands the risk of being distorted. In other words, when what comes easily ‘as a word’ in one language comes hard ‘as a phrase’ in another language, there may be significant dissimilarities not only in style but also in the value of such concept.

However, Donald Davidson’s idea of ‘radical translation’ clearly undermines Quine’s relativist posture. In his “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme,” Davidson contends that translating another language into a familiar tongue is itself a criterion of ‘language-hood,’ as long as the truth conditions are preserved.¹² The conditions for preserving this

truth must be anchored on what Davidson calls the ‘principle of charity.’ The main thrust of this principle rests on Davidson’s belief that truth conditions are fundamental to all known or conceivable languages. Consequently, the principle has, as its premise, certain assumptions: that the language of others makes sense and does not differ radically from any other and, therefore, that the generalized principles, which are operative in our own language also work for the language we want to translate.¹³ Speaking about ‘charity,’ Davidson says:

If we want to understand others, we must count them right in most matters. If we can produce a theory that reconciles charity and the formal conditions of a theory, we have done all that could be done to ensure communication. Nothing more is possible and nothing more is needed.¹⁴

If we apply the principle of charity, therefore, the plausibility of relativism (and all its associated problems) collapses.

In order to reduce to a minimum the likely translational problems that might confront us, in this study we focus on one African language. We are optimistic that a discussion of this Western construed philosophical problem in this African language would not only be revealing, but also would result in the enlargement of the conceptual options available to the human mind. For as Wiredu rightly argues: “Any enlargement of conceptual options is an instrumentality for the enlargement of the human mind everywhere.”¹⁵

THE ANALYTIC-SYNTHETIC DISTINCTION AND THE BINI LINGUISTIC FRAMEWORK

Our approach in this essay is first, to find out whether there are sets of statements in Bini language that are similar in significant respects to the English ‘analytic’ and ‘synthetic’ statements as formulated by Kant. One way of doing this would be to carefully translate a few examples of ‘analytic’ and ‘synthetic’ propositions in English language into the Bini language and then see if such propositions are still intelligible within the Bini language framework.

A quick survey of the Bini language shows that the existence of statements similar to English synthetic statements is not in doubt. It is by means of such statements that language is first learnt and communication made possible amongst the Bini people. For example, the English statement, ‘father is riding a bicycle’ – which on translation into Bini reads, *Ebaba gha fi ikeke* – is a synthetic statement which can only be true by virtue of matters of fact. Statements of this sort play a major role in the thought system of the Bini people, for it is by means of such statements

that communication is possible. It will therefore not be out of place for a mother to say to her little baby, *Ebaba gha fi ikeke*, while simultaneously pointing to the 'Ebaba' (father) riding the bicycle. It will make no sense, if a mother says to her child, *Ebaba fha fi ikeke*, without showing the child anything (fact) to corroborate the sentence. It is only after learning language in this manner that the child will then be equipped to learn and understand statements which may not immediately need any experience for them to be understood as being true or false. There are countless other statements in the Bini language that fall into this group of what are synthetic statements in the English language. No space will therefore be devoted to translating synthetic statements from their original English formulation into the Bini language, as the existence of statements similar in significant respects to the English synthetic statements is not in doubt.

What is however contestable is the existence of what can be called 'analytic' statements (by Kant's definition) in the Bini language. One way of verifying the existence of such statements is to carefully translate some English analytic statements into the Bini language and then see if they still retain their intelligibility after such translation. Such intelligibility is demonstrated by first translating analytic statements in the English language into the Bini language and then back into the English language. One example of an analytic statement in the English language and its translation into the Bini language and then back into English is as follows:

- i. English: A bald man is a man
- ii Bini: *Agba-akpan ore-okpia*
- iii Back to English: One who is bald is a man

A very close study of the above-translated analytic statement reveals that such a statement lacks intelligibility and is completely alien to the thought pattern of the Bini people. A statement like this is sure to earn a bewildering look from any one who properly understands the Bini language. This is because the English analytic statement 'a bald man is a man' when translated into the Bini language and then back into English, now reads 'one who is bald is a man.' To the understanding of the Bini, this means that the class of man comprises only of male adults who have bald heads and nothing else. The truth however is that amongst the Bini people (and indeed elsewhere in Africa), there are countless number of male adults who form part of the class of man and who nevertheless are not bald. The point being made here is that the Kantian examples of analytic statements, when translated into the Bini language, no longer retain the intelligibility they have in their original English formulations.

A survey of statements in the Bini language shows that one can hardly find any which one can confidently call 'analytic' in the same sense in which statements are said to be analytic in English language. That is, one

can hardly find in the Bini language, statements whose meaning, truth or falsity depends solely on the relationship between their subjects and their predicates.

In the Bini language however, there are some sets of expressions which are normally used, both for economy of words, and to deliver 'messages' to their recipients. It is mostly amongst this group of expressions that one can find those whose meanings are known independently of matters of fact. But such expressions are not even analytic in the sense in which statements are in the English language, for the following reasons:

- i. The truth of such expressions does not necessarily depend on the meaning of terms employed in the statements conveying them.
- ii. What the 'predicates' of such statements say is not necessarily contained in the notion of their 'subjects.'
- iii. Such expressions are not necessarily couched in the usual English 'subject-predicate' form.

And yet, such expressions can be known independently of matters of fact. Examples of such expressions in the Bini language and their translations into English language are as follows:

- i. Bini: *I ku abungbe vbe ayon, aruaro ghideghere*
English: When there are too much dirt in the wine, the blind will see them
- ii. Bini: *I hen aserien, ai serien erunmwun*
English: One only recants curses, one does not recant blessings

Expressions of the above type in the Bini language normally carry what we choose to call a 'message' and a 'meaning.' The message carried by an expression is its 'symbolic import,' while the meaning of an expression can be found in its face-value interpretation. For example, while the face-value interpretation of the Bini statement: *I ku abungbe vbe ayon, aruaro ghideghere* is 'when there are too much dirt in the wine, the blind will see them,' its symbolic import is 'no matter how truth is suppressed it still manifest itself.'

The point, however, is that in neither of these statements is experience required. Yet, our knowledge of these statements depend neither on the meaning of the terms used in the statement conveying the expressions, nor on the fact that the predicate of the statement affirms what is already contained in the notion of the subject, for expressions of this type in Bini are not couched in statements of the subject-predicate type.

A very convenient way of describing the above class of statements in the Bini language is to say that they are simply known '*a priori*,' and independently of experience. Although *a priori* statements share a common front with analytic statements generally, in that both can be said to be known independently of experience, they differ from analytic statements in that our knowledge of such statements does not necessarily depend on the relationship between one part of the statement and the other. In the Bini language, therefore, there are group of expressions that can be described, for want of a better expression, as '*purely a priori*.' Under this category, not only is a consideration of statements conveying an expression known *a priori*, but even our knowledge of the concepts employed in such statements is also not dependent on experience. A good example of this kind is the Bini statement *Ihen aserien aiserien erunmwun*, which translated means, 'One only recant curses, one does not recant blessings.'

Besides the two classes of statements identified above, a third category can also be found in the Bini language. Statements in this category may be understood as *a priori*, but the concepts and terms employed in such statements cannot themselves be known independently of experience. For instance, the Bini statement: *Iku abunge vbe ayon, aruaro ghideghere* cannot be said to be '*purely a priori*,' for the concepts employed in the statement like 'Iku' (dirts) and 'ayon' (wine) can only be known by reference to matters of fact and experience. The point we are making here is that, besides those statements we have described as purely *a priori*, there are some seemingly *a priori* assertions in the Bini language whose concept-content can only be known by virtue of matters of fact. Because of this empirical precondition, such statements in the Bini language cannot be said to be '*purely a priori*.' There are countless other statements in the Bini language that fall into this category.

CONCLUSION

The point made here is that the English formulation of 'analyticity' does not serve as an adequate characterization of statements within the Bini language framework. The closest examples of analytic statements in Bini language are those we have described as '*a priori*.' But then, we explained that while some statements can be said to be purely *a priori* because both the statements and the terms employed can be known independently of experience, there are several other examples of '*seemingly a priori*' statements in the Bini language whose 'concept-content' are only known and explained by virtue of matters of fact. This leaves us with three classes of statements within the Bini language framework. The first, are those we described as similar in significant respects to synthetic statements in English language. The second are those we described as the

‘purely *a priori*’ statements, while the third are the ‘partly *a priori*’ statements – partly *a priori* because their concept-content can only be known by virtue of matters of fact.

The foregoing findings reveal that the analytic-synthetic distinction does not retain the intelligibility it has in its formulation in western European languages, when construed in an indigenous African language. The implication of this is that any straight-jacket bifurcation of all statements in Bini language into ‘analytic’ and ‘synthetic’ will leave out a large portion of meaningful expressions with which the people think and communicate.

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NOTES

¹ Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thoughts: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Cambridge: University Press, 1987), pp. 163-168.

² Kwasi Wiredu, “The Need for Conceptual Decolonization in African Philosophy,” in *Conceptual Decolonization in African Philosophy, 4 Essays by Kwasi Wiredu*, Selected and Introduced by Olusegun Oladipo (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 1995), pp. 22-32.

³ Wiredu, “The Need for Conceptual Decolonization,” p. 23.

⁴ Wallace I. Matson, *A New History of Philosophy*, Vol. II (Florida: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Inc. 1987), p. 362.

⁵ Jonathan Bennett, *Kant's Analytic* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 7.

⁶ W.V.O. Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,” in *Readings in the Philosophy of Language*, eds. J. F. Rosenberg and Charles Travis (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Inc. 1971), pp. 63-80.

⁷ Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,” p. 71.

⁸ Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,” p. 74.

⁹ H.P. Grice and P. F. Strawson, “In Defence of a Dogma,” in *Readings in the Philosophy of Language*, pp. 81-94.

¹⁰ Hilary Putnam, “The Analytic and Synthetic,” in *Readings in the Philosophy of Language*, pp. 94-126.

¹¹ Putnam, “The Analytic and Synthetic,” p. 97.

¹² Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 183-198.

¹³ Dipo Irele, “Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Approach,” in *Issues and Problems in Philosophy*, ed. Kolawole A. Owolabi (Ibadan: Grovacs, 2000), p. 184.

¹⁴ Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth*, p. 197.

¹⁵ Wiredu, “The Need for Conceptual Decolonization,” p. 30.

PLATONIC DIALOGUE AND TRANSFORMATIVE PHILOSOPHY

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The present paper is primarily concerned with the application of the transformative approach within the Western philosophical context. My aim is to show how the idea of a transformation is present in Platonic thought based on John Taber's work on transformative philosophy. According to Taber, transformative thinkers tell us that the unreflecting mind lives in a dream and, if it is to know the truly real, one "must awaken from the dream, enliven slumbering faculties, make a transition to a new state of awareness."¹ I will use the Platonic dialogue to illustrate how some of the main features of transformative philosophy developed by Taber are exhibited there, if only to emphasize the transformative aspect of Platonic philosophy, although not dismiss the systematic reading of Platonic texts.

THE IDEA OF PHILOSOPHY

Rorty's Introduction to *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* brings to fore the core features of systematic thought. He likens the mind to a mirror, containing representations – some accurate, some not – capable of being studied by pure non-empirical methods. This picture implies that the mind is separate from objects; it is a separate entity. On this view, in order to explain how knowledge is possible, one requires a theory of representation – a theory that explains how the mind can relate to objects of a completely different type. One further requires an epistemology to polish the mirror in order to gain clarity.

The picture which holds traditional philosophy captive is that of the mind as a great mirror, containing various representations – some accurate, some not – and capable of being studied by pure, non-empirical methods. Without the notion of mind as mirror, the notion of knowledge as accuracy of representation would not have suggested itself. Without this latter notion [...] – getting more accurate representations by repairing, and polishing the mirror, so to speak – would not have made sense.²

The mind also reflects a history of philosophical development, a development that many would call regular and systematic. There is also a sense in which polishing the mirror is essential to attaining clarity of

vision, and, with it, the necessary means of sharpening and repairing the methods employed in order to secure clarity.

Systematic thought demands conformity to an established tradition. It takes for granted that what is being represented is a common history and tradition. It lays down rules that determine philosophical discourse. Systematic thought eliminates what is inessential to the process by defining the terms of philosophical analysis. It is based on the assumption “that there is a common or universal ground for knowledge on which all human beings come to agree about certain things.”³ The image that there is a “universal process of knowing” in which we all share and are initiated into by “knowledge events having special authority” is implied in the idea of a ‘systematic philosophy.’

TRANSFORMATIVE PHILOSOPHY

Transformative philosophy is primarily concerned with the phenomenon of transformation. Heinrich Zimmer, in his work from the early twentieth century, *Philosophies of India*, investigates the notion of transformation, saying that it is this idea that differentiates Eastern thought from Western philosophical thought. The West, he writes, has always been preoccupied with *information* not *transformation*; transformation involves “the radical changing of man’s nature and, therewith, a renovation of his understanding both of the outer world and his own existence; transformation as complete as possible, such as will amount when successful to a total conversion or rebirth.”⁴

The pre-occupation with transformation in the manner proposed by Zimmer may, at first, sound esoteric. Esoteric, because the idea of transformation may suggest an aversion to technical vocabulary or an unwritten source of knowledge – as opposed to exoteric, in which case questions of knowledge, and methods for arriving at truths, are based on well-defined concepts that are in the objective domain of science.

One may be inclined to assume that the transformation of which Zimmer speaks is limited to Eastern philosophies. However, philosophers in the West have, in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, also begun addressing the need for viewing philosophy and the enterprise of knowing as a kind of activity continuously shaping and reshaping human life.

Nietzsche was the most vocal proponent of the “free intellect” that has no need for the immense planking of concepts in order to preserve itself. It has, he writes in *Philosophy and Truth*, “no need of these makeshifts of indigence and [...] it will now be guided by intuitions rather than concepts.”⁵ The man of intuition, according to Nietzsche has reinvented his life and can exercise his creative will as he thinks fit; the

path he treads on is not the regular conventional path that leads “into the land of ghostly schemata.”⁶

Nietzsche’s man of intuition is a man who has seen things for himself and, as opposed to the man of thinking and theorizing, is transformed and reborn in Zimmer’s sense. He does not aspire for clarity or truth in any conventional sense and is not given to systematic thought or philosophy. For this reason, his intellect is free because it does not assume a universal ground for knowledge “on which all human beings can come to agree about certain things.”⁷

HERMENEUTICS AND TRANSFORMATIVE PHILOSOPHY

Thinkers who spawned the hermeneutic movement in philosophy were quite aware of the limitations of the so-called ‘systematic philosophy.’ Hermeneutically speaking, it is not clear that at the fundamental level of experience we “know” the same things.

There is a problem with rejecting a universal ground for knowledge. If we do not know the same things how can we talk of phenomena, things as they appear to us on the tapestry of life? Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit* offers a way out of this dilemma. Hermeneutics, Heidegger explains in § 7 of *Sein und Zeit*, means talking about phenomena in such a way that phenomena lose their character of *hiddenness* and become fully *revealed* [entdeckt]. By ‘revealed,’ Heidegger means that structures of phenomena or the way things appear to us become clear. If, as he says, structures become clear, we can recognize phenomena for what they are and how they arise.

In order to clarify what Heidegger is saying, consider, for example, the heliocentric model. The heliocentric model altered the way the motion of planets was calculated, but it did not alter the fact that the sun still appears to move around the earth, rising in the east and setting in the west. The only difference is that we are no longer deceived by the appearance of the sun’s position in the sky. The heliocentric model has revealed the underlying structure of the way the sun appears, namely the phenomenon, without altering the appearance itself. For the sun continues to appear as if it is moving around the earth, but one is not deceived by the appearance, even though this change does not alter the appearance itself.

How does Heidegger’s hermeneutics capture the idea of transformation? Knowing structures of experience, phenomena included, certainly alters one’s view of the outer world and one’s own existence through the act of knowing. The question of knowledge approached hermeneutically is not a mechanical process. It is a question of whether knowledge can change us. Is it a handy tool one uses to argue one’s view without it affecting the manner in which one spends the rest of one’s life? In Heidegger’s hermeneutics, the function of philosophy is to reveal the

structures of human existence, and one would have to change oneself in order to see things the way they are.

The transformative philosophy I propose has more in common with Western hermeneutics than with the idea of a ‘systematic philosophy’ because of its emphasis on transformation. It is not as if it lacks a distinctive method, so to speak. This would be a mischaracterization of the idea of transformation. In a sense, one can say that, like hermeneutics, a transformative philosophy is more concerned with taking us “to our old selves [and] to aid us in becoming new beings,”⁸ than with standardizing knowledge.

Transformative or edifying philosophers

Transformative philosophers do not argue their philosophies. They are not the sort of people to “hang up the tools of their trade” after a disputation, “go home, and indulge in the well-earned pleasures of private life. They *live* their philosophies.”⁹

In Plato, *philosophia* is not just a matter of debating skillfully, but a continuous search for truth, and questioning prejudices, beliefs and conventions for oneself is essential to philosophy. In Ancient Greek, the original meaning of the word ‘*ethos*’ is ‘customary place of residence.’ In the later metaphorical use, what one believes is where one usually is; beliefs make up one’s ‘ethos.’

The first thing a transformative philosopher encourages us to do is to revert our attention to this *habitus*. This is also one of the main functions of a Platonic dialogue. Dialogue for Plato is not merely an external speech act, but also a thought act connected with introspection. “It is a discourse that the mind (psyche) carries on with itself.” As in Descartes’ *cogito*, “it is presupposed that a man not only can converse with his fellow men,” but also with himself.¹⁰

Plato’s use of *dialogue* is close to Heidegger’s use of hermeneutics. In essence, Plato invites us to join him in a philosophical exercise of *talking through* matters, whatever these happen to be. *Dialogos* literally means “through” talk, speech, argument, or proof. “Through” talk (*logos*), the assumptions that sustain one’s beliefs are revealed. One becomes aware of the structure of things, and sees them for what they are. How this exactly works I will explain shortly.

Plato also admits that there are two ways of looking at philosophy as a human activity: One may view it as a useful skill, similar to rhetoric. The art of rhetoric equips one with the required skills of public speaking. The only drawback is that it does not give knowledge in the sense of wisdom.¹¹ Rhetoric is not dialectic.

Dialectic is the art of conversation or speech, and one learns the art in the company of a wise Socrates. In his dialogues, Plato tries to get

the interlocutor to realize that the sense of the art is to educate the soul and make one turn around.¹² If one cannot get anything out of nature and history – or Socrates, for that matter – for one’s own use, then the dialogue in Plato’s sense can fail at inducing a “conversion,” i.e. transformation of the person concerned.¹³

Plato fits Rorty’s description of an edifying philosopher, if we believe that, as the author of the dialogues, he avoids taking an explicit view at all. In fact, in the earlier Socratic dialogues, Plato’s presence is virtually non-existent. In these dialogues, we learn a lot more about the character of Socrates and the Socratic manner of chastising his partners in conversation than Plato’s own intentions. When it comes to the middle and late dialogues, Plato’s intentions make their presence felt. All in all, it would be difficult to say that Plato is not interested in history, and even more difficult to deny that his interest in what has happened in history has an agenda. So, the more precise difficulty consists in not knowing Plato’s exact view, because he avoids taking a view at all. The question is, in what way? Plato is less interested in what has happened in history than in what we as readers can get out of history for our own use. This would match Rorty’s description of an edifying philosopher.

Whereas Rorty thinks that there is contrast in Greek thought between the “representing the world and coping with it,”¹⁴ between contemplation and action, my view is that he is not completely right because the Platonic dialogue is a philosophical exercise intended precisely to aid the reader in questioning his or her motives for philosophizing, or pursuing wisdom.¹⁵

There is another dimension to the Platonic dialogue or the *logos* – a dimension scholars like Werner Beierwaltes say is necessary for human existence as a whole. This is the dimension we encounter through image and emotion in the myths.¹⁶

So my view is nearer to Beierwaltes (who claims that dialogue is not just about argumentation, but also about sensitizing the reader through images and emotion), and Taber (who thinks that Platonic thought can be seen as a transformative venture).

Main constituents of a transformative philosophy

Following John Taber’s work, *Transformative Philosophy: A Study of Sankara, Fichte and Heidegger*, I will now use the four constituents of transformative philosophy that Taber thinks can be reasonably applied to Plato.¹⁷

1. Experience – a higher level of consciousness which is a pre-condition for intelligibility of the system
2. Praxis – a method for cultivating this higher consciousness

3. Knowledge – a body of doctrine which constitutes the main topic of the system and articulates the experiential component
4. Transformation – a dramatic thorough rebirth resulting from insight

While the four constituents outline the main features of transformative philosophy, transformative philosophers, as Taber explains, may exhibit only some of the traits.

Taber cautions that the above constituents serve as a principle of interpretation and are not meant to serve as a principle of philosophical taxonomy. In applying the notion of a transformative philosophy to any philosopher, one sees the philosophers as expressing not just a system of ideas but also a *vision*.¹⁸ They want us to see something for ourselves, and the idea of ‘seeing’ is very close to the Greek idea of *theoria*, which also means ‘to see.’

The statements of a transformative philosopher must be seen in relation to one’s own experience if that philosophy is to serve as a framework of interpretation. To have educational value, it is not a simple matter of settling theoretical disputes based on an individual or intellectual bias.¹⁹ If it did, then philosophy would be a dogma, which is contrary to the very idea of dialogue in the Platonic sense.

The Platonic dialogue as an illustration

Platonic thought urges the participant in conversation not to get lost in the representations of external or visible objects. This is the first level of the dialogue. Plato often criticizes the Sophists, the poets and the statesmen for lacking the sort of virtue that comes with self-awareness.²⁰ He mocks them for not being able to separate the pursuit of knowledge from external objects, as in wealth, fame, and high offices of state. Those who cannot separate knowledge from the appeal of the visible derive their sense of self primarily from things. In such cases, one’s sense self is guided by the ephemeral, not by knowledge.²¹

The dichotomy between the visible or material realm of things, and the invisible/intelligible realm in Plato, is a function of the relative and absolute expressions of the Good. The Good makes us what we are, it is implicit in our value judgements, and it is what makes life meaningful and enjoyable when pursued in the proper way.²² There is a method, in Plato, of cultivating virtues in the pursuit of the good life. This is the equivalent of praxis, although it is often difficult, in a dialogue, to draw a clear line between theory and praxis. The pursuit of wisdom in Platonic philosophy entails both.

If one approaches the Platonic dialogue as a collection of theses and formal arguments alone, then it will fail to have the desired effect. So,

Plato is not trying to win his readers over by argument by forcing his views on them. He is merely trying to confirm the viewpoint of those who find themselves in the position of any of the characters. If what is being said in conversation does not appeal to one's good sense, then the Platonic program to transform one's outlook will have failed.

In the *Meno*, this is characterized by the response of the interlocutor to the Socratic "elenchus" (which literally means 'humiliation'). The purpose of the elenchus is to bring the partner in conversation to realize his ignorance. Meno's response to the humiliation is to introduce a classical specimen of the sophistic style of argumentation, namely the learning paradox.²³ In the case of the slave boy of the geometrical experiment, the elenchus serves its purpose.²⁴ He is able to learn by examining what he thought he knew but does not actually know.²⁵ The geometrical experiment is not just about calculating the area of a square double the size of the original, but it also serves as a moral discipline. The reader benefits from knowing something about geometry formally, but also understands the principle behind the Socratic method, i.e., not to win an argument at all costs.²⁶

If one chooses the Platonic approach, then one has merely confirmed Plato's view by in effect adopting it. Accordingly, there is a conceptual structure to the Platonic dialogue and this structure will also determine the nature of the transformation to be achieved.²⁷

Finally, the philosophical knowledge gained through Plato's philosophy confers a precise level of understanding which leads to a higher level of realization of the absolute good.²⁸ The absolute understanding of the good is not opposed to the relative understanding. It is like a piece of iron that is of no use to one who does not know its value, or the prized statues of Daedalus that have value only if they are tethered and tied down.²⁹

Plato, through the Socratic method in the *Meno* and in his Line and Cave metaphors in the *Republic*, envisions specific educational measures for cultivating the intellect, the faculty that enables us to derive benefit from knowledge, both as a theoretical (formal) and moral discipline.³⁰ To this end, he dedicates many dialogues to the analysis of the tripartite soul, and to the various faculties in the soul.

MYTHOS AS A PHILOSOPHICAL DEVICE

In his myths, Plato develops some of the themes introduced in the discursive parts of the dialogue. The images employed in the myths serve as a philosophical and literary device to help us "see" what we cannot grasp at a glance in the discursive parts of the dialogue. This means that the myths cannot be taken literally. Thus, when we grasp the meaning of the images, we also grasp the Platonic idea, namely the structural and

experiential component of knowledge articulated through them. We do not view ideas merely as a representation of external things.

The Line and Cave metaphors of the *Republic* also have the status of a myth. I would like to examine these metaphors briefly to establish the function of ‘mythos’ for transformative philosophy.

In the Line metaphor, the sun is the principle that enables us to see external objects, just as the Good enables us to understand the value of intelligible things.³¹ The visible and intelligible are not diametrically opposed, because even ephemeral things, though transient and relative their value may be, are imitations of the Good.³² When we recognize this fact, we are no longer deceived by the ephemeral since we recognize the ephemeral as an imitation of something truly real.³³

Having outlined the various stages of intellectual development in the line metaphor, the cave metaphor characterizes the progress of the soul from the ordinary view of things to the vision of the Good.³⁴ Plato – if we are thinking along with the images in the metaphor – is urging us to turn our eyes to the Good, and break free from illusion.³⁵ Since it is philosophy that prepares us for this insight, Plato is tacitly appealing to one’s good sense, and he believes that every one of us has this good sense, otherwise it would not be possible to realize one’s ignorance at all. However, if we follow Plato closely, we also realize that he does not conclusively demonstrate the insight that leads to the vision of the Good. Instead, Socrates, at crucial points in the *Republic* and the *Phaedo*, mythologizes the very things that cannot be argued. We should, he urges his friends in the *Phaedo*, embark on the strongest hypothesis, and trust in the education and discipline derived from philosophy. Reason at its best is our raft and will guide us in this life and in the hereafter.³⁶

Now, the philosopher has no fear of death. So Socrates’ allusion to the hereafter cannot also be taken literally. In fact, Socrates tells his friends not to be saddened by the prospect of death, because it is the fate of the ephemeral that it should come to pass.³⁷ Here we find that Plato has no view at all on the subject of death, or at least not an explicit one. It is not clear in what way the images of the eschatological myths are meant to inspire the despairing mind. In any case, their aesthetic value cannot be undermined, for images employed in the proper way can inspire the mind where needless hairsplitting does not. What we can get out of these images also depends on whether they have the desired effect, and this requires the reader to be reflective and receptive throughout the dialogue.

The same is true of the art of dialectic. It has an educational function. Dialectic, too, is ultimately, just an instrument, albeit one that must be employed consistently.³⁸ But when it is, it will eventually transform our outlook. The man of the cave in the *Republic* has a similar experience. However, having seen the Good, he is reluctant to turn back and occupy himself with human affairs.³⁹ Further on in the narrative one

finds out that, in the interest of the city, the best natures must be compelled to return from their contemplation of the good “to the prisoners in the cave and share their labors and honors, whether they are of less worth or of greater.”⁴⁰ The interesting question is why?

It is true that the story of the Cave, like the Line metaphor, speaks of reaching higher plains of knowledge.⁴¹ Through his ascent to the intelligible regions (namely, to where he has his vision of the Good), the man of the Cave attains insight. If we take the image of the ascent literally, then we would take the myth to mean that the Good transcends all of ordinary life. If that were the case, then the man who has the vision should remain in abstract contemplation and never turn back. The fact that he should turn back and descend into the cave marks a turning point or a rebirth. Plato, at *Republic* 519c, thinks that the man who has the insight will see that goodness manifests itself at all levels of life, and in human life in all of its forms.⁴² The implication is that if the transformed man has really seen the Good, then he will freely descend again. He will have the insight into why it is better to descend again. He would not perceive the descent as being contrary to the nature of the Good. One could conclude that, for Plato, being good means getting one to pursue the ordinary in the Socratic manner. The wise man of Plato is to some extent like Nietzsche’s man of intuition. His “free intellect copies human life, but it considers this life to be something good and seems quite satisfied with it.”

CONCLUSION

Platonic dialectic, then, is a discipline for cultivating a higher level of awareness within a system that articulates the experiential component. Through the practice of introspection, the subject of the discourse is led beyond her own abstract perspective or naïve realism, just as the man of the cave in Plato’s cave metaphor. There is no guarantee, however, that the subject will have insight in the manner in which Plato conceives of it, be this subject the man of the cave or any other reader confronting the dialogue. This is because, had the reader seen Plato as merely seeking to endorse realism against idealism, then she would be viewing Platonic thought from a standpoint outside the system. She would have already decided not to participate in the process. In transformative philosophy, as Taber informs us, there is no standpoint outside that of the knowing subject, and hence no standpoint that can be objectively endorsed. This would undermine the idea of a transformation. The thing being examined is one’s standpoint, its structures, how it arises and its reversal.

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NOTES

¹ John H. Taber, *Transformative Philosophy. A Study of Sankara, Fichte and Heidegger* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), Intro I.

² *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) p. 12.

³ Taber, *Transformative Philosophy*, p. 120.

⁴ Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 4.

⁵ F. Nietzsche, *Philosophy and Truth*. Tr. & ed. Daniel Breazeale (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979), p. 90.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Taber, *Transformative Philosophy*, p. 120.

⁸ *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 360.

⁹ Taken from Matthew Stewart, *The Courtier and the Heretic. Leibniz, Spinoza, and the Fate of God in the Modern World* (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), p. 54.

¹⁰ Cf. Jaakko Hintikka, "Cogito Ergo Sum: Inference or Performance," in *Meta-Meditations: Studies in Descartes*, eds. A. Soenke and N. Fleming (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1968), p. 64.

¹¹ Cf., *Gorgias* 463 a-c, in *Collected Dialogues*, tr. W. D. Woodhead, eds. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

"S: [...] rhetoric is part of an activity that is not very reputable. [...] it seems to me, [rhetoric] is not an art, but the occupation of a shrewd and enterprising spirit, [...] and in sum and substance I call it 'flattery.' This is, [...], only a routine or a knack."

¹² *Republic* VII, 518d, in *Collected Dialogues*, tr. P Shorey, eds. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

¹³ *Ibid.* 518c-d.

¹⁴ Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 11.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 5-6.

¹⁶ Werner Beierwaltes, "Logos im Mythos. Marginalien zu Platon," in *Weite des Herzens, Weite des Lebens. Festschrift für Odilo Lechner* (Regensburg, 1989), p. 274.

¹⁷ Taber, *Transformative Philosophy*, p. 95.

¹⁸ Cf. *Rep* VII, 518d.

¹⁹ Taber, *Transformative Philosophy*, p. 71.

²⁰ *Meno* 99 a-e, tr. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1981); *Gorgias* 462 b-c.

²¹ Cf., *Meno* 78 c-d & *Gorgias* 486 b-d.

²² See Plato's metaphor of the leaky jar in *Gorgias*, 492e-493c & 493d-494a:

"S: Well, life as you describe it is a strange affair. [...] I once heard our wise men say that we are now dead, and that our body is a tomb, and that that part of the soul in which dwell the desires is of the nature to be swayed and to shift to and fro. And so some clever fellow, a Sicilian perhaps or Italian, [...], named this part of the soul, a jar, because it can be swayed and easily persuaded, and the foolish he called the uninitiated, and that part of the soul in

foolish people where desires reside – the uncontrolled non-retentive part – he likened to a *leaky jar*, because it can never be filled. And in opposition to you, Callicles, he shows that [...] the uninitiate [in Hades] must be the most unhappy, for they will carry water to pour in a perforated jar and similarly perforated sieve. And by sieve, my informant told me, he means soul and the soul of the uninitiated he compared to a sieve, because it is perforated and through lack of belief [...] unable to hold anything.”

The discussion in 493d-494a may be summed up as follows: Callicles’ response is that the man, who leads the disciplined and temperate life, filling his jar with the essentials he requires, is like a stone or a corpse, stripped of desire and unable to get satisfaction in life to the fullest extent possible. Socrates, however, thinks that the disciplined man is also contented knowing what he needs to stay healthy and also maintains a healthy self-interest, doing what is better suited to the life of wisdom, consisting namely in a balance of pleasure and reason.

In short: The undisciplined man lacks the good sense of what is healthy and is not satisfied with the essentials, and will go to any length to procure further supplies to keep fulfilling his desires. Since he has no sense of what is good for him and what is good enough at any given time, his appetite is comparable to that of a leaky jar, and his undisciplined mind or soul to that of a perforated sieve that lacks belief, is incapable of reflecting on what is good for it and how much of something is good.

²³ *Meno*, 80 d-e.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 82a ff.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 84 a-d.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 85 c-d.

²⁷ Taber, *Transformative Philosophy*, p. 83.

²⁸ Cf. *Seventh Letter* 344 b-c. ‘Epistula Septima,’ in *Die echten Briefe Platons* (Greek/German), tr. E. Howald (Zürich, 1951). See *Letters*, in *Collected Dialogues*, tr. L.A. Post, eds. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

²⁹ Cf. *Meno* 97d-98b.

³⁰ Taber, *Transformative Philosophy*, p. 91.

³¹ *Rep* VI, 507bff.

³² *Ibid.* 508bff.

³³ *Ibid.* VII, 517c.

³⁴ *Ibid.* VI, 511b-514aff.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 515c-516e.

³⁶ *Phaedo*, 107bff. & d, 114eff, in *Collected Dialogues*, tr. Hugh Tredennick, eds. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

³⁷ *Ibid.* 114d-e.

³⁸ *Seventh Letter*, 344b-c.

³⁹ *Rep* VII, 517c-d.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 519 c-d.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 517b-c.

⁴² *Ibid.* 517c.

BEYOND NATURAL LAW

Stephen Theron

In religious philosophy today, one can seem to reach a point where, on the one hand, in a discerning moral theology, one would stress the purely analogous, “sociomorphic” character of law and obedience in relation to the transcendent, to God,¹ while in apologetics, on the other hand, one often argues for theism as the only rational basis for any assertion of absolute, that is to say literal obligation (qualifying it as “moral” obligation does not make for clarity).² Is there not a contradiction here?

The answer would seem to be affirmative. That is why one has gone on variously to resolve or transmute this concept of obligation, which one may have begun by insisting was indispensable, undeniable indeed.³ One might now take such discourse as reflecting a kind of description of the workings of a life governed by love, corresponding to the one “command” of Christ. This love cannot be just one – even the highest – among a set of virtues, seeing as it “informs” all of them.⁴ Thus, the life of virtue is itself effectively transcended, inasmuch as it still would belong to the domain of law, albeit law interiorized from action to corresponding habit. Such a transcendence illustrates, and insists upon, the Christian shift from pagan virtue to divine beatitude as the ultimate “value,” a move inwards from the divine goodness to the divine being.⁵

It would seem that statements of our duties are only descriptive (of what can be expected of love), yet love itself, by its very nature, cannot be prescribed. This is what compels analogical understanding of the term “command” when a command of love is spoken of. Hence nothing is literally prescribed outside the human forensic realm. What remains of our previous position, then, is that if there were pure duties⁶ then they could only be prescribed by a God, i.e., by an absolute being grounding even our freedom. This, however, is only one, and the most primitive or anthropomorphic, way of understanding conscience as the voice of God, should we hold this view. Similarly, a commitment such as Josef Seifert’s to a substantial, specially created human soul has no intrinsic connection with there being literal divine commands, even though such commands might require a soul as a precondition for their applicability.

Conversely, if God does not literally prescribe, then there are no pure duties. At this point we are not talking about any idea of revelation. One can also wonder to what extent the very notion of revelation, where it falls short of epiphany, is not tied to naive picture-thinking (anthropomorphic in the negative sense) as it concerns God and the declaration of his will in the form of commands. We might think of Jesus, for example, as transcending this anthropomorphic, Judaic notion of

revelation insofar as he transcends the sociomorphic idea of a literal divine command, manifesting instead his person.

The theory that presents God as essentially prescribing even before any idea of revelation might come into the picture is that of natural law. Hence, this concept can be used restrictively insofar as it can support the claim that our nature can demand something that does not seem natural to us or forbid what seems only too natural. Underlying this is the well-grounded natural law ethic that ethically right behaviour is a matter of doing what we most deeply want to do;⁷ i.e., natural law can function heuristically, insofar as a theory of the natural inclinations can help us to know ourselves and our destiny. It is not in the end a theory of prescription – the epithet “natural,” as it were, naturally obliterating this (prescriptive) feature of law, as in talk of the laws of nature. It is only that, in our human case, being free, it is up to us to live according to our nature. But no theorist can prevent the ultimate coincidence of this nature with what we really want. For desire arises out of nature as defining, i.e., delimiting it. Nor is it correct to use the concept in order to play off the species against the individual. For if inclination provides the precept and I, as an individual, genuinely lack the inclination in question, then there is no corresponding precept that can apply to me. The other view – that of inclination as pertaining to the species – is often taken as self-evident, and is clearly related in advance to a notion of precept understood as assimilated to commands in society which are essentially addressed to members “equal before the law” – equal because law itself is seen as necessarily cast in universal terms (as, by contrast, God’s command to Abraham to sacrifice his son). Here again we have sociomorphism. Divine intellect, unlike human intellect, is not tied to universal categories, nor is this supposition a part of any true doctrine of the divine ideas.⁸

Natural law, then, is a kind of ultimate attempt to shore up the idea of duty before God. Here, as in utilitarianism, duty can be justified entirely in teleological terms. This is only so, however, where a future not-yet is envisaged as goal. But this means that what is still being called “duty” is a mere sub-species of practical prudence. Far more important ethically, one can scarcely deny, is the beautiful action, *to kalon*, here and now, whatever it may be, including a beautiful means-end series. Teleology transfers duty or obligatoriness to the ends sought, that is to say. But our end is our preference; we cannot but choose it ourselves, and in choosing it we will either flourish or not. The teaching of religion, of Christianity, is that to love is to flourish, while to flourish, of course, is life – perhaps the ultimate good.

I

How might this affect the practice of religion? The Christian religion, in

accordance with sound philosophy, proposes an end as given, i.e., as not lying within our choice, since it is the natural consequence of the absolute requirements of our intellectuality, which latter, in turn, is our very organizational life-principle. This latter thesis, that of Aquinas, seems implicit also in Hegelianism. A main opponent is Cartesian dualism.

Yet man's success is seen as consisting in his own free choice of this pre-determined end, to which he inclines upon understanding it to be such. This end is infinite being and our enjoyment of it, be it by vision, knowledge, life or however we express the union or absorption intended. In some religions, loss of individuality, seen as a false self, is envisaged as a precondition; in others, it is the individual who remains the subject of this absolute fulfilment.

We cannot but choose our end. Therefore, the appearance of an imposition of it is appearance only. Although Augustine spoke truly in saying "Thou hast made us for thyself," and "One thing alone is needful," this one thing includes any other possible thing, i.e., it is not a thing among things in any literal sense, but the All.

A lover may say: I do not want the All, I want only my beloved. Yet either this attitude cannot be maintained; either there is no lover who has not wanted more, beginning with the basic wants and freedoms of nature, or the beloved has become for him or her the vehicle for, perhaps the first intuition of, the All.⁹ Here, however, we cannot play down the dialectic between life and death: the finding of life through and in death, the death to all else that love entails and moves towards, the love which is "better than life."

It is Christian teaching that wanting the All naturally entails a certain denial or relaxation of our obsessive grip upon the self, leading through to a recovery of this same self in this union with all things (with the All), where we keep the self in "life eternal."

That nothing less than the All is our natural end cannot be seen then as a restriction upon choice, as would an imposed finite end. There is nothing outside of it, and he who chooses nothing does not choose. Already the bare or, it may be, joyous affirmation of one's own will participates in this choice of the All, which is sought in all our actions, more or less appropriately.

Law, again, is a descriptive help for the avoidance of inappropriateness – a kind of summation of one's own or society's past. This view opens a rift of paradox in the biblical account of the Fall of Man, should we wish to uphold this argument. Death, religion wants to teach, is not natural but "penal." This latter, however, is again a forensic term, being used sociomorphically. Read thus, the story invites us to see mankind as lying under the "wrath of God" or, more literally, as estranged from the All through "wounds" of nature transmitted from the first parents. The overcoming of this, thanks to a particular historical divine

initiative, proceeds *via* a substitution, more or less painful, of “grace” for nature as the principle of our lives. It is in this clarification – perhaps apologetic modification – of this that Aquinas adds that grace in fact perfects nature, i.e., does not replace it.

In apparent contrast with this drama, though, we observe the natural development of a human life from childishness to wisdom and larger views – to “graciousness,” in a word. The biblical drama may be best taken then as giving the hidden *rationale* and cause of this, as when theologians say that grace is everywhere operative and all grace is the grace of Christ. This view tends to reduce original sin to a negatively ideal state, i.e., not so much a real predicament as an explanatory posit, like the state of inertia in modern physics, posited although everything is actually always moving. There results a certain coincidence, helpful ecumenically, with the Islamic denial of original sin.

A loss of innocence is posited in the *Genesis* account. But are we intended to think that God, the All, intended man to remain in ignorance of what, it is said there, would enable him to be as God? The tenor of the rest of scripture itself speaks against this. Again, is it not natural to man to wander around in the wide world, not just stay in “the Garden” of paradise, however delightful? We cannot take the story at face value. The story itself internally corroborates this judgment, as does the earlier story of the creation in seven days, on one of which the sun was created, since a day itself is determined by the movements of a sun already created. Our exegesis, it might seem, must go deeper than St. Paul’s, for we need to see his text too as requiring exegesis.

II

We have seen how the Christian Gospel itself encouraged us in our transcendence of the principle of law as an ultimate ethical category. A correlate of law is obedience which, thus, where law is transposed to ethics or theology, becomes a virtue, a part of justice. It is certainly a virtue to obey human laws when they are well devised. The connection of religion with law is deep-seated and even etymologically reflected. But this inherent sociomorphism, again, merely invites us to step beyond religion. “Catholicism,” remarked de Lubac, “is not a religion. It is religion itself.” But we might equally call it theology or true philosophy, as in the *Theologica Germanica*, a most practical handbook.

Obedying God might seem to be the very nerve of the Old Testament, so that this could not fail to find a central role in the New, which speaks of Christ, who “became obedient unto death” and whom, only as a result of this, God exalts. Christ himself finds his closest brethren in those who “do the will of my father,” this being his own “meat” or food. And at the end, “not mine but thy will be done.” Union

with God, St. John of the Cross will later remark, “is thus effected in the will.”

All of this might seem to make explicit the imperative “seek and ye shall find,” as when in a novel about Aquinas (*The Quiet Light* by Louis de Wohl) the theologian answers his sister’s question as to how one becomes a saint by saying that one does so by wanting it. Wanting what, though? Wanting, purposing therefore, to do God’s will is not the same as wanting God, the All, even if God and his will are the same in reality. Certainly one cannot sensibly, if one understands, want what God does not want. But one cannot, either, honestly arrive at this attitude without wanting God himself with all one’s heart, this again being made possible by God’s being the All. Here again the tragedy, the “curse” even, of law as a principle stands out.

Such considerations prepare us for a more immediate query: what might it mean to “obey” God? God does not speak. God is. The Koran, for example, cannot therefore have been literally kept from eternity in heaven, nor is the Christian Word of God distinct from God himself.

Obedience, though, is response to a command, order or injunction, even though the Gospel differentiates an obedience of sons (and daughters) from that of slaves. “I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,” says St. Paul, and that takes us further still – further, for example, than obeying whatever he might have heard (in discourse) in such a vision. A command, unlike a law but like a vision, can be particular, as when I say, “Give me your son.” Seen thus, the obeying of commands becomes more assimilable to the immediate intuitional responses of an adult freedom. We see that the content of obedience is not exhausted by any correlation with law; its essence remains after law is transcended.

But again, God does not speak. The impulse to sacrifice one’s son would come from an intimate inspiration. If we say this impulse contradicts love, *a priori*, we might seem to be making a law out of love. But love is not law. It is the form of all law and virtue and, as such, transcends them both. This is its freedom, why it “blows where it will,” and none can tell the shape it will take. Love is spirit, *the* spirit. It is not in essence an instrument in the service of societal securities, even though without love many people will kill their sons, however they may legislate against it. Abraham, the lover, we should not forget, did not kill his son. The son that was eventually offered up, in the Hebrew language of sacrifice, was not distinguished from God, from love – an image and pattern, therefore, of that in some sense self-denying love of the All, which is the very energy of our drive towards it as ultimate end, our readiness to “submit to death,” to that end, if we should perhaps be so ready.

III

Thus one might ask if, say, we have a right to suicide. From the position reached here – more a point in a trajectory than something static – one might find a difficulty in answering, at least at first. For one has to say that anyone can do whatever he likes – that is our situation as free agents. The ethical question is one of identifying what we would like, nothing else. In this way, one is embarked upon a process of demythologizing the idea of offending God, as well, perhaps, as that of (natural or God-given) rights.

The language of right and duty has first been taken over from the forum of human or societal law in order to then be used as moral justification for legislation and the enforcement of laws. But apart from being circular, this is far too simple. We have to try to identify moral realities in themselves, progressing beyond how they exist in our notions of them (as Aristotle might have said). There is no need to relate this to the needs of moral pedagogy, and it would be an arbitrary methodology that sought to base itself on the moral experience of children.¹⁰ Children's behaviour is bound to be controlled by quasi-legal models insofar as it is conditioned by the need for continued acceptance in the society of their immediate superiors. In adult moral thinking, however, this need itself must form part of the object(s) to be identified, viz. whatever we really most want – our end or ends. It cannot be what constitutes ethics, as the needs of society constitute legal theory. Rather, it stands inside ethics as its extension (*Entfaltung*),¹¹ as an end.

It might be thought that the consequences for legal theory of denying the reality of moral rights (or correlative prohibitions, e.g., of suicide) would be a nihilistic positivism fatal to society's well-being. This is not so. The ethical background to the framing of law, as of people's conduct under the law, remains operative. The law, though, is conditioned by certain hypothetical ends of society or, more generally, of human life, while ethics is the theory of those ends, of "the good life." Only in this sense could it have been right to say that human positive law rests upon natural law for its validity. Any idea of natural law, however, must be purged of all mythical forensic elements. The law is merely (descriptively) that certain ways of behaving lead to life, others to death or loss of life. Nor is there here a built-in presumption of a particular extent to which behaviour is describable in universal and, thus, law-like terms, whatever the regulative necessities of our concept-forming apparatus may be thought to be. A case-law beyond casuistry can apply here, just as a revolution, once carried through, might be its own justification, at least in the sense that it needs no other. Hence, the corruption of a revolution is nothing other than a denial or practical betrayal of the individual revolution's own principles, rather than of some or other extrinsic standards. Natural law, that is to say, can be added to by each piece of

successful new behaviour (like the decisions of judges in Anglo-Saxon countries). A web of analogies is created for our reflective contemplation.¹²

We can thus understand why Alasdair MacIntyre, a defender of natural law, dismissed human rights as a fiction on a par with Rawls's "original position." The language of human rights is an attempt to describe the response proportionate to human dignity, to the quality of our nature, no more. The forensic, quasi-legal reference is misleading, a metaphor. What would these rights be with which man is supposed to be created? We have rights under legal systems only.¹³

The objection, indeed, to this myth is that it scales down and restricts the moral life, our response to all we encounter. Instead of repeating that someone has a right to his foolish opinion, or to his inconvenient life (or, conversely, to suicide), we should see him or her whole, and then we will anyhow respect the conviction or constraints of conscience from which he speaks – we will not want to snuff out his life, understanding that this would murder hope within ourselves first of all. The language of rights is utterly deontological, but we are denying the moral *deon*.

The impulse to obey the law is not itself a law.¹⁴ But nor is it a quasi-formal dictate of reason, as Alan Donagan¹⁵, Kant or R.M. Hare¹⁶ try to say, bringing in a new constraint upon autonomy in the instant that they first achieve it, introducing a division (not heteronomously) into the very heart of man.¹⁷ We choose freely to be law-abiding when and insofar as we consider that it will minister to our attainment of our end, to the good, self-fulfilled life. We choose to disobey law for the same reason. Criminality, as leaving one open to accusation (*crimen*), is essentially a misidentification of the end deriving, if deliberate, from a weakness of love. Where I lack love I become criminal, as some laws in society are themselves criminal.

So the recipient of a promise, for example, has no literal moral right to its discharge. The language is wrong, that is to say. Someone has failed to see the value, the dignity, of my humanity, if he breaks his promise to me. It is no different in principle from an aesthetic insensitivity. Yet in thus failing, the promise-breaker has devalued himself more directly and substantially – he has only inconvenienced or disappointed the promisee. His word in particular has lost the currency value appropriate to human utterance.

There can, of course, be a choice to live bestially too, and we may need to choose to hunt down those who choose thus. But, in fact, where breach of promise has become an infringement of right it has ipso facto passed into the human legal system. It follows that there is neither a purely moral right nor a purely moral duty. The fulfilment and goodness of life is determined by the purity and intensity of our wanting what satisfies. It is

the hunger and thirst that beatifies – this, according to the present analysis, being the satisfaction of “what is right” (Matthew 5,6).

This position is, in itself, tenseless; considerations of present or future duration belong rather to the material aspect of what is here established formally. Here lies the importance of hope as mediating between the form and the matter, as in “happy are you who weep now,” another of the beatitudes.

Our position, then, is not that anyone has or has not a right to do whatever he wants, but that there can be no moral rights. Talk of rights here is the secular analogue of sin in religious discourse. Both ways of talking fail to meet the reality, ethical or “theic,” as it is in itself. They are thus lazy ways. Laws here can only be general descriptive principles of being, as indeed human laws in the literal forensic sense are also, even most fundamentally, descriptive of the good society, i.e., of unimpaired social being. Here, too, the prescriptive dimension is accidental: this brings us back to the scheme of Aquinas. Our point, though, whether or not coinciding with his final mind, is that just this entails that there is no prescription outside of the social sphere, no inward constraint of just that type. There is, rather, good advice (*paranese*), traditional warning, just as there are, corresponding to this, fixed tendencies in reality, such as that no man who hates his brother or who is by choice a murderer loves God or has eternal life within him. If he begs for it, he begs to love, as he who asks has already received.

IV

God, then, does not legislate. The laws of logic, of metaphysical being, do not progress beyond the sheer particular assertion that God is, since he is just HE WHO IS. This is not a bare act of being, supposedly highlighting a Thomistic blindness to the importance of values.¹⁸ It denotes, rather, the fullness of being, in which all value, the good, is comprised.

There is nothing outside of this, as we ourselves have our being in God. So the everything that is God is not the ephemeral world. God’s commanding us to seek him is but a variation upon his constantly attracting us, as Aquinas himself points out, saying that God instructs us by law and helps us by grace, as we help ourselves by virtue. The idea of an external help from God is metaphorical, since God, all of God, is “closer to us than we are to ourselves.” In this sense, grace is not external, but the God within, in fact dissolving any idea of an externally prescriptive law such as we have in human societies.

We should not then wish that the maxim of our action could become a universal law. Things are better the way they are, where love alone moves to deeds, and we would wish instead that our action could be something worth imitating, as influence rather than canon.

The high value of human freedom is thus safeguarded against an inert legalism. It is realised in a competition of good because of creative actions essentially mirroring, though also giving rise to, the fraternal competitiveness of artists. In the history of music no satisfactory symphony repeats or copies another, but nor does it, nor can it, ignore it. Rather, it performs a variation upon it, it turns the same screw tighter, or it pays its tribute by reacting against it. "In this is my father glorified."

It is a matter of freeing the divine reality from the constraints of human legal metaphor. We should not speak of divine sovereignty, for example, or of the decrees or "ordinances" of creation. It can happen that, in the whole of creation, a certain principle holds good, descriptively at least. One says this is so because the divine nature is as it is, rather as Aquinas wanted to say that ultimately good behaviour is good when, if, and because God commands it (as against Socrates in *Euthyphro*, perhaps). What we are missing here is that it is our minds that distil out the pattern observed as a "principle," which can then be accorded the active, Greek (archic) function of ordering.

So in the very act of imagining God controlling his creation by a set of ordering decrees, we are controlling our image of God by foisting on it our mental necessity of abstraction, actually a sign of the weakness of our intellectual power as starting from things sensed. Attention to the difference between *ius* and *lex* (as Aquinas writes of them when discussing the virtue of justice in the main *Summa*) is needed here.

We seem indeed to arrive at the conviction that there is knowledge in God and that God is one with his single (because infinite) act of knowing. But that should give us enough to avoid the above mistake. Divine intellectuality is radically different from ours. We can only call it intellectuality by an analogous extension of the term. Whatever it is, there is no reason to and several reasons not to confine it within a legal metaphor which fits better, and even at times literally, with our own created mentality, as when Aquinas stresses that law is something belonging to reason.

So there are no divine decrees. Conversely, decrees are not divine; at most, they would be faint types of the real divine motion within us better caught within the notion of grace or, better yet, as avoiding the legalistic dilemma of what is due versus what is gratuitous, of energy, life, power, love, blowing where it will.

The situation is similar to our thoughtless use of the masculine pronoun for the divinity. In the German language this is less harmful. One calls God or the moon 'he' as one calls a wasp or a cat or the sun 'she' or a girl 'it.' But in English if one says "he," one means a male, while "she" means a female, so there is no alternative there. We just have to remember that we have no literal pronoun for God.

How are we then to think of the divine intellectuality? It is nothing other than being as free of restriction. We would have to call this intellectual, since it is as intellectual (and initially as cognitional generally) that we transcend so many of the bonds of our own being. Being intellectual, then, is not a special, particular quality which God must have because we have it, and it is a positive quality. Intellectuality generally just is any kind of openness to other being – and to one’s own, at the ultimate level. An infinite being will in this sense be intellectual, whether human beings ever existed or not. The argument for divine love is similar. For God not to affirm himself would be a blockage, a restriction.

The language of human rights is an attempt to define human dignity without recourse to love, which cannot be commanded since it is itself an energy, the energy of life affirmed. In such a life, one does to others all that one would have done to one’s self – that “all” just being nothing other than just one thing, an affirmation in love with all that love leads one to do. This is worlds away from just seeing that one does not do to another being that which one does not want done to oneself.

It is not a matter of saying or thinking that, for example, out of love I give you the care that is due to you anyhow. In reality, nothing is due to you unless you attract love, God’s or mine, while for my love to become like God’s is the way for me to have the life I love. One recalls the Socratic insight that the unloving wrongdoer is the one most to be pitied. But what, on these terms, is a wrongdoer? One without love, simply. One who blocks life’s exchanges. It is through this that they first become wrong, that is, are doomed to fail to reach their object or to “miss the mark.” It is only because lying, for example, so often does this, that lying comes to have a bad name.

V

So is now law quite transcended? In his letter to the *Romans* – surely one of the most vivid of the documents preserved from classical times – we find St. Paul saying that the gentiles, by which he means non-Jews in general, have not just a, but *the*, law written on their hearts, directing them how to live, so that they are “without excuse” for not having done so. He is thinking mainly of the practice of idol-worship and, as a kind of analogue of that, via the idea of a lie in action (which we considered in the second section above), of homosexual practices; these are two straight violations of Jewish taboos.

This clearly metaphorical notion of a law written on the heart is the main proof-text for the later theological theory of natural law – one that was, however, increasingly offered, e.g. , within scholasticism, as a philosophical theory. One should note, though, that the purpose for its introduction here, by St. Paul, is that of making it possible to find the

gentiles just as guilty as the Jews (or maybe the Jews not more guilty) of breaking God's law, this being the definition of sin as an infinite enormity. And this allows him to conclude that "all have sinned," thus making both the need for and the efficacy of Christ's redemptive act universal, as it should be, if he is indeed to be seen as the new man, the second Adam, the full, unique and only Word spoken to human beings everywhere ("go and teach all nations") by God.

Although natural law is thus introduced in order to widen the scope of a sin-theology, it can be seen that, in later development of the notion (e.g., by Thomas Aquinas) the idea of sin plays no essential role, even if it remains in a parallel theological system in the same thinker's mind.¹⁹ What counts, rather, for him, is the necessity of certain virtues and patterns of behaviour, which, as such, can be denominated laws (just as in natural science) for the attainment of the end – for human flourishing, that is to say. The laws are in fact the inclinations of our nature, rightly codified; they are the systematic description of what we most deeply want.

Now it is easy to feel that such views cut deeper into reality than does the theological positivism from which St. Paul starts. They might even be seen as the understanding into which faith is said to mature. St. Paul himself, however, is forced to explain the human reality as an analogical or oblique application of what is only fully and explicitly verified in his own small nation, viz. the giving of the law. He ought, however (perhaps he does), logically, to allow for a law written on the hearts even of the Jews, both before and after Moses. In virtue of this "conscience," surely, the claims of Christ are pressed, e.g., in *Acts*, as a man who "went about doing good."

The question will then arise as to which law has priority: the genuinely written and proclaimed, or that of the heart. All the later disputes about faith and reason, not to speak of refinements in regard to an "erring" conscience, are there in germ.

In itself, there is no particular likelihood that the idea of what we call God is that of a law-giver in the sense of demanding obedience, this being the criterion for salvation or reprobation respectively. The Greek idea, somehow mirrored in Calvinism, that whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad seems to have just as much going for it. Laws, after all, as prescriptions, are encountered in human societies – nowhere else.

One might think it natural to view the Jewish story of the giving of the law, of a revelation, as a *post hoc* strategy for emphasising the sanction and respect which in reality already attaches to ethical principles. "This do and thou shalt live," could be spoken by any Aristotelian of the virtues needed for happiness.

The effort of the orthodox, however, has always been in the contrary direction, of claiming that if we had greater insight we would see that what presents itself to us as generally desirable is really a detailed set

of unbreakable laws,²⁰ the real situation only being truly reflected in the solemn promulgation of the Ten Commandments. This is the background to the remark of St. Paul's with which we began.

It might remind us of his other remark: "God, from whom all fatherhood in heaven and earth is named." We might want to accept this as true, even while remembering that our word "father" always refers first and without analogy to our actual paternal progenitor. One can argue from all positive qualities we encounter to their maximal reality in an infinite being – thus fatherhood, thus even motherhood, thus love, mercy, justice, but not perhaps, and for example, bravery, as being a virtue specific to beings threatened by death; perhaps even temperance is not an exception.

Law, though, one might think, is specific to beings who abstract universal concepts. The divine analogue would be faithfulness and immutability. He keeps faith as we keep the law, but law, again, outside of socio-political contexts, is descriptive, giving the essence (how we are). The upshot of the dialectic concerning law in the Bible is that the ultimate "law" is simply and entirely love, which is something not conceptualized at all but rather a self-diffusive energy – Spirit, "poured into the heart," says Aquinas, echoing scripture – hardly how one usually thinks of law. Love precisely does not follow a rule, but "blows where it wills." Each new instance of it gives what is rather more like an accumulation of "cases," as we noted above, the analogue of which in Church tradition is the varied lives of the saints – though not varied enough, many feel. It is, anyhow, a failure to understand if one sees the command of love as exactly univocal with the old commands, and then marvels that love can be commanded, before banishing it to a realm of "forced acts of the will" – in the manner of Kierkegaard, Kant or indeed the aberrant mystical theology of the seventeenth century Fr. Augustine Baker's *Holy Wisdom*, from which the phrase is taken.

An indication of the error here can be gained, once again, from considering the difference between forbidding people to do to others what they do not want done to them, and urging them to do to and for others whatever they would have others to do to and for them. The first posture is a kind of super-rule only. The second posture of itself expands into a creative, imaginative programme, as pictured in the image of trading with talents, taking initiatives; this alone becomes the yardstick of success or failure.

And this indeed is not so much what is written, but what was hidden in the hearts of the gentiles, as they were therefore and only therefore able to recognize when they had it proclaimed to them – grace building on nature, as Aquinas might say. He also says that if it were not natural to man to love God with all his heart and mind then charity, the new wine, would be perverse and irrational.

VI

If law is transcended, then what remains of sin, of that violation we spoke of above? This topic is not explicitly raised very often in philosophical ethics. Yet it is a real question whether breaches of a putative moral law, or of an ethical code, or instances of disregard for personal conscience – one’s own or another’s – are not in fact sins. So the topic needs considering.

The notion of sin includes the idea of an offence against a divine person, i.e., it is religious. A corollary traditionally drawn is that this offence is infinite as being against a person of infinite worth (the logic is not so very perspicuous here) and hence not open to forgiveness by finite beings. Here we are already in that legalist, sociomorphic world we have been decrying as somehow mythical. There may indeed be a need for personal salvation, but not necessarily from just this predicament. Awaking “the sense of sin” has always been a problem for preachers.

Yet a large number of us could not truthfully say we have never felt this sense, a sense of condemnation (and not just self-condemnation), of being no good, failed, and even unclean: there are ritual roots to the concept, which might also be interpreted less theologically as an awareness of despair as a live option. The context indeed is typically sexual, centring around an initiation felt to be illicit. There we have the law again. Later, one will be taught and try to believe that other sins, such as “spiritual” sins, are worse. But the notion gets its bite from our inadequacy in the face of sexuality, a situation palpably hovering around the Adam and Eve story, even after we have been assured that their sin was disobedience in eating of the wrong tree and not, for example, starting to find their nakedness titillating.

VII

We argue, it seems, for a kind of moral nihilism, in the sense of a transcending of the principle of law as a guide to behaviour in the energy of a life of love. This is called in the religious sources “the new life.” Through love, through creative energy, one comes alive and gives proof of it. Law cannot be considered in abstraction from love without essential deformation, since love is the form of all virtue. Love itself is thus not a virtue merely, but an energy. This is true independently of any appeal to a doctrine of grace or “infused” virtue. The picture there is one of pouring (*infundere*) fuel into a machine; it is not easy to get behind the picture, as the Pauline paradox of “I live yet not I” testifies.

People may wish to claim that any grace – in Socrates, for example – depended upon the foreseen, unique merits of Jesus Christ and how he died. Yet is this even in Christian terms a correct representation of

“the atonement”? It implies a very tortuous understanding of Jesus’s simple declaration to people that their sins were forgiven, as if he were referring to some kind of application (forensic) of his future merits. Aquinas saw this at least partly when he said that one tiny drop of Christ’s blood would have been more than enough atonement, yet he seems here too timid to drop the idea of sacrificial atonement altogether. As a result, the whole doctrine of forgiveness seems muted in his writings, as it is not in the pages of the Gospel. Whether this is a difference of style or of substance is an important question for interpreters.

The claim, anyhow, is not of much relevance in view of the primacy of love, evident when once proposed. It is religious fear and lack of trust in providence which has kept people from seeing it.

The idea of sin, then, is closely bound up with that of law, of law indeed as a divine principle. It need not be, however. Jesus shows this, even though operating within a culture tied to sin as a legal notion. He stated that all sins will be forgiven except the sin against the Holy Spirit. To say this can well be understood as taking distance from the whole paradigm. Retaining the word in conjunction with the spirit lifts the notion to a new level. This move is nullified by people trying to identify the sin in question as one of the old list, e.g., as “resisting the known truth.” This resistance is common enough. Can we not also hope that also this will be forgiven?

Sin against the spirit would rather be something like living without the spirit, not taking account of it, even resisting it. By spirit would be meant the spirit of love, its fruits, energies and “beatitudes,” and not some authoritative proposition or other. The sin will not be forgiven in the sense that those who live without love have no life in them. They have to turn away on to a new path, though to do this they may well need help from others.

One effect of the legal notion of sin is to set a gulf between Jesus and other human beings. “Which of you can convict me of sin?” he is represented as saying, and the whole idea has been institutionalized in the notion of original sin, from which Jesus alone (unless also his mother) is held to be free. But if there is no law interposed between love and its object, there is, in this sense, no sin either. It is stated of Jesus that he grew in virtue, i.e., he became more virtuous than at an earlier time. If this does not mean that he was sinful in the quasi-legal sense, then it need not be true of us either.²¹

Of course, one or other – even all – of us do or have done things we later bitterly regret, enshrining as they do, according to our analysis, acts of black hatred, shorn of all love. One thinks of murder, malicious talk, the various deceits and betrayals. We can turn away from, renounce these things, things which we suppose Jesus never did, though he is shown possessed of the passions from which these things can distortedly proceed,

and some might well misjudge him as malicious, unbending, unforgiving and so on in his recorded dealings with the Pharisees. “Like to us in all things except sin,” it was said of him, but if sin evaporates as mere legal metaphor, apart from that real spiritual sin, then Jesus is just like us. Whatever our judgment of this, however, we seem to find in his teaching what is at least the germ of an ethic open to endless restatement without any successor or paradigm shift being easily imaginable. Love fulfils the law. But what fulfils love unless more of the same? The pre-eminence claimed for Jesus should lie in the claim that he loved those given to him “to the uttermost,” for nothing else would have counted for much without that. But we are not required to deny that anyone else loved to the uttermost.

VIII

We are not placed indifferently between good and evil, nor is this the essence of freedom. In fact, any evil chosen is chosen qua good, not qua evil. The normal and natural thing is to follow the good in accordance with our inbuilt inclinations. This is the *regula*, the law. We pursue these ends freely as to manner, means, proportion and so on. So we need not write the possibility of sin into our account of moral reality, any more than the possibility of eating sawdust need come into our account of nutrition. All choice is itself built on the foundation of spiritual being, a good. Thus, God doesn’t exist because he chose to exist; the understanding of his freedom is to be sought within his simple, necessary and free act of being, however incomprehensible that may be to us. The sense in which it is possible to eat sawdust is not a sense involving any kind of inclination in the consumer’s nature. There is no “indifference” here, no balance between two fundamental options of selflessness or “selfishness.”

The scenario gets a kind of plausibility from our situation, to be sure. This can be interpreted to be one of desperate straits for man, in a fallen world where original sin reigns. This, though, has many of the marks of a redescription of reality – ideology, in other words. It is hardly possible to draw an alternative picture of how things ought to have been. The Fall, where it works on writers’ imaginations, is often simply assimilated to the mythical idea of a past golden age, as we find it in Lawrence’s *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, or Graham Greene’s short story, “A Discovery in the Woods.” Chesterton indeed speaks of a golden ship that went down. C.S. Lewis imagines “unfallen” beings on other planets who in fact hardly differ from peasants loyal to a religious tradition as we find them on earth, the villains being those who decide for themselves, even though for Lewis the hero-defender of tradition has to decide for himself to fight the devil with his fists, it being plain that those he defends are helpless prey to a tempter who persists long enough. But admitting so

much comes close to finding fallen man guiltless because helpless, in which case there has hardly been a “fall.”

Still, they point out, the tendency towards evil, against which we must choose, is a tendency we ought not to have. The error here though lies in postulating that we have such a negative tendency. The postulation is little more than an attitude, a mood of pessimism. The truth is more simple: virtue is difficult and there are limits to our striving. As Aquinas puts it, what *can* fail sometimes *does*. Errors right themselves, given time.

On both views, wrongdoing emerges as analogous to the perverse, the inexplicably deviant and sterile. But no, it is not quite inexplicable if we keep ourselves free of traditionalist mystification. First, a lot of things called evil are not really evil. Second, our sense of self and freedom moves us at times to do something wilfully unusual, to a testing of the boundaries, as all with children know, or as Eve had to test the divine prohibition, as it is represented as having been. Obviously her action was not as heinously evil as to cast a world in ruins. As orthodox writers themselves have said, she, like Satan before her, perhaps assumed God would forgive the odd, one-off act, and why, really, would he not? Unless, perhaps, she were not sorry, unless the story is saying in a disguised way that it was something she had to do, part of growing up. We are after all required to grow up, by nature herself, criterion of right and wrong:

*Quae quidem regula in his quae secundum naturam agunt, est ipsa virtus naturae, quae inclinatur in talem finem.*²²

There is, then, an impulse to perversity, but it would be a mistake to equate this “imp of the perverse,” as analysed in some of Poe’s stories for example, with the much more wide-ranging orthodox conception of sin. The impulse has to be kept in check and can be merely playful. Sin comes in where one really hurts someone, or destroys something good without compensatory gain, and this, again, is traced back to a lack of love, not to perversity as such. A few little (or even big) kinks and hang-ups seem essential to individual personality. It is hard to see, therefore, how one can maintain the old doctrine about unnatural vice, violating the order of creation and so on. Man can in principle do anything conceivable, if he can but find the power. To fulfil himself in doing this he needs, again, to be driven by the energy which is love. That is the true picture, not one of confinement within the banks of law, natural or otherwise. We have found that natural law as presented by Aquinas actually should issue into this supralegalist position of ours.

IX

It was essential to the old notion of sin that one could not ascribe it to God, since its essence is to act against God. Nominalist theology pushed this to the limit in claiming that God could command evil acts. In fact, contrary to G.E. Moore's objection (and his positing of the "naturalistic fallacy" is ultimately argued for from a purely grammatical possibility), one can show that the goodness of any possible divine will cannot be questioned. God does whatever he wills in heaven and on earth, and all his ways are true and good; that is what God is, if he is. Only the creature can sin. Being able to sin has something to do with being a creature, being derived.

But if the creature has his particular nature from which his operations proceed, then how is sin, as defiance of that nature, possible even to the creature? "Sin," said Aquinas, aware of this problem, "is ultimately not explained as disobedience to law," – inexplicable if law is natural inclination – "but as unsuitability of action to end."

This might suggest that sin is just a mistaken choice of means to happiness. It certainly is that, and a culpable ignorance and weakness plays its part in much of what is reckoned as sin. One might think, though, of a particular type of such unsuitability that is common to all sinning.

This would be itself based on an inclination of nature – not man's specific nature, but the common nature of creatureliness, of not being God, whether or not man is in fact the only rational or free being that experiences that situation. Sin might be a particular reaction to tension generated by existing without being God. God, after all, is the only naturally existing being (his essence is his existence). We others get it from elsewhere, on the Thomist analysis at any rate. We are obliged to God, in a word, to whom, as the All, we cannot but tend.

Just this situation, demanding a response unknown in the divine nature, might come to seem intolerable. The rational creature has dominion over his own acts, yet he or she is *penitus nihil*, having nothing except as a gift. Is there not perhaps a "natural" temptation here? A temptation so natural as to be a simple act of growing up? Aquinas says the first sin, of an angel, could only have been pride followed by envy. The latter is easier to disapprove of: that someone should be sorry that he is not God, to the point of disdaining a type of participation than which no higher can be offered a creature. As for pride, it seems not much more than insanity if its essence is really a refusal to be "subject" to God, as Aquinas puts it. If the devil was so clever, he must have known that all his strength and dignity came from God. The whole picture seems to depend on an anthropomorphic court-picture of God, before whom subjects, or those who should be subject, appear.

Finding misery in one's non-divine self is a mood that can occur to any creature, whether it be likely or not. If it issues in a refusal to gladly take part in life, we are back with that failure of love we have found essential. Is such envy, though, the cause of it, or does the causality work the other way? The latter view is the right one. Envy – sadness at another's good – grows in the absence of love. We were right to make love primary. Here, too, the apparatus of law or even the table of virtues seems found to be unnecessary.

X

All of the above is a theoretical statement, not a programme for moral education. One may hope, however, that our view of the latter will not be unaffected by the theoretical advance, which represents unification at a higher level. Not only do we take seriously the dominical saying that “all the law and the prophets” hang on the two Old Testament commandments of love. We also listen to the “new commandment” of the Johannine Christ to “love one another as I have loved you,” interpreted by Aquinas and others not as something written as these words are written. It is not written because it is not writeable, and so not a commandment in any ordinary univocal sense. It is the “new life” or rather life, essentially eternal as it always was. This is the hidden meaning of saying that this commandment was not given at the beginning of the world because of sin.²³ Our consciousness needs millennia, or decades of an individual life, to grow up to an understanding transcending the legalistic, anthropomorphic or sociomorphic.

But may we not then harm even our children by confronting them with “norms” presented as denials of their impulses, impulses which we should not seek to tame but rather to affirm and educate, if anything increasing their potency. Thus one initiates the violent and destructive child into games of noble conflict, played out in the harmonious atmosphere of sportsmanlike magnanimity; one initiates erotically befuddled youngsters, both in reality and in art and theatre, into the drama, the joys and the risks, of a social life founded upon mutual love – a microcosm of a Church, one might well say.

We deeply betray democracy, freedom and toleration – those great revolutionary achievements seen by Maritain as fruit of the Gospel – when we present them just as “values” obediently to be accepted. They are energies rather, sufficient to replace living according to a rule, any rule. Hence they are creative and perpetually self-transcending. So people become affronted in the depths of their autonomy as spiritual beings when they find “the establishment” wanting to force or dictate to them such “values,” to force them, say, to welcome the refugee, to put up with homosexual vagaries or abstain from punishing refractory children. De

Tocqueville²⁴ rightly noted that the inner dictatorship of an imposed egalitarianism can be harsher than any previous tyranny, and Solzhenitsyn made the same observation in regard to the dissenters from Leninism as compared to how offenders under Czarism were treated. What this indicates is that to take over democracy as just an ideology is to be putting new wine into old bottles. It is, rather, a way of being and living which is better caught in the English notion of kindness²⁵ or in the picture of the Nietzschean superman who is above revenge. It is not, again, just a new set of rules. The witch-hunting severity of American Puritanism sets limits to democracy's – we might say to the kingdom's – realisation. The spirit, that is to say, is not to be forced, and ideological governments imposing what according to traditional ideas are extreme programmes are soon turned upon by their populations. Imposition belongs to the old scheme of things. Hence becomes apparent the fittingness for Christians of a morality of exhortation alone (*paranese*) and of example at a level no longer affording opportunity for that passing of judgment so deprecated in the Sermon on the Mount.²⁶

The point of liberty, equality and fraternity is just this – to realise fraternity: that we are one family, whether or not we find this, with Schiller, to imply a common father *überm Sternenzelt*. In a family, a justice existing on its own, uninformed by love, finds no hold, no object who is “other” (*justitia est ad alterum*). This was already the lesson of *The Merchant of Venice*, that “the quality of mercy is not strained.”²⁷ Democracy,²⁸ our preferred name today for this new type of existence, is an invitation, not a rule or discipline (though discipline be always needed), and hence the character of what we are invited to; the great supper or communal feast of life is frontally assaulted by any idea of imposing it. If we ever compel anyone to come in, then we have to be able to persuade him or her to put on a wedding garment first.

We must, of course, deal with offenders, both at home and abroad. (Someone has to.) But not by the method – the mystification rather – of moralism and precept. Declarations of human rights even, we have seen, if taken as minimalist ideological prescriptions rather than as charters of freedom inviting and directing to a maximal magnanimity, can signal a new degeneration into moralism and precept. It is instructive that Aquinas sees the death penalty, which he accepted as legitimate, not as a punishment but, in common with modern ideologies, as a removal of someone harmful from society when all else has failed and thus as falling under *epieicheia* rather than under retributive justice.²⁹ It is thus an admission of failure which we can resolve never to make. Let Judas rather hang himself, if he insist, and let us hope up to the end that the last piece of old snow will finally melt as spring gets increasingly under way.

This is to say that either our institutions are alive, informed by love and its infection,³⁰ or they are not. It is disgust with a hidden egoism

and cowardice in those who would lead, but who in fact bury the talent in a self-protective privacy belying their proclamations, which produces such negative manifestations as Nazism, old or new. For behind the bluster lies a timidity matching that of those they scorn, a fear of extending community beyond the biologically and culturally similar, a belief that they are doing what everybody (of their own “race”) really wants: temptations to sleep, to stay at home on the big day, whatever it is.

Moral philosophy moves at the level of inner attitude, which positive law should reflect. Social contract theories reflect this, that we should freely engage to observe the laws, at least from a prudent wish to avoid needless trouble, and Hobbes was not wrong to interpret right and obligation in this way. There is no absolute or purely “moral” principle that we should obey law, pay taxes, and so on. And, more positively, coastguards and other officials need, if they are not to fail, to be ruled by love and not by an abstract zeal to comply with regulations. If we believe in our society, we will want to pay tax.³¹ If the coastguards or their masters think it for the refugees’ best, they may set about sending them home, or even tightening their own borders. Again, love knows no rule.

However we look at things, natural law is transcended. We are, rather, involved in a particular and creatively unfolding drama, none of the responses to which are foreseeable, and which we have tried here to characterize. There is one light, a “kindly light” (Newman), which we need to navigate by in this drama.

NOTES

¹ Cf. N. Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom* (1944); J. Fuchs, S.J., “Das Gottesbild und die Moral innerweltlichen Handelns,” *Stimmen der Zeit*, Bd. 202, 6 (June 1984), pp. 363-382; Stephen Theron, “The bonum honestum and the Lack of Moral Motive in Aquinas’s Ethical Theory,” *The Downside Review*, 118 (April 2000): 85-111.

² J.H. Newman, *A Grammar of Assent* (1870); Stephen Theron, *Morals as Founded on Natural Law* (Frankfurt: P. Lang, 1987); Josef Seifert, “Gott und die Sittlichkeit innerweltlichen Handelns,” *Forum Katholische Theologie*, 1 (1985): 27-48.

³ Cf. Theron, *Morals as Founded on Natural Law*. This was also the initial premise for C.S. Lewis’s theism in Book I, “Right and Wrong as a Clue to the Meaning of the Universe,” of his *Mere Christianity* (London, 1952; first printed in *Broadcast Talks* of 1942). It is argued for more systematically in his set of lectures, *The Abolition of Man* (1943), described by Cardinal Schönborn as “un brillant essai,” in his “L’homme créé par Dieu: le fondement de la dignité de l’homme,” *Gregorianum*, 65 (1984), p. 353. One should add that Lewis in part anticipates our present solution when he has his diabolical protagonist in *The Screwtape Letters* say of the divinity, with some disapproval, that “He’s a hedonist at heart.”

⁴ See my *Natural Law Reconsidered* (Frankfurt: P. Lang, 2002).

⁵ Cf. E. Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Scribners, 1940), pp. 325, 473. Gilson speaks of standing the old pagan philosophy of virtue on its head.

⁶ Seifert, *art. cit.*, merely assumes their necessary existence, arguing that since “norms” cannot be derived from human nature according to contemporary teleological moralists they have to end up in arbitrary voluntarism (“mit einer radikal voluntaristischen Auffassung enden, die die in Gott abgelehnte Willkürherrschaft auf den Menschen überträgt”). But this is simply to fail to take seriously the new command of love, according to which absolute commands – only logically conceivable as divine, as G.E.M. Anscombe saw (“Modern Moral Philosophy,” *Philosophy*, 33 [1958]) – have been replaced, in fulfilment of a divine dialectic, by a more enduring absolute which as energy, grace, life, is never more than analogously prescriptive.

⁷ Cf. H. McCabe OP, *Law, Love and Language* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1968).

⁸ The supposition leads to the contradictory assertion that there is no divine knowledge of particulars.

⁹ Cf. Stephen Theron, “Analogy and the Divine Being,” *The Downside Review*, 116 (April 1998): 79-85.

¹⁰ As does Maritain in *An Introduction to the Basic Problems of Moral Philosophy* (1950, English tr., Albany, NY: Magi, 1990), ch.6, an espousal of the modern anti-ontological value-philosophy in apparent contradiction with all this arch-Thomist’s other work, at least on this point, and as such only equalled in facing both ways by some of Karol Wojtyła’s utterances. They seem to have forgotten Gabriel Marcel’s remark about how such use of the idea of value is “the sign of a fundamental devaluation of reality itself” (*Les hommes contre l’humain* (Paris: Éditions du Vieux Colombier, 1951), a reproach one may also level at Dietrich von Hildebrand (*Christian Ethics* [New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1953]) and, as indicated above, his disciple Seifert. But for a contrasting but equally positive evaluation of children’s experience see Stephen Theron, “On Being so Placed,” *New Blackfriars*, 61 (September 1980): 378-385.

¹¹ Cf. M. Grabmann’s comment on happiness as “höchste Entfaltung der Sittlichkeit,” *Thomas von Aquin* (München, 1959).

¹² Cf. J. Walgrave OP, “Reason and Will in Natural Law,” *Lex et libertas* (Rolduc Symposium Acta: Vatican City, 1987), esp. pp. 74-75.

¹³ For an earlier attempt to defend human rights against such criticism see Stephen Theron, *The Recovery of Purpose* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang 1993), ch. 8.

¹⁴ As was argued in my *Morals as Founded on Natural Law* (see note 1 above).

¹⁵ A. Donagan, *The Theory of Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

¹⁶ R.M. Hare, *Freedom and Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963).

¹⁷ Cf. Pope John Paul II (K. Wojtyła), *Veritatis splendor*, pp. 48-50.

¹⁸ A suspicion voiced by Josef Seifert in “Esse, essence and Infinity: A Dialogue with Existential Thomism,” *The New Scholasticism*, LVIII (1984): 84-98. But cf. Stephen Theron, “Does Realism Make a Difference to Logic?” *The Monist*, 69 (1986): 281-295, esp. p. 286.

¹⁹ See my *Natural Law Reconsidered*, chs. 1-3.

²⁰ See P.T. Geach, “The Moral Law and the Law of God” in *God and the Soul* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969). Lawrence Dewan OP states that an angel can see that what we experience as inclinations are, when healthy, in fact laws – prescriptive and forensic, he seems to mean. Cf. “St. Thomas, Our Natural Lights, and the Moral Order,” *Angelicum*, LXVII (1990): 285-308.

²¹ Jacques Maritain’s *The Grace and Humanity of Jesus*, tr. Joseph W. Evans (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), looks like an unsuccessful attempt to face up to these considerations, fatal for that Chalcedonian paradigm to which he remained committed.

²² *Aquinas, Summa theologiae*, Ia-IIae 21,1.

²³ *Summa theologiae*, Ia-IIae 106, 3 ad 3um.

²⁴ A. de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1830).

²⁵ Much more than English of course. Zechariah the Jewish prophet spoke of a “spirit of kindness” being poured out upon people in consequence of some great divine act (*Zechariah* 12,10).

²⁶ In saying this I retract much of my criticism in previous publications of B. Schüller’s position in *Die Begründung sittlicher Urteile* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1980).

²⁷ To dismiss this play as “anti-Semitic” is utterly crass, as if Shylock were not balanced by Jessica, though even if he were not, it should be obvious that the theme of the play cuts much deeper than incidental prejudices of time and place.

²⁸ I use the term, building upon Maritain’s insight mentioned above as one heavy with analogical ramifications. See his *Christianity and Democracy* (London: Bles, 1945). The connection lies to hand, for example, of the rule of the people with the universal priesthood and kingship and prophethood of believers, of those who have received the new life or what is life indeed or truly.

²⁹ Cf. *Comm. in II Cor.* cap. 11.

³⁰ Cf. Maritain’s “civilization of love” in *True Humanism* (New York: Scribner’s, 1938) and other writings, from the aim of which he says we can only retreat (into a limited ideal of “civic friendship”) to the scandal of mankind.

³¹ This is the positive element in the often absurd feeling among, for example, some Scandinavian socialists that it is immoral to plan your finances so as to minimize tax. They might approve this in a society with which they felt less identified, e.g., if they lived in Saddam’s Iraq and felt they were being forced to finance germ warfare.

**FAITH AND THE SUBLATION OF MODERNITY:
KIERKEGAARD, QUIXOTE AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF
FIDEISM**

James Mark Shields

At a 1988 conference on fundamentalism at Berkeley, Robert Bellah spoke of “Enlightenment Fundamentalism,” suggesting that the recent global upsurge of religious traditionalist movements came about as a reaction not only to modernity but to the narrow scientific intolerance that frequently coincided with such – i.e., the “cribbed and confined” world view of the general academy, dedicated to an exclusionary tactic of eliminating anything beyond the purview of what Habermas has called the “technical-rational paradigm for understanding the world.”¹ This is an important point towards the realization that the general worldview that we call “fundamentalism” has roots in a particular way or style of *belief* in a truth, i.e., one that is transcendent, non-contingent, exclusionary, and even imperialistic; and in a *faith* that rises above what is rational and empirical – and ultimately beyond what is human.

At the same time, modern fundamentalism gains support from a widespread anti-intellectualism that questions the validity of academic attempts to transform or reinterpret the purity and strength of faith. Gabriel Daly insists that this protest cannot be simply dismissed as “irrationalism,” as it poses an important question, not only to church-affiliated theologians (as Daly suggests), but also to anyone concerned with the ramifications of moral pluralism and the ongoing absolutism-relativism debate, or interested in the effects of their faith and belief may have in a pluralized post-modern world. The question is: “How is it that when religious belief and practice are brought into harmony with reasonable requirements of the secular world, so often they lose their power to attract and satisfy?”² This, indeed, is the crux of the matter: religion within the limits of reason alone, whether *à la* Kant, Comte, or John Dewey, seems to be little more than secularism disguised with the use of an abstract quasi-theological terminology. Moreover, rationalism and positivism neglect the non-rational element that appears in all religions and that plays a vital role in conversion and religious experience. Indeed, as Daly notes, it “sometimes seems that a church which squares up with modernity loses precisely the ‘Dionysian’ element which fundamentalism so often preserves.”³

But must the rest be silence? Must we choose between Descartes and Dionysus, with Nietzsche’s hero the only figure around which to center the revolt against the Kafkaesque world of late modernity? The Dionysian element, the most non-rational aspect of religion, is, in essence,

faith. It seems safe to conclude that faith cannot be abjured nor vindicated by reason or logic. But then what are we to make of faith, and can there be any truth at all, except what resides within the individual? There can surely be faith without knowledge or proof, but can there be faith without foundation, without a surety – a certitude that excludes variations? If, as theologian Hans Küng has argued, truth and falsity are not monopolized by any religious tradition, and in fact have no “vertical” allegiance to any one conception of transcendence, but rather run “horizontally” across all faiths, then fundamentalism, as a horizontal phenomenon, stands before us as a possible “falsehood” *vis-à-vis* particular faith traditions – and the “truths” embedded in such.

WITHOUT FEAR OR TREMBLING

Fundamentalism is clearly a reaction against the limits of modernism – if not post-modernism. Both Ernst Gellner and Alasdair MacIntyre cite Søren Kierkegaard as an anti-fundamentalist hero; a pivotal figure in the transformation of Western understandings of religion. The son of a Lutheran minister (like Kant),⁴ Kierkegaard picked up as his starting-point Kant’s failure to revoke Diderot and Hume and justify morality by reason alone, the Dane calling in the act of choice to do the work that Kantian reason could not accomplish. Steeped in Lutheran morality, Kierkegaard attempted to establish a new practical and philosophical underpinning for an older and inherited way of life, relying to some extent upon the tradition of fideism dating back to Occam. Kierkegaard may have been the first to counter the illusions of objectivity made manifest in the tendency “to smother the vital core of subjective experience beneath layers of historical commentary and pseudo-scientific generalizations,” and in a concomitant “proneness to discuss ideas from an abstract theoretical viewpoint that took no account of their significance for the particular outlooks and commitments of flesh and blood human beings.”⁵ Whereas Kant wanted to make room for faith – albeit a faith of pure practical reason securely founded in the authoritative deliverances of the moral consciousness – for Kierkegaard there was much more at stake than a particular set of cognitive claims. Faith is a pervasive way of looking at things that color one’s world, and has its source in a particular *attitude* to life from that cannot be dislodged by logical or rational argument. Yet *pace* Luther, faith cannot be left entirely on its own, to justify the whims of its beholder, but must be accompanied by an enlargement of an individual’s self-understanding and critical self-awareness, which Kierkegaard found could best be achieved by the “ironic” method and the use of literature, rather than by abstract instruction, the inculcation of salutary precepts, or the reaffirmation of tradition.

Thus, if Kierkegaard is a Jamesian pragmatist in his conception of truth and belief, he is also an ironist of the Rortyan neo-pragmatist sort, seeking to enable his readers to acquire a more perspicuous insight into their own situation and motivations, but without the didacticism of “objective” modes of discourse, whether scientific or theological. His program is a distinctively literary one, eliciting, with the help of the imagination, the emotional foundations and practical implications of one’s beliefs and behavior, while at the same time revealing the differences in contrasting outlooks and approaches. This is the only path open to the modern emotivist self, who is effectively without *telos* (having lost its traditional boundaries provided by a social identity and a view of human life as ordered to a given end upon the acquisition, as it were, of personal sovereignty).⁶ As such, the emotivist self has its own kind of social definition *vis-à-vis* the definition of those characters that inhabit and present the various social roles of the epoch. Ethics become a somewhat quixotic, yet still vital and necessary, quest for identification.⁷

Kierkegaard represents an important advance in the development of a style of belief I would like to call narrative fideism: whereas both Kant and Hegel (in different ways) sought to assimilate and subordinate the notion of religious faith to other categories of thought, Kierkegaard (in, e.g., *Fear and Trembling*) puts forth a form of faith that possesses a wholly independent status, lying beyond the province of ethical thinking and resisting elucidation in universal or rational terms, but nonetheless consistent with critical thought and development of self by means of archetypal characters.

BELIEF AGAINST BELIEF

For the fideist, belief must involve a “leap” – a willful longing rather than an assumption based upon an avowed proof or given evidence. For Kierkegaard, it is to be understood not so much as a *conclusion* as a *resolution* – a voluntary act that, although originating from doubt, must strive to overcome doubt. Though it is of course impossible to know *why* people believe what they believe, it seems plain that religious *belief* is quite different from a belief in, say, trees, people, or even black holes or quarks. Belief in God, or in Scripture, or in Revelation through a particular transcendent referent or tradition is not based upon (and does not claim to require) evidence of the sort that natural science requires. As Paul and Tertillian knew, Christian belief, in particular, requires the professor to accept something that is not only improbable but *offensive* to reason and the understanding, namely the Christ-event and its cosmic redemptive significance.

Thus Christian belief requires not just a mere “leap of faith,” but a headfirst dive into the rationally unthinkable. Miguel de Unamuno, a

Spanish disciple of Kierkegaard, found the motivation for this leap in the hope of transcendence, not least because of a dread fear of the nothingness that would entail without immortality. “To believe in God is to long for His existence and, further, it is to act as if He existed; it is to live by this longing and to make it the inner spring of our action.”⁸ For the Dane (e.g., in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*), Christianity only has truth as a subjective phenomenon; objectively, he argues, it has none whatsoever: “its basic tenets being more properly taken to be expressive of a moral vision or to embody spiritual values than as constituting assertions that purport to be true in some literal or specifically factual sense.”⁹ As terrible as this pronouncement may sound to traditional ears, Kierkegaard’s formulation can serve as the basis for a revived Christian humanist ethic of the Erasmian sort, one that bypasses the terrible rigor of fundamentalism yet need not founder upon the rocks of Kierkegaard’s own existentialist subjectivism.

As William James noted, we cannot will ourselves to believe what is *contrary* to the facts at our disposal. Belief in God, however, is and must be a transcendent belief, and thus is quite different from belief in, say, flying goats, not just because belief in the latter serves no purpose, but also because it is so clearly *contrary* to the evidence we possess with regard to sedentary and avian mammals. Clearly, our creeds are not produced by our intellectual nature alone. But does this justify any and all beliefs with religious content? No, for just as we cannot affirm that there is Truth, neither can we deny the possibility outright, and in the meantime we must deny those beliefs whose particular manifestations run contrary to – as Jeffrey Stout would have it – the shared pidgin moral and ethical vocabulary we now possess. Truth may be best reconceived in terms of *possibility*, in an empiricist and not an absolutist sense.¹⁰

Moreover, this brings up the oft-neglected issue that is of vital import to a consideration of faith, belief, and truth – namely, the assumption that our human minds are equipped to know the Truth if and when it comes to us. This conceit, which may be fundamental to the religious impulse, is based on the notion that we are somehow “made for” the Truth. Thus we are stuck at several removes from what Heidegger would call the *earth*: not only may we not be fitted to receive the truth, but our words may not be able to adequately express what is beyond our purview, even if it can be glimpsed in silence. Yet giving up objective certitude does not require giving up entirely the quest or the *hope* of truth. As James and Borges would agree, it is also venturesome to think that of all the attempted illuminations of truth, of all those “illustrious coordinations” of words and phrases, that one of them, “at least in an infinitesimal way, does not resemble the universe a bit more than the others.”¹¹ “Science says things *are*; morality says some things are better than other things; and religion says essentially two things: 1. The best

things are the more eternal (transcendent) things; (and) 2. We are better off if we believe the first affirmation to be true.”¹² In the end, of course, faith can only be judged by the manifestation of such in an interpersonal or social situation, and this is where fideism leads – to the action of the everyday believer.

Like the humanist Erasmus before him, Kierkegaard sought to bring Christianity down to earth by centralizing its practical ethics and emphasizing patterns of behavior – always based upon, though not *justified by*, the priority of faith. For several centuries now, philosophers and critics have successfully discredited attempts at substantiating religious predispositions (concerning the nature of God, immortality, and so on). But these objections need no longer (as Schleiermacher may have been the first since Occam to realize) be considered as inherently destructive to religion; they may in fact, by sweeping away such superfluties, have indirectly helped to draw attention to the core of the Christian message as conceived by the humanist Erasmus, and the existentialist Kierkegaard. Truth in this sense is a modest, but vital claim, which involves *moral action* as its last result. It has been suggested (by, I believe, Buckminster Fuller) that God is not, in fact, a noun, but a verb, and for the modern fideist truth must be conceived in the same way. Rightly understood, human existence takes the form of a constant striving – a seeking after fulfillment, “which is attainable by our fiercely committing ourselves to a power that transcends objective knowledge and rational comprehension.”¹³

This, for Kierkegaard, is, in so many words, the *formula of faith*. There can be no faith, no belief, without prior skepticism, without doubt; but it may be possible for the anxiety of doubt and uncertainty to issue in a qualitative leap that takes the believer neither into a state of alienation nor into one of dogmatic certitude, but into an absurd but strong sense of *hope*: “Faith means belief in something concerning which doubt is still theoretically possible, and as the test of belief is willingness to act, one may say that faith is the readiness to act in a cause the prosperous issue of which is not certified to us in advance.”¹⁴

IMMANENCE AND TRANSCENDENCE: CHRISTIAN PRAXIS

For all the talk of the privatization of religious conviction in the modern West, the fact remains that an individual’s understanding of truth, her personal beliefs and convictions, and her faith will affect, if not *define*, how she will act interpersonally, socially, and politically. Though the roots and basis of faith can only be, as Kierkegaard was so adamant about getting across, subjective, the results of such, when made manifest on the more than private level, can and must be measured accordingly – and this measurement, being a critical reflexive one, may in turn transform or

develop one's beliefs. Simply put, though God, as the wholly Other, the transcendent point of reference is, by definition, *transcendent*, the fruits of faith are necessarily *immanent* and thus "anthropological." Religion cannot be a separate realm (as, say, are poetry and physics) into which one assumes a role when necessary; for most people religion is manifest on the level of daily activity, most particularly and forcefully in the sphere of daily human interaction.

Thus, it may be that *practical* religion is best conceived as *ethics*.¹⁵ As Martin Marty states, in our age we need hardly (as James, and Kierkegaard before him tried to do) legitimize the private aspects of religion, particularly in a culture and a world that finds criticism of its socialized forms rather easy.¹⁶ Surprisingly, however, outside the rather confined sphere of dogmatic theology (and perhaps psychology), there have been few serious attempts to find out exactly where religion, and Christianity in particular, may have "gone wrong," and lost its claim on many modern folk as a guide to a better life. Tolstoy conceived of religion in these terms: Religion is not, he says,

as some scientists may imagine, a manifestation which at one time corresponded with the development of humanity, but is afterwards outgrown by it, [i]t is a manifestation always inherent in the life of humanity, and is as indispensable, as inherent in humanity at the present time as at any other.¹⁷

Second, says Tolstoy, religion is always the theory and practice of the future, and not of the past, and thus must be continually renewed.

In developing this notion of humanist Christian praxis, we may learn from that philosophical tradition known as pragmatism, shaped in large part by James, who avowed his lifelong debt to both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. Though the pragmatist interest in religion was virtually discarded by James's heir John Dewey, it re-emerged in the work of Reinhold Niebuhr, who utilized theology and religious symbols in dialectical concert with an acute historical consciousness and a feeling for the "signs of the times." Niebuhr was most interested in the relation of God and the self, and both of these to history, as well as what the relationship means (or could mean) for human possibilities, and how it sets the direction for relevant public action. His "theological anthropology" had as its aim the ethical reconstruction of society (i.e., *bricolage*) by forging a religious imagination that sustains a strong commitment to public life and gives, by way of faith, *hope* in the very moment of despair. Christianity, therefore, must wage constant war on the one hand against "political religions" (such as fundamentalism) that imagine some proximate goal and some conditioned good as humanity's

final good (*telos*), and, on the other hand, against forms of otherworldliness that give these political religions seeming validity.¹⁸

Yet, for all these aspects of fideism in his work, Niebuhr lacked a clear sense of the interpersonal imperative of religion, its implications for ethics and for a transforming way of life in dialogue with not only political theory and philosophy but also with literature and poetry. It was a poet, Gottfried Lessing, who said, two centuries before Kierkegaard and Tolstoy, and three before Niebuhr, that Christian faith proves itself not in reasoning, nor even in believing, so much as in right praxis.¹⁹

THE NARRATIVE QUEST: QUIXOTE AND THE BIRTH OF THE MODERN

Pre-Enlightenment moral thinking, whether of the Greek, medieval, or Renaissance variety, inevitably involved the telling of stories. Adopting a stance on morals and ethics was to adopt a stance on the narrative character of human life. Such a motif is not unfamiliar to the Western mind, but is in less evidence since the Enlightenment and the birth of “fiction” as an autonomous category of writing.²⁰ The platitude that one can only learn by doing, by experiencing, is at once confirmed and countermanded by the narrative conception of life, which, while emphasizing the questing and experiential element of the life itself, is often revealed in the text, which is on the one hand at one remove from direct experience, but on the other the most potent and direct way of learning about the quests of *others* who exist in distance of space or (especially) time. A play by Lessing illustrates this idea nicely. The plot of *Nathan the Wise* revolves around a parable of a ring of great power, which is to be bequeathed to a person, with the catch that it is not the attainment of the ring itself that reaps rewards, but the *way* it is acquired; i.e., not in the possession, but in the striving to show oneself worthy of the gift, that the true gift is revealed. Of course the notion of the pilgrim journeying on the questing life had a place in Western literature long before Lessing, most notably in three paradigm figures: The pilgrim of Dante’s late medieval poem, entrenched in the concentric spheres of an uncompromising Catholic worldview; Bunyan’s Pietist Christian, enduring personal trials and overcoming all by his simple faith and his “valiance for Truth”; and, finally Cervantes’s knight of the sorrowful countenance, emerging from the medieval world of chivalry to find that the unity of standards and values had disappeared.

It has been said that the modern world began, not in front of the Wittenburg cathedral doors in 1517, but rather in 1605 Spain, when the Hidalgo of La Mancha left his village to explore the world, only to perceive, for the first time, “the rupture of a world based on analogy and thrust into differentiation.”²¹ Quixote’s challenge remains ours, now that

the world Cervantes saw beginning has come, with Dostoevsky, Kafka and Broch, to a close. How to accept the diversity, plurality, and changefulness of the world, while retaining the mind's power for analogy, unity and coherence so that the world, and our lives, do not become meaningless? *Don Quixote* tells us that being modern is not a question of sacrificing the past in favor of the new (and not of re-invoking a mythical purified past); but of maintaining, comparing, and remembering values created by our forebears, making them modern so as not to lose the value of the modern. Thus, not only, as Lionel Trilling has said, is all prose fiction a variation on the theme of *Don Quixote*, but we might say the whole of modern life is based upon the fundamental Quixotic problem of appearance and reality, of belief and truth.

It is of no coincidence that Cervantes was a dedicated Erasmian, sharing with the Dutch scholar at least three themes: 1) a sense of the duality (or multiplicity) of truth; 2) the illusion of appearance; and 3) the (often ironic, but at times sincere) "praise of folly." Cervantes borrows the Erasmian method of comic debunking to show his unorthodox vision of the double truth: the learned but "mad" Quixote speaks the language of universals, of belief, which seems to be outdated; the simple but "sane" Sancho Panza speaks that of particulars, of doubt. Yet neither is vindicated: each character's appearance is diversified, obscured, and opposed by the existence and persistence of the other. This point Cervantes shares with Erasmus; in *Praise of Folly*, the latter attempts to head off the danger of making reason absolute: if reason is to be reasonable, it must see itself through the eyes of an ironical madness (the eyes of Quixote). This has implications on the personal level: "If the individual is to assert himself, then he must do so with an ironical conscience of his own ego, or he will flounder in solipsism and pride."²² Quixote, the knight of unwavering belief, meets a faithless and lawless world, and neither knows any longer where the truth really lies. At heart, as Carlos Fuentes suggests, *Don Quixote* outlines a possible reunion of love and justice, a utopia found not in a nihilistic sweeping away of the past, nor of the present in favor of the past, near or remote, but in a fusion of the values that come to us from the past and those we are capable of creating in the present. Specifically, in Cervantes's case, the values of an age of chivalry acquire a democratic resonance, while the values of democratic life acquire the resonance of nobility.

Integrity, or *constancy* is a central virtue for the questing knight, perhaps *the* virtue, and is recognized by MacIntyre as the virtue that reinforces his argument that

unless there is a *telos* which transcends the limited goods of practices by constituting the good of a whole human life... conceived as a unity, it will *both* be the case that a certain

subversive arbitrariness will invade the moral life *and* that we shall be unable to specify the content of certain virtues adequately.²³

Integrity cannot be specified at all except with reference to the wholeness of life. The narrative form counters the post-modern trends of relativism and the analytical atomization of human behavior, as well the deconstructive emphasis on the text in its isolation. Yet again we are dealing more with *use* than *meaning*: “It is because we understand our own lives in terms of the narrative that we live out that the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others.”²⁴ The narrative concept of selfhood requires two things: first, that I am the subject of a history that is my own and no one else’s, one that has its own peculiar meaning; and second, that I am not only accountable to others, I can also ask others for an account, as I am as much a part of their story as they are of mine. This is the sociological aspect of “inter-textuality”: “the narrative of any one’s life is part of an interlocking set of narratives.” Though we have no apparent, revealed, or consensual *telos*, no final Good to be reached, it is the quest for a conception of the good that,

will enable us to order other goods, for a conception of the good which will extend our understanding of the purpose and content of the virtues, for a conception of the good which will enable us to understand the place of integrity and constancy in life, that we initially define the kind of life which is a quest for the good.²⁵

To paraphrase Dio Chrysostom, *a fully comprehended Good is no Good at all.*²⁶

IRONY, LITERATURE AND RELIGIOUS TRUTH

Modern aesthetic theory has seen a multitude of opinions as to the place and meaning of art in modern society, running the gamut from the propagandistic misomusy of socialist realism to the social irresponsibility of the *l’art pour l’art* movement. If anything, post-modern aesthetics, under the semiotic-deconstructionist hegemony, has swung back to a conception of the ultimately isolated and complete work-in-itself, freed from author, history and society, and left to the deconstructive talons of the all-powerful critic. Art is perhaps best conceived somewhere in the middle; like religion it is ultimately a mode of expressing otherness, a form of circumspetual pedagogy. Here we can follow Proust over Kierkegaard (who conceived of the *aesthetic* life as a dissolute and disunified one, contrary to the *ethical* life): “The only true voyage of

discovery,” the former relates in the waning pages of *Remembrance of Things Past*,

the only really rejuvenating experience [remaining to our world, is] not to visit strange lands but to *possess other eyes*, to see the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to see the hundred universes that each of them sees, that each of them is; and this we can do with (the help of the artist, the writer, the musician).²⁷

Art can be pedagogical without being didactic; this is especially true of literature, which unfolds other narratives. The ironic mode of writing, favored by Erasmus and Kierkegaard, as well as by many writers including Austen and Joyce, can be identified by the use of characters who see and say more and other than what they intend to, the purpose being, in some sense, revelatory: the reader may appropriate or dismiss the values and actions of the characters’ performances. Literature grew largely out of the humanist movement, who placed great emphasis on creative thought.²⁸ Erasmus was himself a master of “redescription” in the Rortyan sense; his *Praise of Folly* is a work that, in the author’s own words, does not seek the Truth but rather *to speak with ingenuity*, to describe things in novel and possibly enlightening ways. This is the crux: Erasmian Christianity is based upon more than a lofty morality of the secular humanist sort (for then the term Christianity would be superfluous); rather it is based upon a particular mode of faith (what I have been calling *fideism*), as well as a recognition of the power and importance of ameliorative redescription, edification and the narrative concept of human life.

The humanist-fideist perspective, as it evolves out of Erasmus, Lessing, and Kierkegaard, is one that is sympathetic to art and literature, believing in the moral possibilities of both and in the significance of storytelling to the fashioning of the narrative self. A self-conscious fideist would never resort to book burning, keeping in mind the words of the German Jewish poet Heinrich Heine – now posted at a concentration camp/museum in Germany – that “once they begin burning books, they end by burning people.” In contrast, in December of 1520, Luther effectively and dramatically sealed his breach with Rome by publicly burning the latest papal bull along with copies of canon law and scholastic theology, defiantly proclaiming: “Since they have burned my books, I burn theirs.” And, as Heine predicted, it was not long before, at Münster, much more was burned – the radical Anabaptists facing the fate of Savonarola, Thomas More and Giordano Bruno. The more recent pronouncement (and later reaffirmation) of the religious leaders of a certain Middle Eastern nation with regard to not only a book but also the book’s author, along with threats to publishers and the firebombing of

bookstores, underscores the danger felt by fundamentalists with regard to subversive literature. In *Don Quixote*, the knight's well-meaning friends burn his library in order to put an end to the madness of his impending quest.²⁹

Richard Rorty's "ironist" is also a bibliophile, and a fideist who refuses to make the Kierkegaardian leap of faith: she is rather the sort of person who "faces up to the contingency of her own most central beliefs and desires, someone sufficiently historicist and nominalist to have abandoned the idea that those central beliefs and desires refer back to something beyond the reach of time and chance."³⁰ Rejecting theological as well as scientific or metaphysical certainties, Rorty's ironist hopes to *create* solidarity by increasing our (individual and collective) sensitivity to the particular and very specific details of the pain and humiliation of others, best revealed in the narrative of a story, in literature. In the absence of a single meta-vocabulary, we must settle instead for narratives that connect the present with the past, on the one hand, and with utopian futures, on the other. Most importantly, the quest for utopia is and must regard itself as an endless process: "an endless, proliferating realization of Freedom rather than a convergence toward an already existing Truth."³¹ Though we need not go so far as Nietzsche, whose "inverted Platonism" asserts that a life of self-creation can be complete and autonomous, we *can* think of any human life as the always incomplete, and in this sense somewhat comic, quixotic, yet sometimes tragic and heroic, reweaving of a web in which we are continually connecting and confronting other worlds.

Yet Rorty's neo-pragmatist vision of an ideal liberal ironist community is one that is "secular through and through"; one "in which no trace of divinity remain[s] – either in the form of a divinized world or a divinized self."³² He thinks it imperative that the notion of God should go the way of Truth: the process of de-divinization would culminate in "our no longer being able to see any use for the notion that finite, mortal, contingently existing human beings might derive the meaning of their lives from anything except other finite, mortal, contingently existing human beings."³³ Here Rorty rejects William James in favor of John Dewey as pragmatist muse; his steadfast reliance on Deweyan secularism refuses to acknowledge both the prevalence but the potential latent in conceptions of transcendence and the faith impulse.³⁴ Like many thinkers of today, Rorty is only able to see religion as an (institutionalized) crutch that enlightened men and women can and should finally discard in order to live by their own authority.

Rorty might well accept a compromise with religion (as does Gellner, and as Rorty himself does with the self-creative yet socially limited impulses of Nietzsche, Sartre, and Foucault), relegating such to the strictly personal level to ensure that one does not "slip into a political

attitude which will lead [one] to think that there is a social goal more important than avoiding cruelty.”³⁵ There are two problems with this conception: first, unlike aesthetic self-creative tendencies, which can perhaps be privatized with little effort, religious impulses are *by nature* interpersonal – i.e., they manifest themselves in human interaction; and second, there is no fundamental or necessary discrepancy between mainstream religious values and the liberal invective against cruelty; in fact, Erasmus, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King have shown that just the opposite can be the case.

Erasmus would no doubt agree with the first two principles of Rorty’s ideal ironist: 1) she has radical and continuing doubts about her own vocabulary, impressed as she is by the vocabularies taken as final by others, whether encountered in people or in books; and 2) she realizes that arguments phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve the doubts of others, or vice versa. Yet the third principle is one that fideists would have some difficulty accepting in its entirety (one that does not necessarily result from or correlate with the first two): though a fideist may not think that her vocabulary is “superior” to another’s, in the sense of it being closer to a transcendent truth, she will quite probably believe that her own vocabulary *is* in touch with a power greater than her own. There is no such thing as faith in immanence. Yet such does not preclude the awareness of the (possible) contingency of one’s vocabulary, and, ultimately of one’s own being.

Ironists may employ Occam’s razor against the so-called “metaphysicians” who, in ostensibly preaching “common sense,”³⁶ fail to question their own assumptions. An ironist is, like the fideist, ultimately a *nominalist*: since nothing can serve as a criticism of a final vocabulary save another such vocabulary, our doubts about our own character and culture can be resolved *only* by enlarging our acquaintance; for the fideist this comes about in part through a particular orientation of faith. Literature, with its multiplicity of visions (Proust’s “hundred universes”) of peace, freedom and humanity, as well as of pain, humiliation and cruelty, offers descriptions of alternative future(s). But literature cannot stand on its own. As George Steiner points out, “[t]he simple yet appalling fact is that we have little solid evidence that literary studies do very much to enrich or stabilize moral perception, that they *humanize*.”³⁷ In the “poetry after Auschwitz?” vein, it would be starry-eyed to posit that aesthetics can, in and of itself, *replace* not only reason but also religion as the basis for morality. Yet, Steiner sees a need for literature, as a realm of non-neutral description that awakens us to greater vision, as it were. Following Kafka, he says, a book must be not a comfort, but rather “an ice-axe to break the sea frozen inside is;” altering our personal and communal existence, and reshaping “the landscape of our being.”

TRADITION: THE USE OF HISTORY

A recognition of contingency is one thing, and the appreciation of the moral possibilities of art another, but what of *tradition* – what of the trump card offered by sundry fundamentalists as the embodiment of Unity and Truth? What is the fideist to make of the authority embedded in a shared past or in socio-cultural memory? The narrative self is steeped in history (unlike, says MacIntyre the selves of Sartre or Goffman): I am born with a past, and to try to cut myself off from that past in the individualist/subjectivist mode is to deform my present and future relationships with others. The possession of a historical and a social identity coincide. In fideist terms, tradition must neither be contrasted with reason (as in Burke) nor used to justify stagnancy or stability. Tradition, as history, always embodies continuities of conflict; what is required is a *traduttore traditore* – a translation of tradition that is both a frank acknowledgment of “cultural baggage” and a attempt to relativize this past through comparison and criticism. As Walter Jens remarks *vis-à-vis* Lessing, these two things do not exclude but rather *presuppose* each other, and *must* if humane behavior is to become the law of the world.³⁸

Yet, as Tolstoy observes, history is a realm of disappointment. One gets the feeling, he says, “that history, as it is written by historians, makes claims which it cannot satisfy, because like metaphysical philosophy, it pretends to be something it is not, namely a science capable of arriving at conclusions which are certain.”³⁹ Again, the quest for Certitude is ultimately doomed. History does not and cannot reveal “causes” in the strict sense; it will never reveal the connections between good and evil, between science and morality, and so on. History *can* be an important guide to the future; like art, it reveals, or presents worlds, but that is all; it can neither be disdained as meaningless (“bunk”), frightening (“nightmare”), nor worshipped and sanctified under the exclusionary rubric of tradition, for the true *reality* of history is only what is made of it in the present. In order to keep up with the changing epoch, history must be *sublated*.⁴⁰ In another sense, history is a stockpiling of values, since life can be comprehended only in the category of value, “yet these values can only be thought of in reference to an ethically-motivated value-positing subject.”⁴¹ Culture is, in some sense, a value-formation; it needs the assumption of a style- and value-producing *Zeitgeist* that brings the values together. But what does this tell us about history, and the relativity of values? Only that the immanence of values, their “in-the-worldness,” points away from an a-historical, transcendent, and absolute value-system. If at bottom truth is conceived as *transcendent* then it cannot be equated with a particular historical (or mythical) epoch, but must be eternal, beyond time and chance; if it is *immanent* (which, for fideists truth *is*, unlike faith), then it is *contingent*, in the sense that it must evolve with the

changing vocabularies and styles of an epoch. Truth is, in a sense, both made (in the living quest) and found, gradually, through the living of the life reinforced by hope.⁴²

CONCLUSIONS

Every significant transformation of religious ideas has arisen in response to the challenge of changing times; yet, as in art, in religion too every form may not be absolutely appropriate to every age. Religion at these times of transformation must change or die. Fundamentalism professes to reject modernity, but it actually continues modernity in several ways: in the use of modern technology, and in the usurpation of the vocabulary of absolutism. Christian fundamentalism is not simply a backward form of faith, it is in fact a continuation of Lutheran and later, positivistic severity and inflexibility in an age of perceived moral laxity. What is most significant is not the purported “retrieval” of values, but the way, the *style* in which these values are spoken of – a style that ill-befits the new world situation, and indeed the world situation since the Renaissance, when new possibilities were first explored in the West. Fundamentalism is a style of faith that denies possibility, and this is its danger.

As Stout says,

[i]t is becoming increasingly clear that the real ‘philosophical’ action is going to occur... not in debates over the logical status of religious ethics or the Kripkean metaphysics of ethical wrongness, but rather in whatever forces, rational or non-rational, incline people toward religious faith or against it in the first place.”⁴³

As we know, perhaps all too well, “[r]eligions have a way of getting to the parts of the human psyche that secular ideologies no longer reach.”⁴⁴ Hans Küng foresees an imminent “rebellion against the Kafkaesque world” of late modernity and the opening of a new horizon of meaning in post-modernity, a world in which religion can be more than a solace from the storm, but can have an eminently humanizing, liberating function. *Immanence* – the immanence of fideist truth as conceived in the form of the narrative quest – must be bound up in a humanly liberating way with *transcendence* – a non-rational but not absolute faith in the possibilities of divinity and the transcendent *vis-à-vis* the world of humanity.

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NOTES

¹ John A. Coleman, "Catholic Integralism as a Fundamentalism." In *Fundamentalism in Comparative Perspective*, edited by L. Kaplan (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), p. 79.

² See Coleman, "Catholic Integralism," p. 92.

³ "Catholicism and Modernity," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 53 (1985), pp. 795-6.

⁴ Broch considers Kantian philosophy the belated formulation of Lutheran theology, developed in connection with Platonic and idealistic forms: "Kant's attempt to establish a retrospective Protestant theology did indeed wrestle with the task of transferring the substance of religious Platonism to the new positivistic science, but it was far from seeking to set up a universal theological canon of values on the catholic pattern" See Hermann Broch, *The Sleepwalkers*, tr. M. Tanner (London: Quartet Encounters, 1986), pp. 485, 523.

⁵ Patrick Gardiner, *Kierkegaard* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 2.

⁶ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: a study in moral theory*. London: Duckworth, 1992), p. 34.

⁷ It is ultimately up to the individual, as a free and autonomous being capable of choice, to decide on her way of life and what course to follow to perfect or improve herself; yet the underpinnings and implications of contrasting life-views must be presented and explored before this choice can be made, and this is what Kierkegaard sought to portray in *Either/Or, Fear and Trembling*, and *Stages on Life's Way*.

⁸ Unamuno continues: "This longing or hunger for divinity begets hope, hope begets faith, and faith and hope beget charity. Of this divine longing is born our sense of beauty, of finality, of goodness." Miguel de Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life*, tr. J. E. C. Fitch (New York: Dover Publications, 1954), p. 187.

⁹ Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, tr. D. F. Swenson and W. Lowrie. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 116.

¹⁰ William James recognizes the difficulties in such; with Santayana he saw that even the greatest empiricists are only empiricists upon reflection; when left to their own instincts they "dogmatize like infallible popes" William James, *The Will to Believe and other essays in popular philosophy / Human Immortality* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), p. 13; also see George Santayana, *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (New York: Dover Publications, 1955).

¹¹ Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths - Selected Stories & Other Writings*, tr. Donald A. Yates, James E. Irby, Anthony Kerrigan, L. A. Murillo, Dudley Fitts, John M. Fein, Harriet de Onás, and Julian Palley (New Directions, 1962), p. 207.

¹² James, *Will to Believe*, p. 25.

¹³ Gardiner, *Kierkegaard*, p. 109.

¹⁴ James, *Will to Believe*, p. 90.

¹⁵ "Who is truly Christian?" asks Erasmus – "Not he who is baptized or anointed, or who attends Church. It is rather the man who has embraced Christ

in his innermost feelings of his heart, and who emulates him by his pious deeds” (cited in Richard L. DeMolen, ed. *Essays on the Works of Erasmus* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978], p. 5).

¹⁶ Martin E. Marty, “Introduction” to William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Penguin, 1982), p. xxv.

¹⁷ Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God is Within You: Christianity Not as a Mystic Religion But as a New Theory of Life*, tr. C. Garnett (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), p. 87.

¹⁸ Reinhold Niebuhr, *Reinhold Niebuhr: Theologian of Public Life – Selected Writings*. L. Rasmussen, ed. (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1988), p. 18.

¹⁹ Lessing’s motto: “Denique nemo est barbarus, qui non inhumanus et crudelis est” (No one is a barbarian except for those who are inhuman and cruel) would stand as well for Rorty’s liberal ironist.

²⁰ “Each life will then embody a story whose shape and form will depend upon what is counted as a harm and danger and upon which his success and failure, progress and its opposite, are understood and evaluated” (MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 144).

²¹ Carlos Fuentes, *Don Quixote, or the Critique of Reading* (Austin: University of Texas, 1976), p. xi.

²² Fuentes, *Don Quixote*, p. xii. As the great maximist LaRocheffoucauld put it: “Sometimes in life situations arise which only the half-crazy can get out of.”

²³ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 204. *Constancy* is not quite the same as *consistency*, the latter being judged by results, the former by intent. Sometimes a constancy of faith may imply an inconsistency in action, particularly when the contingency of truth is taken into account.

²⁴ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 212.

²⁵ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 219.

²⁶ Dio’s words were: “A comprehended God is no God.”

²⁷ Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of things Past: Volume III: The Captive* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1981), pp. 259-60.

²⁸ Stefan Zweig, *Erasmus and The Right to Heresy*, tr. E. and C. Paul (London: Souvenir Press, 1979), p. 71. The danger, of course, remains, and in fact pragmatism has been criticized throughout its hundred-year history for a certain air of intellectual detachment, despite the rhetoric of engagement and praxis. According to Stout: “Without being supplemented by detailed social and political reflections, Rorty’s remarks are apt to have the effect of encouraging everybody to share the rich aesthete’s complacency and insensitivity” (Jeffrey Stout, *Ethics After Babel: The Languages of Morals and their Discontents* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1988], p. 231).

²⁹ One of the conflagrants, the curate, is said to be “such a good Christian, and so much a friend of truth, that he would not be guilty of an equivocation for the entire universe” – thus the irony of Cervantes. See Miguel de Cervantes, *The Adventures of Don Quixote de La Mancha*, tr. T. Smollett (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1986), p. , p. 54.

³⁰ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. xv.

³¹ Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*, p. xvi.

³² Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*, p. 43. He goes on to say that “[a] postmetaphysical culture seems to me no more impossible than a postreligious one, and equally desirable.”

³³ Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*, p. 65.

³⁴ “Religious fermentation is always a symptom of the intellectual vigor of a society; and it is only when they forget that they are hypotheses and put on rationalistic and authoritative pretensions, that our faiths do harm” (James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. xx).

³⁵ Elsewhere, Rorty admits that, “for a few people (Christians) for whom the search for private perfection coincides with the project of living for others, the two sorts of questions (‘What shall I be?’, ‘What can I become?’, ‘What have I been?’, and ‘What sorts of things about what sorts of people do I need to notice?’) come together” (Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*, p. 143).

³⁶ Which Rorty defines, in seeming homage to Ambrose Bierce, as “the watchword of those who unselfconsciously describe everything important in terms of the final vocabulary to which they and those around them are habituated” (Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*, p. 74).

³⁷ George Steiner, *Language and Silence: Essays 1958-1966* (London: Faber & Faber, 1990), p. 156.

³⁸ Walter Jens, “Lessing’s *Nathan the Wise*: Nathan’s Attitude Has Been Mine All Along.” In *Literature and Religion*, ed. H. Küng and W. Jens, tr. P. Heinegg (New York: Paragon House, 1991), p. 97.

³⁹ Cited in Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy’s View of History* (London: Orion, 1978), p. 14.

⁴⁰ As Jeffrey Stout has put it, to find oneself in a cultural tradition is the *beginning*, not the *end* of critical thought. Cornel West proposes a “prophetic pragmatism” which acknowledges the “inescapable and inexpugnable” character of tradition – the “burden and buoyancy” of that which is transmitted from past to present. The present is intelligible only as a commentary upon and response to the past, in which the past is transcended, yet “in a way that leaves the present open to being in turn corrected and transcended by some yet more adequate future point-of-view.” (MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 137).

⁴¹ Broch, *Sleepwalkers*, p. 501.

⁴² MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, p. 146.

⁴³ Herbert Marcuse made a similar point when he said: “The liberation of man depends neither on God nor on the nonexistence of God. It is not the idea of God which has been an obstacle to human liberation, but the use that has been made of the image of God.” (Herbert Marcuse, *The New Left and the 1960s: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, Vol. 3, ed. Douglas Kellner [New York: Routledge, 2005], p. 116).

⁴⁴ Stout, *Ethics After Babel*, p. 175.

BOOK REVIEWS

Freud and American Sociology. By Philip Manning. Cambridge, UK, Polity Press, 2005. 169 pages. ISBN 0745625045, 9780745625041

Sigmund Freud is back ... again. Both in mainstream culture and in the academic world, the debates about the place of Freud have never really disappeared. Recent popular magazines have pronounced that Freudian psychoanalytic theory is increasingly verified by cutting-edge empirical evidence and clinical successes with patients. Parallel with popular thought, sociology continuously kills Freud, only to revive him. Philip Manning's *Freud and American Sociology* takes up one such guilty Oedipal moment in sociology's intellectual history, when, apparently, Freud's insights could have been used to the benefit of sociological thought. Specifically, he argues that this opportunity arose around the "symbolic interactionist" tradition established at the famous and dynamic 'Chicago School', especially with the ethnographic practices of Erving Goffman. For Manning, the intellectual story of American sociology, from that point on, is one of undeveloped potential in that it fails to take up Freud's theoretical insights, especially those concerning subjective experience.

One is immediately struck by how this theme of false starts and missed opportunities characterizes the content of the book *itself*. Strangely, while promoting an "auto-ethnographic" method for sociology – one that requires that the sociological observer place herself in the story she is telling – Manning does not seem to believe that his narrative is an action that tries to bring a credible account of sociological history into being.

In his introductory chapter, Manning claims he is passively "retelling ... this story" (p. 3), rather than "telling" or "offering" it, as if this story exists somewhere outside of its telling. This position becomes even stranger once the reader gets to the heart of the book, where the author hits his stride and seems very comfortable in the role of story-teller. Indeed, the narratives, taken apart from the theoretical pursuits of the book, are engaging and entertaining (especially the small details that bring these thinkers to life – e.g., that Sumner had played professional football with the Chicago Cardinals).

Unfortunately, Manning's initial ambivalent relationship to his own authority as a speaker means that the ambition of the text is weakened from the outset. For example, the Preface begins thus: "This book attempts to show that qualitative sociology can benefit from ideas derived from a stripped-down, non-clinical version of psychoanalysis" (p. ix). This project seems straightforward enough, except when the reader encounters the entanglement of the author's argument with the phenomenon under

discussion. Somehow his own thesis becomes the very engine of the intellectual history he is discussing: "This book is therefore an exploration of the intellectual history of this proposed theoretical fusion" (p. ix). It is almost as if Manning has, from the outset, both made himself the ghost in the machine, and shifted the burden of proof for his argument onto "history" itself. Finally, at the end of this confused preface the reader finds another goal: "... I hope that I have at least rekindled interest in some extraordinary sociological works" (p. xiii). The preface also promises to trace Manning's thesis through the Freudian themes of "transference" and "counter transference" – themes that fall away for chapters at a time in the text, but are picked up again at the end of the book. And then, in Chapter 1 Manning announces that his task is to "assess" the validity of the reception given to Freud's ideas by the sociological community from 1909 onward. This plethora of intents articulated by the author frustrates the reader's attempt to understand what the author is defending and how he is making his defense.

Far more critically, however, because the author does not formulate his understanding of historiography, narrative, and *causation* as they might function in the realm of intellectual change, the reader is left to puzzle over assertions like "Goffman is the messenger from the future" (p. x). Does he really mean to suggest that the intellectual future is somehow predetermined or that the not-yet future acts rest upon the past? Is this a folksy line meant to distract from serious epistemological matters of intellectual historiography?

Stylistically, the core of this book is accessible and interesting, if one is able to bracket Manning's theoretical concerns and read only for descriptive narrative. That said, in particular places the text could have benefited from serious editing of the more inelegant passages, such as the short section in which Manning compares the Freudian opportunity to a mirror that reflects sociology back to itself. While this metaphor is in keeping with the intention of the book, its application becomes nightmarish. (Within these two pages Manning tries to run this metaphor through both Cooley's and Lacan's complex and subtle metaphors of the mirrored self, only to end up reducing these great thinkers to inaccurate caricatures of themselves, and sociology to a set of clichés and mixed metaphors. In the case of the latter, the Freudian mirror apparently reveals "children, some of whom were bastards" and "born-again keepers of the faith" [p. 10].)

In terms of its stated purpose, this book falls short of the mark. For pages on end, Freud is hardly discussed. For example, in Chapter 3, entitled "Symbolic Interactionism and Psychoanalysis: Blumer's and Goffman's Extension of Mead", Freud and psychoanalysis are rarely mentioned at all. Instead, a very readable and engaging 31-page discussion of the work and contributions of Blumer and Goffman is offered. The only

discussions of Freud are tangential and obvious, like the comparison of Freud's id/ego/superego structure of the self with Mead's I/me structure – which can be found in most introductory sociology textbooks. Similarly, Goffman is discussed in terms of his famous criticism of the diagnosis and treatment of institutionalized psychiatric patients during the 1950s in the United States. How this connects to Freud is left unclear, except that Manning argues that Goffman's undeveloped theory of self prevented him from getting at the subjective experiences of the patients. Chapter 4, which discusses Parsons' interest and partial training (and even treatment) in psychoanalysis, engages Freudian ideas more directly. It discusses "Parsons attempt to tame Freud's ideas" (p. 97) in order to incorporate Freud's theories of motivation into the unwieldy Parsonian schema of social action. Yet, again, this chapter neglects to keep the focus on the idea of motivation and, by the end, drifts completely away from it.

The nagging question, "What does Manning really want?" becomes more pressing near the end of the book, in the discussions of Rieff, Chodorow, and Prager. In Chapter 5, a very short discussion that nevertheless verges on hagiography, Manning has Rieff practically out-Freuding Freud. Rieff is the "man of the moment" (p. 119), who is "willing to fight a cultural war" (p. 127) against a relativistic, self-indulgent, atheistic society. In the final chapter, Manning takes up the work of a number of sociologically-trained thinkers who have attempted to incorporate Freud into their work with some success.

The central problem with this book is *conceptual*. Throughout, the author confuses, muddies, or assumes for the purposes of his argument conceptual distinctions that are important to his discussion. Manning is arguing that sociology should concern itself with the "person's internal world" (p. 131) rather than the *sui generis* realm of the social scene that "comes off," as Goffman would say. Manning would have to explain why the subjective level of reality is a more truthful realm for sociologists to study than the social realm. In the same way, he assumes, rather than formulates, the taken-for-granted divide between self and society (a distinction the likes of Freud, Cooley, Mead, and Goffman did not treat as self-evident or a settled matter).

This problem arises again where he assumes that the abstract is less truthful than the concrete. For example, although he asserts in his preface that sociologists "must strive to identify the typical," (p. xii) he criticizes Chodorow for using ideal-typical constructions of gender relations, and Prager for creating composite patients. In both cases, Manning would have to explain *why* these devices offer less access to social realities than the concrete case-history he recommends. In other places, the reader finds Manning confusing notions like *level* of analysis with *scope* of analysis. For example, when he asserts that – "Although there have been efforts to portray symbolic interactionism as an approach

with a general theory of society, the consensus among sociologists has been that it is a micro rather than a macro approach” (p. 117) – Manning fails to explain why a “micro” analysis of society would necessarily be lacking in terms of generality. (By confusing level and scope in this assertion, he seems to suggest, for example, that more about the moral and social code of our world can be revealed by the study of the abstracted movement and behavior of capital than by the wink of a bank manager. Of course, thinkers like Goffman assumed just the opposite.) So while Manning treats intentional theoretical abstraction with suspicion, he seems naively to assume that one can somehow move to a level of abstraction by getting away from the “scene.” Again this assumes a passive sociological observer who, rather than owning up to her own abstractions, simply pulls back to “get a bigger picture” of what is happening. Oddly, this formulation runs directly counter to the involved “auto-ethnographic” method he recommends. Unlike Goffman’s scenes that come off in the welter of social life, Manning’s scenes are just there, to be empirically grasped.

At the end of the day, the sociologist that Manning argues for (who takes seriously the subjective life of people in the midst of their social worlds) is at odds with the sociologist who emerges from his implicit epistemology. Or, put more simply, Manning suggests that we do what he says, not what he does.

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The Good Rebel: Understanding Freedom and Morality. By Louis Groarke. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2003. 326 pages. ISBN 0838638996, 9780838638996.

The moral justification of rebellion has been debated almost since the inception of Western philosophy. In one of the earliest surviving texts of the tradition, Plato makes us privy to a supposed discussion between Socrates and the laws of Athens concerning whether the old man should make an illegal escape from a city that has unfairly condemned him to death. In this way the *Crito* introduces philosophy’s attempt to outline clearly and concisely the conditions necessary for rightful disobedience. The answer we seem to get in that founding dialogue is particularly dour: Socrates convinces himself that he may not leave his prison and escape execution, even though it is accepted that he has been unjustly convicted and sentenced. A famous principle that comes down to us from the *Crito*

is “persuade or obey” (51b-c), the principle reflecting as a kind of contract that gets established between civic authority and the citizenry. Even a tacit acceptance of the protection and benefits the community provides us with is enough to engender the contract for Socrates. Those who then come to feel that an authority is acting in an unjust manner have a right to attempt to persuade that authority to recognize that there is injustice, and hence to alter its behaviour; the authority must, of course, be open to the possibility of being so persuaded. But if the attempt at persuasion fails, then there is no recourse for the citizen but to obey the dictates of the authority. The fact that in his own case this means certain execution for Socrates shows just how far he was willing to take his principle. Plato’s early and sustained attempt at providing the conditions necessary for a justified rebellion thus furnishes us with an empty set: in an even loosely legitimated society, we are never justified in rebelling against civil authority, and there are no such things as “good rebels”, i.e., people who both openly rebel against the commandments of their society and who are morally good people.

Louis Groarke would have us take a second look. His book, *The Good Rebel*, aims at showing us that in fact there is a certain brand of rebel who provides us with possibly the best example of good moral behaviour we can find. In a broad sense, the argument rests on the position that rationality and freedom combine to produce moral conduct. The majority of the book is spent substantiating this claim; that being done, Groarke then moves on to elucidate how some rebels manifest rationality and freedom.

Rationality is explained in terms of living a coherent life, the coherence lying between one’s moral code and the way one behaves, or, as Groarke puts it, rationality “is the practice of an (internal and external) consistency” (p. 100). This might seem to be rather well on the way to the description of good rebellion itself, and not an analysis of rationality *per se*, but Groarke is concerned never to let rationality be cut off from activity. It is a foundational premise of this monograph that reason cannot absent itself from its circumstances and ascend to the heights of disinterested theory. “Pragmatists suggest a different approach. We begin in the world of action” (p. 94). Activity brings with it concerns about value, since a well-reasoned action has been chosen or valued above other possible actions. This pragmatic approach to rationality serves as the basis for an early highlight of the book, an attack on the “Why be Moral?” issue that has gained interest in contemporary philosophy. For Groarke, and presumably for all philosophers who share his view of an active reason, to ask the question, “Why be moral?” is to operate on the assumption that reason is not necessarily a moral and valuing faculty. Not surprisingly, one then finds it very difficult to argue reason into the position that it should be moral.

The problem is done away with once the notion that reason is inherently active is taken up, and surely Groarke has a good point here; even to ask the question, “Why be moral?” is to take a moral stance. “The problem with the why-be-moral account is that these philosophers direct their argument toward amoral agents. This is unrealistic. Except for the very young, the mentally handicapped, the comatose, or the insane, there are, within the human family, no such agents” (p. 40). Groarke’s position – that we cannot divest our reason from its moral and active character – is another mainstay of Western philosophy, and he calls on arguments from Augustine (pp. 46-47), Plato (p. 48), Aristotle (pp. 53-54), and Butler (pp. 54-55) for support. This is well and good, and we get a lively account of some of the history of philosophy on the issue of the moral character of reason. What is not so usual about Groarke’s analysis is his forcefulness in applying this insight back into the realm of action; since reason really is always moral, then it must always be active in the world as well. Here the case gets put to good use: aside from this attack on the why-be-moral camp, the particular service that this book does in taking up active reason comes in following up on required behavioural outcomes that such a position entails, especially in terms of rebellion. If it is true that reason inherently is concerned with and leads to action, then whenever it is the case that the activity an individual’s reason calls for is disallowed by the dictates of society (or whatever authority is in place), then that individual must rebel in order to act rationally. Accepting the claim that acting rationally is a good thing, the rational rebel can thus be a good rebel.

Rational agents are free on this account, since it seems they are not meaningfully constrained by laws handed down by an arbitrary authority. To the extent that we are rational, we are compelled (in a very strong sense, given the emphasis on reason’s active quality) to act according to our sense of what is right, but one immediately wonders if we have opened the doors to anarchy, since the legitimacy of social authority (or indeed any worldly authority) is downplayed in comparison to the role of an active reason. Groarke’s next project then, is to show how true freedom entails embracing morality. The principal opponent here is the position that freedom entails being able to do whatever one wants. A second highpoint of the book comes in the ensuing attack on a mindless liberalism that operates on this very notion of liberty without going one step further in trying to discern what it is that one should want (pp. 105-118). This is contrasted with an understanding of freedom as embracing what one thinks of as right. One willingly and gladly endorses an understood morality, and the rational nature of this kind of freedom is highlighted: “Autonomous agents are ruled by something larger than themselves, by the moral law, by the dictates of impersonal reason” (p. 110).

Clearly this conception of freedom is indebted to Kant, and Groarke knows it. But as we are giving an analysis of rebellion, Kant in effect gets turned on his head: “while Kant conceives of morality, in traditional terms, as a submission to authority, I want to use the good rebel as a conspicuous example of both freedom and morality” (p. 221). (As an aside, it is worth pointing out here how much Kant and Plato are in agreement on this issue. For Kant’s wholesale appreciation of the “persuade or obey” doctrine, see his *Metaphysics of Morals* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 95]). Occasionally an authority gets morality wrong (p. 100), and rational, free agents are committed to acting out against social injustice. Still, we are not led inevitably to anarchy because proper freedom entails a deep concern with morality. Once again, relying on an extensive amount of literature supporting the claim that there is an objectivity to morality, Groarke can close off concerns about social upheaval and the loss of personal security. Indeed, the inverse outcome should be true: since freedom involves embracing the moral life, and morality has an objective basis, the more free and rational humans become, the more their moral conduct will cohere and harmonize with that of others. Thus we get support for the claim that rebels provide an exemplary case of good behaviour, because in a bad society, good rebels are “conspicuously moral and conspicuously free” (p. 11). They are consummately moral because they have had to overcome the conditioning that all societies enforce on their citizens in achieving an understanding of the good, and they are conspicuously free because they have embraced their moral code to such an extent that they are willing to invoke great material suffering for the sake of that embrace. With this Groarke rests his case for the goodness of the good rebel.

All of this readies us for a reassessment of Socrates. The case of Socrates might seem to argue against Groarke’s analysis. Surely Socrates was both rational and free in the sense that Groarke outlines. The dialogues make us intimately aware of Socrates living a rationally coherent life, a life that was in conformity with his conception of the good, material consequences be what they may. Indeed, Socrates is free in a far more prosaic way at the crucial moment, being free to leave the prison and escape the death sentence, should he choose to do so (*Crito* 45a-46a). Yet Socrates conforms to the state’s (unjust) commands, choosing not to disobey as a rebel might. We have good reason then to characterize Socrates as a conformist, and possibly a conformist of the worst kind, blithely endorsing injustice on the part of the state. Evidence of this further claim comes out in his trial, when Socrates refers to his military service at Potidaea (28a), a campaign where Athens violently suppresses a rebellion – a rebellion that we have reason to believe qualifies as an act of good rebellion in Groarke’s terms. Socrates expressly tells his jurors to understand his behaviour there in terms of obedience, with the implication

being that the Potidaeans should have remained loyal as well. Far from a rebel, Socrates shows himself willing to engage in injustice on the part of the state, should it require him to do so. How are we to make sense of this conduct? Surely part of Socrates' moral reasoning comes from the claim that he has a duty to respect the dictates of a society that raised and provided the conditions for his existence (*Crito* 50e-51c) and that he had many opportunities to leave the city, should he not accept its nature (*Crito* 51e). This is an issue that gives the morality of rebellion some real bite, and one might have hoped that it would have been taken up by Groarke, there being a theory of rebellion on hand that may be rich enough to show how the free, moral agent who feels the weight of such a debt might see clear to an act of rebellion.

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Psychology and the Question of Agency. By Jack Martin, Jeff Sugarman, and Janice Thompson. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003. 186 pages. ISBN 0791457257, 9780791457252

The main purpose of *Psychology and the Question of Agency* is to provide a coherent conception and approach to the question of agency that does not disparage scientific work in psychology while resisting the kind of reductivism upon which the psychological enterprise rests. Human agency should not be reduced to purely biological and/or cultural determinants, nor need it be considered to arise mysteriously. Instead, it would seem that human agency arises nonmysteriously from within a developmental, historical and sociocultural context. Many philosophers have tried to devalue the importance of agency because it cannot be compartmentalized into a particular scientific viewpoint. It is for this reason that contemporary psychology has not been concerned with agency, understood as choosing and acting on the basis of one's own desires, beliefs, and reasons.

This book reinforces the important idea that agency should not be dismissed and undervalued, particularly since it is experienced within everyday life. Thus, theorists must revise the highly deterministic and reductive view of agency in favour of a more communal version. Psychologists and philosophers cannot afford to dismiss the fact that human beings are embodied active agents within the world. Such agency extends far beyond mere voluntariness, in that it encompasses the selection of possibilities that are broadly within an individual's historical

and sociocultural context. Thus, in most cases, human beings should be considered to be both determined and free.

Intentional action cannot be isolated from the sociocultural forces and developmental sequences that structure goal-related human activity in the world. The development of agency is shaped by culturally enacted patterns of stimulation, information, beliefs, and practices with respect to what constitutes optimal development. It is through their involvement within sociocultural contexts that individuals can begin to understand themselves as persons, to recognize the possibilities available to them, and to acquire the tools necessary to select and pursue such understandings and possibilities. This view is of a developmentally emergent, yet situated, deliberative agency that depends on the processes of self-interpretation and self-determination, processes that themselves have a developmental path. Human existence is marked by ambiguity and complexity, requiring individuals to interpret their situation and condition in ways that transcend current sociocultural meanings and practices. Biology and culture are insufficient on their own to account for the partially determined and transformative nature of human activity in the world. Human beings frame, choose, and execute their own actions in relation to their long- and short-term goals, which are usually discovered through their life experiences.

Human choice and action usually results from an irreducible understanding and reasoning. The underdetermination of human agency by extrinsic conditions does not mean that human agency is merely undetermined by extraneous features; it is not reducible to physical, biological, sociocultural, and/or random-unconscious processes. Instead, human agency is understood as a type of self-determination; however, it does not need to be exercised in each situation. It is only through the exercise of self-determination that humans can adjust to novel situations in ways that reflect social negotiation and transformation. The interpretation of situations is based on the understanding and reasoning of human agents.

Thus, an alternative conception of agency is necessary to revise the current reductionistic tendencies. The account developed in this book draws directly from the Heideggerian and hermeneutic traditions of philosophy. The Heideggerian revision of agency is a type of “in the world agency” exercised by embodied, developmentally emergent, psychological individuals within a sociocultural and developmental context. The reasoning involved in a hermeneutic type of agency is informal and practical, in that it reflects an agent's first-person perspective which is created through her unique history of experiential participation in the life-world into which she was born and has developed. A hermeneutic type of agency also reflects the normativity of sociocultural contexts, which acts as an inescapable background to an individual's intentions, reasons, and actions. An individual's actions are intelligible because (s)he has the

perspective of an agent deciding how to act in order to accomplish a purpose that relates to a particular goal in life. To understand such actions, an individual must appreciate them as resulting from a situated, deliberative agency.

Much of agency is a matter of selectively picking up practices that are available to us by virtue of our sociocultural embeddedness, and adapting possibilities such as psychological resources for deliberation, choice, and action. Individuals, therefore, develop practices, ideas and possibilities for acting that are already available within the sociocultural contexts. However, our emergence as persons cannot be reduced to these sociocultural aspects of reality. Agentic capabilities are developmentally emergent properties of human persons that are not possessed by any of the physical, biological, and/or sociocultural requirements of personhood. Reflective agency is a constitutive, emergent property of individuals which is developed from embodied, biological individuals active within a physical world of constraints and a sociocultural world of practices and conventions.

Thus, the sociopolitical view of agency that the authors develop is largely communitarian, since they believe that libertarians view human beings as radically autonomous individual selves. The liberal self is typically unencumbered by any reliance on the community for the development of agency, since it is usually abstracted from history, culture and experience. Thus, the libertarian view espouses an incomplete account of agency since one important aspect of experience is missing. Alternatively, on the communitarian view, our individuality can only be understood in conjunction with the social, cultural, historical and communal bonds into which individuals are born. Individuals depend, therefore, on their communal attachments for the ways in which they think of themselves.

In conclusion, this book presents a new and refined view of human agency that is neither reductionistic nor metaphysical in nature. The account of agency presented offers an alternative from the reductionistic and scientific frameworks that current psychologists and philosophers seem to abide by. The book will be relevant both to philosophers and psychologists who are interested in a developmental and historical notion of agency and autonomy that is defined in terms of community. Very few theorists have tried to effectively apply hermeneutic principles to agency because of the complexity and obscurity that is sometimes involved. The authors in this book have succeeded at demystifying agency by viewing it as an everyday concept that most reflective individuals could develop.

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