

Philosophy, Culture, and Traditions

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INTRODUCTION: RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY, AND CULTURE: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

Rajesh C. Shukla

In recent years we have noticed a growing religious and cultural revival in various parts of the world. The reasons for this revival may be many but for the sake of clarity we can broadly categorize them under two heads. On the one hand, there appears to be a renewed public interest in the understanding and construction of the religious and cultural identity of individuals and the role that such identity plays in social and political discourse of our times (Habermas 2010, 114-118). Millions of people identify themselves on the basis of their religion and culture and find meaning and satisfaction in their spiritual and cultural beliefs. On the other hand, some have also used religious and cultural commitments to justify some of the most heinous crimes in human history, forcing us even harder to consider whether religion and culture can serve a common public good or if they remain an impediment to human progress; this has been argued by many thinkers in the Enlightenment era (Cassirer 2009, 47-49). According to the Enlightenment view, the realization of true human progress and potential is virtually impossible as long as human beings remain constrained by their narrow religious and cultural commitments, together with other pathological emotions.

Many have argued that the Enlightenment project, particularly its absolute trust in human reasoning as the fundamental criterion of thought and value, fails to appreciate the role of religion, culture, and tradition in human life, leading to an illusory rational and cosmopolitan ideal unattainable in experience (MacIntyre 2008, 51-61). The difficulty is not that such an ideal cannot be achieved because of a lack of resources – human reasoning, thought and commitment – but because the ideal itself is inherently flawed (MacIntyre 2008, 61). The overzealous insistence on human reason as the ultimate arbitrator of all disputes, conceptualizes reason in a formal sense that robs it of its human character and connotations. In other words, the Enlightenment project sets up an impossible and fictitious ideal and for that very reason alone it must be challenged – or abandoned – if we want to engage in meaningful social discourse (MacIntyre 2008, 59-61). This conclusion, however, has seemed to me to be somewhat rushed and problematic.

It was an uneasiness with the above conclusion that made me think about the relation of religion, philosophy and culture – leading to the organization of an international conference on the topic in September 2013, at Saint Paul University, Ottawa, Canada. After some engaging conversations with my colleague, Dr. Sophie Cloutier, it became even more obvious to me that there is some truth in all three positions outlined above,

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namely 1) that religion and culture provide us with the essential features of an individual's identity 2) that they have caused much violence in the recent past or, more precisely, much violence has been committed in their name, and 3) that the Enlightenment project is correct in its contentions – at least partially – that reason and philosophical discourse can unravel the lofty possibilities entailed in human life and being, helping us overcome divisive religious and cultural differences and the politics associated with them. The focus of the conference that followed had, as its purpose, "to examine the intersections of religion, philosophy and culture, and to illuminate their common characteristics as well." The essays in this volume are the revised and vetted versions of some of the papers presented at the conference. I am thankful to all the participants in the conference for their interest and enthusiasm in supporting the event and also for their contributions to this volume. I am especially grateful to the editor of the journal *Philosophy, Culture, and Traditions*, Professor William Sweet, for his active involvement in the conference and also for his help in the publication process. Finally, the organization of this conference would not have been possible without the financial support of Saint Paul University and its Research Center in Public Ethics and Governance. We thank them both in equal measure.

CONCEPTUAL PRIORITY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In a conceptual sense, religion, philosophy, and culture constitute three different domains of enquiry, pertaining to different aspects of truth and reality. Religion is said to be about the highest conceptions of truth and being, underlying the most meaningful and worthy aspirations of humankind (Bellah 2011, 34-37). It provides us with an explanation of the known and the unknown, the knowable and the unknowable, the real and the unreal, and the existential and the imaginary. In other words, religions – at least most of them – offer a comprehensive explanation and commentary not only on what the human mind can see and grasp, but also on the things that fall outside its immediate perception and grasp (Royce 2001, 187). Considered this way, religion turns out to be the foundation of all knowing and being in the world, claiming a genuine ontological priority over all other disciplines, including philosophy and culture. It can be argued, for instance, that religious beliefs and commitments shape the thoughts and thought processes of people in a substantial way (Bellah 2011, xvii), making it impossible for the believer of a particular religious faith to appreciate alternative conceptions of truth and reason.¹ It is not surprising then that we often notice the impact of religious beliefs and convictions on the unfolding of human life and culture.

The Judeo-Christian belief that all human beings are created equal and that they all possess an equal claim to the bounty of nature and natural resources, is often identified, among other factors, as an important source of inspiration for cultural beliefs that support a democratic system of

governance as well as scientific progress (Landes 2006, 42). More strongly, the political liberty and equality of human beings, which have become hallmarks of Western society, have their ontological underpinnings in the Judeo-Christian religions – even if these political ideals were pitched against the institutional manifestations of that ontology in the first place. Likewise, Western scientific progress, industrialization, and the resulting environmental degradation, too, can in some sense be traced to the religious belief system that has dominated Western thought (Taylor 2005, 79). The notion that nature and natural resources are created for humans does little to improve the lives of the rest of the biotic community. On the contrary, such notions lead to a massive exploitation of natural resources, inflicting serious harm on the environment (Taylor 2005, 77). Opinions might differ regarding the intensity and depth of the above interconnections of religion and culture in the Western context, but that is beside the point. My point is simply this: religious beliefs do shape an individual's life and culture and are manifested in and through them so much so that religion and culture sometimes become synonymous in a specific sense of the term. In this specific sense, Western culture may be said to contain the impressions of Christianity just as Middle Eastern culture reflects the Islamic religious tradition. In addition, the actual implications of this cultural and religious interconnection are never straightforward, and serious criticisms have occurred: "Examine the history of all nations and all centuries and you will always find men subject to three codes: the code of nature, the code of society, and the code of religion; and constrained to infringe upon all three codes in succession, for these codes were never in harmony. The result of this has been that there never was in any country...a real man, a real citizen, or a real believer" (Diderot, cited in Cassirer 2009, 135).

One way of addressing the above tension among multiple centers of an individual's loyalty could be a genuine adoption of reason and criticism as the standards of our intellectual and aesthetic judgments, and of our personal and social obligations. This emphasis on reason, and consequently philosophy, takes different form among various Enlightenment thinkers – and in other traditions too (Radhakrishnan 2006, 12)² – but common to them all is an unquestionable trust in the delivering capacity of human reason. The implication is that reason alone can free human beings from the yoke of ignorance, narrow mindedness, and problematic religious and cultural practices. In the same spirit, we see Immanuel Kant arguing that moral laws must be rationally constructed and that they must not be influenced by an individual's feelings and emotions (Kant 2012, 12). The general problem with the Enlightenment thinkers, Immanuel Kant being no exception, appears to be that of an oversimplification of human agency in terms of its abstract rational capacities, and neglecting practical aspects of its thought, culture, and being: "It is not simply that every philosophy has its source in a particular culture, but that it can never break free of that source... Language and values are rooted in culture. Indeed it is from our cultures that we learn what counts as philosophy (as distinct from literature, science, history or

religion) and how to distinguish philosophy from the religious, the scientific, the axiological and the literary” (Sweet 2012, 3).

But what does it mean to say that philosophy can never “break free” from its cultural context? One way to approach Sweet’s contention would be to hold that philosophical investigations are carried out in a historical and cultural context, and that they can never escape their cultural parameters (and prejudices associated with them). On this view, culture would seem to constitute the limits of philosophical enquiry. It is extremely doubtful if one can legitimately uphold this view without compromising the integrity and independence of philosophical thinking. Neither Sweet nor the Enlightenment thinkers in general appear to approve of the cultural limits on philosophy in the above sense. However, there is another way in which culture can provide the frame of reference for philosophy: philosophical enquiries take place in a cultural context and they can never be totally divorced from their cultural context. This is where Sweet and others who have similar argumentative commitments – MacIntyre, for instance – differ from the Enlightenment tradition. On the Enlightenment view of reason and philosophy, it is possible to transcend the cultural contexts, even though temporarily, to comprehend and serve the universally binding principles of human thought and association. For MacIntyre and Sweet, philosophy may not be culture bound but it remains culture specific nonetheless. It is so because philosophical investigations and styles take shape in a social and cultural milieu and tradition, and “the shared values, expectations and patterns of intelligibility of a culture inform the cognitive expressive process of an individual thinker in a fundamental way” (Sweet 2012, 322).

REASON, CULTURE AND CRITICISM

Sweet’s above remark regarding the cultural context of philosophy raises further questions regarding the proper role of reason in cognition. Given that culture supplies the background for philosophical enquiry – and other rational investigations, too – one must ask what is its proper contribution in cognition? Does culture provide us with the alpha and omega of knowledge, or does knowledge happen in a cultural context, signifying its influences on an individual’s understanding of the world? Moreover, how does a cultural account of reason differ from non-cultural accounts – which might be completely rational, non-rational, or even irrational – if it differs at all? None of these questions can be settled in a way that constructs reason, culture, and knowledge in abstraction, having no direct bearing on human life and experience. In other words, our response must be practical and demonstrative.

In response to the first two questions, Alasdair MacIntyre has argued that human cognition, value, and normative judgments have a cultural context, and that reason must return to social practice in search of their meaning and coherence (MacIntyre 2008, 227-228). It is the practice and the goods that are internal to it that will determine the acceptance or

non-acceptance of a principle or policy in a purposive way. This recourse to practice is especially true in the case of moral and political philosophy, which is the point of our interest in this essay. What is right and just, for instance, can be defined in various ways, but the justification of such definitions can come only from the concepts that are grounded in a particular human practice (MacIntyre 2008, 231-233). For example, justice pertains to ‘fairness’ and ‘dessert’ but neither of them can be adequately explained if they are removed from their practice (and cultural context). What is fair and what is unfair is itself a normative question, necessitating further clarifications: Fair and unfair for whom, under what conditions and on what grounds? These questions cannot be settled outside the context in which they arise. So, for MacIntyre, moral and political concepts – virtue and justice, for instance – 1) have a cultural connotation that determines their social application, and 2) bereft of this cultural connotation they become “incommensurable” and even meaningless. MacIntyre’s first argument has gathered much support in contemporary scholarship, but his second argument remains very controversial and problematic. I wish to expound on the second argument as it has some serious implications for the conception of reason itself.

The incommensurability of justice and virtue, particularly in its Aristotelian formulation that informs MacIntyre’s thinking, implies that these concepts are so ‘Athenian’ – supposing a particular type of human agency and world view – that they cannot be articulated in the contemporary political context which is un-Athenian and modern (MacIntyre 2008, 226-227, 252). Contemporary social and political structures are individualistic and selfish and, unlike the ancient Greeks, we do not believe in chiding our fellow citizens for their personal moral inadequacies. As a matter of fact, the notions of personal and social space, as we use them in the contemporary political and moral discourse, are totally absent in Greek thought. Since our cultural grounding is not the same as Aristotle’s, his remarks on virtue and justice seem very unfamiliar to us. We do like a few things Aristotelian and try to mimic them, but our efforts fall short. Moreover, no one should be blamed for this failure, as its reason resides in culture, i.e., modern culture, which has emerged out of the Enlightenment conception of rationality.

It seems now as if MacIntyre has put reason in a bind. He argues that reason has cultural roots, recognizes that cultures evolve and change, and then criticizes the Enlightenment conception of rationality for lacking in a cultural commitment. This lack of cultural commitment is particularly obvious in the abstract rational construction of cosmopolitan moral and political order by the Enlightenment thinkers. I have already argued in favor of the intimacy of reason and culture, so that is not the issue here. The question is: If the above intimacy has to be explained in a way such that reason is reduced to culture, losing its distinct cognitive status and value, or in a more dialogical fashion, where culture provides the content of rational investigation but not its limits, then the Enlightenment’s extravagant trust in

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reason – even if MacIntyre is right – cannot be corrected by a similar trust in human practice.³ Human practice, too, has its prejudice. In other words, our understanding of reason as well as of culture may require a simultaneous re-ordering. Undoubtedly, culture plays a significant role in our moral and political lives, but it is equally true that reason can contribute immensely in the clarification of various issues, if not their total resolution:

What reason is, and what it can do, can never be known by its results but only by its function. And its most important function consists in its power to bind and to dissolve. It dissolves everything merely factual, all simple data of experience, and everything believed on the evidence of revelation, tradition and authority; and it does not rest content until it has analyzed all these things into their simplest component parts and into their last elements of belief and opinion. Following this work of dissolution begins the work of construction (Cassirer 229, 13).

Reason's power to cross-examine every known source of knowledge, including an individual's experience, factual data, and religious and moral authority, helps us clarify their nature and the problems associated with them. Moreover, this cross-examination paves the way for a critical self-reflection on the part of various participants, contributing to public criticism and refinement of various beliefs and practices. When a belief is exposed to reason and fails to stand its test, it makes a rational person think about the legitimacy of that belief. Not all beliefs can be rendered to this rational test – and that is all right. We should not confuse the scope of a method with its legitimate quality and worth. It is one thing to say that reason can disclose all truths and quite another to say that reason can help us clarify the conditions of our knowledge, removing ignorance and prejudices in our lives. This removal of ignorance and prejudice requires dissolution of the belief system that sustains them and the construction of a new system that can make-up for the difference. The new system shall state new principles of truth and rational investigation as well.

Against this rational construction of truth, it is argued that every subject matter of knowledge can be theoretically further analyzed until its analysis has disclosed the simplest constituents. But the simplest constituents cannot be reached because methodological commitments do not allow that. As a result, subjectivism, Nietzschean prescriptivism, and even nihilism seem like a logical outcome of the dissolving process of reason (MacIntyre 2008, 113-114). This conclusion would appear correct only if we accept a particular conception of rationality that associates the functioning of reason with its simplest instantiation. I will argue in the next section that reason is partly mental and partly habitual or cultural, and that it is a mistake not to recognize this interconnection of reason, habit, and culture in given a context.

INTERCONNECTIONS OF RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY, AND CULTURE

The popular conceptions of religion in modern times seem to associate it with an individual's private beliefs, and her personal and spiritual convictions. Whether such beliefs and convictions can be supported on rational grounds or not, is not considered an appropriate question. On the contrary, such questions are discouraged for numerous reasons, including religious freedom and the protection of religious belief in public life. Moreover, we have seen in the previous section that the conception of rationality itself has a cultural (and even a religious) overtone, and cannot be applied in an abstract and formal sense. Religions deal with questions of ultimate ends, such as the origin and purpose of human life and the universe, and John Stuart Mill has rightly remarked, though in an ethical context, that the questions of ultimate ends are not amenable to a direct proof and argumentation (Mill 2010, 52). Alongside the protection of religious freedom and conscience, there is another aspect that deserves our consideration. Religious beliefs and practices evolve with time – not at a core ontological level, but at the level of social practice. There are many practices that were considered religious at one time but that have totally lost their relevance now. This suggests that some practices that we defend on religious grounds now may not be defensible in future. Likewise, there were many cultural practices that were solidly defended for centuries but have completely lost favor in present times. Assuming that there are still such religious and cultural practices, we need to think about how they can be resolved peacefully and without posturing. I wish to forward three arguments to the same end.

One way to identify the religious and cultural practices that stand in need of change is to adopt reason as a social criterion for conversation and judgment, as espoused in Enlightenment philosophy (Cassirer 2009, 9). If there are religious and social practices that have become outdated but are continuing nonetheless, it may be useful to question them rationally, not impulsively. Calm thinking and engagement can foster a climate of trust and friendship among the followers of a practice and its critics. Critics may belong ideally to the same culture and faith – or may be from outside. Internal criticisms are normally much better received than external, which requires even a higher degree of sympathy towards the people whose beliefs and practices are discussed and criticized. For instance, a cursory look at the nineteenth and twentieth century religious and social reforms in Hinduism, including the stopping of child marriages, caste discriminations, and the inequality of women, shows that they were primarily led by Hindu religious and political leaders. External critiques such as Annie Besant and her Theosophical Society (1875) added to the debates in Hindu society, but they were very sympathetic in their criticism and support.

Next, a thoughtful critique of a religious and cultural practice can lead to its clarification, improvement, or abandonment depending upon the

depth of the questions raised against it. It can encourage people to think through the implications of positions they hold and the consequences that would follow if someone else took a similar position in a similar situation; we can call this the religious and cultural parity argument. It begins by accepting unconditionally the religious and cultural merit of various claims and practices, and refuses to judge their religious and cultural metaphysics and ontology. Now this unconditional acceptance of religious beliefs and cultural practices can be either political (where an individual does not know what these practices are but remains committed towards them on political grounds) or rational (where one knows something about the nature of these beliefs). Political acceptance is to accept all religious beliefs in order to be politically correct. The rational approach, too, accepts those beliefs, as the commitment to do is unconditional, but keeps the door of rational dialogue and criticism open. Such dialogue and criticism can in the long run help one resolve some of the problematic religious and cultural practices, and strengthen the bonds of civic life and citizenship.

Finally, to deny reason the role of correction in religious and social practices is to overlook the historical progress of humankind throughout the world. There was a time when child marriages and the inequality of women were defended on religious and cultural grounds, but the same cannot be sustained now. This does not mean that there are no child marriages and that the aspiration of women's equality has been achieved fully, but that rational probing has exposed the religious and cultural prejudices, superstitions, and support system involved. So the invocation of reason and criticism in religion and culture is relevant, not simply in an instrumental sense where it reinforces the presence of religious and cultural practices, but also in an intrinsic and critical sense where it discloses their true implications, separating them from their false misconceptions and superstitions.

DEVELOPING THE THEMES

The authors in this volume engage and pursue a number of the preceding issues.

In his paper "Philosophy of Religion, Meta-Religion, and the Expressive Dimension of Meta-Religious Discourse," Gordon Davis sets out to explain the difficulties involved in recognizing philosophy of religion as a distinctive area of academic enquiry and research within philosophy. He argues that most criticisms of the distinctiveness of philosophy of religion rally around the argument that a sum total of parts can only constitute a "putative wholeness," not a distinctive whole, and that philosophy of religion is nothing but a collection of various philosophical issues debated in metaphysics, ethics, and axiology. The difficulty with the above interpretation, Davis argues, is that it pays sufficient attention neither to the 'meta-religious' nor to the 'meta-ethical' aspects of the philosophy of religion. Accordingly, the main purpose of Davis's paper is "to bring some order to an ill-defined category, that of the 'meta-religious'; but the aim of

doing that is to attempt a fresh start at delineating the structure and scope of philosophy of religion as distinct theoretical discipline” and “to make progress on the vexed question of where religious pluralism stands – or should stand – in relation to realism and relativism.” To bolster his arguments, Davis builds on his original insights about non-Western philosophical traditions, Buddhism in particular, that are more sympathetic to ‘meta-religious’ discourse and its cultural grounding than mainstream Western philosophical thought.

In his work “Critical Thinking versus Ideology: Challenging Education, Culture, and Religion,” Ramón Martínez de Pisón contends that there is a noticeable lack of critical thinking in contemporary education and culture – and a rise in ideological thinking among people; the consequences of this are becoming more and more obvious each day. The rise in prejudice towards Muslims after September 11, 2001, the commodification of education in recent years, and the general loss of differentiating capacity among students are symptomatic of the above problem. Martínez de Pisón argues that if we want to address this problem we must re-orient our educational system from information-imparting mechanisms to reliable sources of knowledge and wisdom, so that our students can fully grasp the implications of a view or position prior to subscribing to it. Such knowledge and wisdom, Martínez de Pisón maintains, will protect them from cultivating irrational prejudices and accepting unsustainable ideological claims.

Anthony Chinedu Osuji discusses the relation of religion, philosophy, and culture via theology in his contribution, “Religion, Philosophy, and Culture: A Christian Theological Perspective.” Osuji argues that philosophy and culture are crucial to the appropriation of a religious belief, and that the historical manifestations of Christian faith from ancient to modern times support the above contention. This is because the mentioned areas of enquiry and cognition focus on the big questions pertaining to fundamental aspects of human life, including what is the “origin, meaning and goal of existence.” Even though these questions have a philosophical and cultural context, their true theological meaning stands in its own right and cannot be reduced to “context and history” or to any other temporal consideration. For Osuji, theology must provide a link between the temporal and historical, and the non-temporal and spiritual, offering new spiritual solutions and directions when history and culture reach their limits.

Timothy Harvie’s essay, “Thomas Aquinas, Amartya Sen, and a Critical Economic Discourse,” raises questions regarding the normative justifications of the present market economic system, pointing out its moral limits and suggesting interesting solutions. Following Michael J. Sandel, who has argued that “the most fateful change that unfolded during the past three decades was not an increase of greed [but]...the expansion of markets, and of market values, into spheres of life where they don’t belong” (Sandel, 2012, 7), Harvie provides an interesting explanation of the economy-centered reasoning that has brought us to this moment. He argues that,

unlike its stated claims, economics as a science is neither completely “dispassionate nor objective,” and that it requires other modes of judgment to provide for its own intelligibility and assessment of market outcomes. To point out the difficulties associated with the raw self-interest based neo-liberal economic models and the contemporary market economy, Harvie draws upon the works of Thomas Aquinas and Amartya Sen, emphasizing the role of justice in the social domain, insisting that economy must enhance human capabilities and flourishing, not merely material gratification of the few.

In his work “Love as a Political Concept: A Short Genealogy Elucidating the Background of Anders Breivik’s Manifesto,” Marc De Kesel engages in a philosophical analysis of the concept of love in the Christian religious tradition and its political impact on an individual’s understanding of Europe as a historical, geographical and even mythical landscape. De Kesel argues that earlier Christians understood love in a pure religious sense of ‘*agapè*,’ that made people live together in peace as brothers and sisters, transcending the limits of *eros*, which represented “unsatisfied and unsatisfiable desires.” However, this idea of love has been through many transformations and has been open to many interpretations, distortions, and even abuse in some cases. De Kesel contends that the politicization of love started very early, continued in the Middle Ages, and has resurfaced in the modern times in terms of love of nation states and other political associations – Europe, for instance – leading to violent inner struggles, public violence, chaos, and Islamophobia in the case of Anders Breivik. It is incumbent upon Christians now to find ways to make up for the misdeeds of Breivik and show that their tradition can still help us “build of a modern [and] free democracy,” based on the original idea of *agapè*.

Richard Feist’s essay, “Thinking Intervention: From Westphalian Non-Intervention to Military Humanitarian Intervention,” engages in a philosophical and historical analysis of armed humanitarian intervention in modern times. Feist takes note of the declining use of force in various situations, including parental relations such as disciplining a child, and argues that the humanitarian use of force, too, has its limits, particularly in policing wars. Rejecting the claim that there can be a purely ethical military intervention for ethical ends, he stipulates that there is always a mix of motives in the international arena and that the behavior of modern nation states substantiates it: “The problem is not whether there is a mix, but what kind of mix is realistic and ethical at the same time.” It would be probably more effective and realistic, he contends, for the realization of humanitarian purposes to highlight the elements of oversight, criticism, warning, and refusal to sell arms to guilty parties in the international arena. Accordingly, Feist concludes that human catastrophes do not simply “break out” from nowhere, and that they can be contained, even stopped, if timely measures are taken by powerful nation states.

Rajesh C. Shukla’s essay, “Ethics, Politics, and Public Life: An Aristotelian Account,” provides us with a conceptual examination of ethics,

politics, and public life, and their theoretical interconnections. He takes the separation of ethical and political ends as the hallmark of contemporary liberal democracies, arguing that this separation, despite its merits, is replete with internal problems. More explicitly, for Shukla, the political goals pertaining to the good life of citizens necessitate a cultivation of virtues in the social and political lives of citizens, including the virtues of justice and civic friendship. An outright separation of the ethical and the political impedes the realization of such goals in public life, and must be critiqued.

In his essay “*Fonder le vivre-ensemble à travers l'éducation: L'apport du cours d'éthique et de culture religieuse*,” Martin Samson reflects on the current political and social problems confronting Quebec, focusing on the issue of inclusive citizenship. He argues that education can serve as an important tool in the development of ideas concerning social and political togetherness among Quebecers and that it can contribute to an enlightened sense of humanism and citizenship among them. Samson also reinforces the need to redefine what it means to be a Quebecer in the present day and age, and how this redefinition can strengthen the bonds of “togetherness,” civic values, and participation, contributing to the development of a just and fair society in Quebec.

In her contribution “*Humanisme et pluralité: une pratique du jugement pour les débats publics*,” Sophie Cloutier argues that reason has been at the front and center of Western philosophical enquiry and discourse for a long time, starting with Plato and attaining a renewed moral pedestal in the Enlightenment tradition. However, this priority of reason has been challenged on numerous grounds, requiring a reflection over its role in the philosophical and political discourse of our times. For instance, Herder criticizes the Kantian conception of universal reason, arguing that the development of reason is related to culture. Recently, many multiculturalist thinkers and communitarians have built on Herder’s critique of Kant, but their position, too, suffers from the drawbacks of cultural relativism when they overemphasize the role of culture in the construction of an individual’s reason and identity. The above problem, Cloutier contends, can be probably resolved in the light of Hannah Arendt’s conception of human judgment that remains open to inter-subjective communications, avoiding the traps of rational absolutism and cultural relativism.

In his work “*Référence chrétienne, culture et historicité modernes*,” Louis Perron makes a compelling case in favor of the reconceptualization of Christianity in the light of contemporary secular challenges and the process of secularization in the Western world. In particular, he asks, what it means to be a Christian in a post-secular and post-Christian world, and whether the world in which we live, particularly the Western world, can be characterized that way. There are no straightforward answers to the above questions. It is clear, though, that we observe a growing movement among many in the West to be a cultural Christian, without having a serious adherence to the religious and moral doctrines associated with that faith. Whether this is possible or not is basically a scholarly question for people of faith, but its

practical consequences are manifest in the public spheres of Western society. Perron considers various arguments and possibilities pertaining to the secular and religious divide, using them meticulously to construct his philosophical position. In essence, he remains sympathetic to the ontological aspects of Christian faith, but makes a strong case for the reconceptualization of Christianity in view of contemporary secular challenges.

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NOTES

¹ This can easily happen if a religious doctrine is radical and militant in its insistence on an exclusive conception of truth, rejecting other possible formulations.

² S. Radhakrishnan remarks: "Even if religions claim to be results of divine revelation, the forms and contents are necessarily the products of the human mind" (Radhakrishnan 2016, 12).

³ For a detailed analysis of MacIntyre's argument, see Andrew Mason's "MacIntyre on Liberalism and its Critics" (1994): 239-238. Mason argues that MacIntyre's views on incommensurability remind us of the Enlightenment conception of rational resolvability, which implies that "...if an argument is a good one it must be persuasive for any reasonable person who accepts its premises, and hence its conclusion is a potential object of a rational consensus among all reasonable persons who accept its premises" (Mason, 239-240).

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION, META-RELIGION, AND THE EXPRESSIVE DIMENSION OF META-RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE

Gordon Davis

The idea of maintaining the philosophy of religion as a distinctive area within philosophy is a contested one, given that it seems to highlight a mere cross-section of themes in metaphysics, ethics and axiology, and given the suspicion among some philosophers that its putative wholeness comes to no more than the sum of these parts. In defence of its claim to distinctiveness, however, I propose here to identify and explain a largely unnoticed feature of some work in the philosophy of religion, a feature that directly or indirectly concerns even philosophers of religion who avoid or eschew it. The feature in question is one I will call ‘meta-religious’, but in a special sense, which I explicate in the first section below. My main aims in this paper are to explicate this special sense of ‘meta-religion’, and to highlight the fact that while it may be a new (or perhaps revived) phenomenon in contemporary philosophy of religion in the West – and as such warrants the coining of a new term¹ – it was both practised and thematized in ancient Buddhist philosophy. The distinctive sort of philosophical discourse I shall discuss is one that has been employed in both Western theology and in the philosophy of religion, but generally not thematized in the former, and rarely avowed or noticed (when present) even in the latter. The different degrees of thematization in Western and non-Western contexts may pose an interesting new problem for those who subscribe to John Hick’s religious pluralism (e.g. Hick 2004), since the difference may be taken by some to vindicate the idea of according a certain priority to approaches pioneered in Buddhist philosophy. (Hick himself highlighted the insights of Buddhism quite prominently; but he did not and could not accord them any priority.) Rather than assess religious pluralism, however, I propose to cite it as an *example* of ‘meta-religion’ – something more specific and more distinctive than philosophy of religion as a whole, but for better or worse, integral to the latter’s unique place in philosophical discourse.

In some ways, the closest cousin of the philosophy of religion is meta-ethics – not only because of the direct role of the latter in the debate over the meaningfulness of religious language, but also because of indirect echoes of the debate over realism and anti-realism, a debate significantly shaped by developments in meta-ethics. The very notion of *meta-ethics*, however, raises interesting and relevant questions. Considering that issues surrounding realism and meaning are not ethical issues, meta-ethics cannot be an ‘ethics of ethics’ – but then, is it perhaps misnamed? And yet, in transcending first-order ethics, it could aptly be described as engaged in *meta-theory*. As such, it is analogous to many discussions in the philosophy of religion, which could be called ‘meta-theoretical’ in at least one reflexive sense, where the examination of religious perspectives is conducted in a

primarily theoretical way (which we might say is, *inter alia*, non-emotive, non-aspirational, non-homiletic and not overtly partisan). But a different set of – perhaps equally central – themes in the philosophy of religion concerns what I will call ‘meta-religion’, invoking a *different* reflexive sense, which stands in contrast to a purely ‘meta-theoretical’ orientation.

There will be occasion, later in the paper, to consider how meta-religion is conditioned by *culture*. There are cultures and subcultures in philosophy, just as there are in any religious tradition. But increasingly, in mainstream Western philosophy, subcultures tend not to mark themselves off by exhibiting a distinctive culture in the sense of *style*; rather, increasingly they do so by making explicit where they diverge on the premises, conclusions or methods of their counterparts. In the sense of involving style(s) of presentation, *culture* has a contested place in philosophy, whereas it is more noticeable in theology, and naturally quite pervasive in other forms of religious prose. The aspect of culture that I will appeal to in explicating the nature of meta-religion, however, is one that is unquestionably present in religious art and music, but also in religious scripture, and even in much theological writing. In contexts where we will want to recall its breadth, I will call it the ‘expressive dimension’ of meta-religion; whereas, when I refer to its specific characteristics, I call these ‘*pleosemiotic*’ features (in the second section of this paper, I analyze this dimension with the help of both aesthetics and semiotics). Once I have outlined these features, I think we will find that it serves as a reasonable candidate for what distinguishes religious writing and discourse from meta-theoretical areas of philosophy such as meta-ethics as well as certain analytic approaches to philosophy of religion.

I said that one main aim of this paper is to bring some order to an ill-defined category, that of the ‘meta-religious’; but the aim of doing *that* is, in turn, to attempt a fresh start at delineating the structure and scope of philosophy of religion as a distinct theoretical discipline. These, then, are two nested aims of this essay. Yet another aim is to make progress on the vexed question of where religious pluralism stands – or should stand – in relation to realism and relativism. And meanwhile, I will explore two implications that emerge out of a comparison of Western debates with ancient Buddhist ones. Firstly, it turns out that appreciating the meta-theoretical sophistication in Buddhist philosophy may drive a pluralist so far away from a Western orientation that we find ourselves facing the mirror image of a common Christian objection to pluralism: one tradition may turn out to offer a more advanced vantage point, thus overturning the inclusive spirit of pluralism. (The particular Christian objection I allude to here is, in essence, that very point, just with a different candidate in mind for what would qualify as the ‘more advanced’ tradition.) Secondly, and perhaps surprisingly, we find that some ancient and medieval Buddhist texts actually *anticipate* the distinction between meta-religion and more purely meta-theoretical approaches. I conclude, then, on a note that is both historical and methodological: we can see, in these reflections, yet another way in which

the philosophy of religion has been held back by an overreliance on examples from the Western tradition and a corresponding lack of attention to both non-Western religions and non-Western philosophical traditions.

META-RELIGION, META-SOTERIOLOGY, AND THEIR PLACE IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

The prefix ‘meta-’ has been used in a bewildering variety of ways, and its overuse has occasionally generated resistance to neologisms based on it; but in some ways, we would benefit from having more – and more nuanced – prefixes of this kind, rather than fewer. I will presently highlight two distinct uses for this prefix, which need to be disentangled if we are to make out key structural elements in the discipline of the philosophy of religion. Before doing that, I will begin by stating what may seem obvious: ‘meta-’ is neither an intensifier nor an indicator of intensification. This will seem obvious to some, but not to others, since the prefix is sometimes used casually to indicate some kind of intensification of a type or style of thinking or theorizing. (In this way, for example, ‘meta-theory’ may seem *highly theoretical*.) There is presumably a suggestion of intensification if someone is described as becoming ‘religious about being religious’; but that would not be a proper use for ‘meta-religion’. Meta-religion cannot just involve a greater degree or intensity of religiosity; rather, it must somehow involve reflection or reflexivity.

Nonetheless, on hearing this neologism, it would be understandable for someone to bring to mind the idea of ‘religiousness about being religious’, since some forms of meta-theory involve an analogous sort of reflexivity. Meta-philosophy is indeed the ‘philosophy of philosophy’; a meta-narrative is itself a narrative; and meta-logic is not just reflection on the study of logic, but specifically the *logical* formalization of procedures and principles for the analysis of logical proofs. The disentangling I promised begins, however, with seeing that this is not how the ‘meta-’ prefix operates in the naming of many other types of meta-theory or meta-theorizing. Metaphysics is not the physics of what happens in discussions of physics, and meta-linguistics is not, or not primarily, a linguistic analysis of linguistics textbooks. ‘Metaphysics’ is in some ways an idiosyncratic piece of nomenclature (despite being historically the first taxonomical use of ‘meta-’); but there are many other cases like meta-linguistics, and one in particular will be important to us here: *meta-ethics*. As I noted in the introduction, meta-ethics is not the ethics of doing ethics, or even the ethics of discussing ethics; it is simply reflection on the nature of ethical discourse. This level of reflection uses the tools of semantics, epistemology and metaphysics, not the tools of moral or ethical discussion; in fact, the range of tools is quite open-ended, except that typically they should not include concepts that operate normatively in the object discourse. Insofar as a first-order discussion of ethics involves both ethical concepts and general concepts, meta-ethics is indeed self-reflexive, but I will call it ‘*openly self-*

reflexive'. (In some of the phrases that follow, 'self-reflexive' is admittedly redundant when qualifying a *meta*-theory; however, it ceases to be redundant when 'openly' or its contraries are qualifying 'self-reflexive'.)

By contrast, a meta-theoretical discipline can be called '*type-self-reflexive*' if central features of the object discourse are also central to the way in which the higher-order reflection on it is meant to be conducted (as in meta-logic and meta-philosophy).² Before broaching the debate about how to define 'religion', we can apply this distinction to the notion of '*meta-theology*'. An *openly self-reflexive meta-theology* would investigate the semantics and epistemology of theological discourse, and a proponent of such a *meta-theology* might (but of course need not) advance a non-cognitivist analysis that would directly or indirectly debunk the field of theology in its traditional form(s). On the other hand, a *type-self-reflexive meta-theology* would reflect on the status of theological discourse by – at least in part – invoking key themes in theology, e.g., the divine or blessed nature of human reason, as well as modes of expression that are essentially characteristic of theological discourse.

In a moment, I will formulate some simplified terminology to refer to *type-self-reflexive meta-religion* and its contraries, including *openly self-reflexive theories of religion*. But first, I will narrow the relevant sense of 'religion' to religious *discourse* – understood, however, to include all kinds of reflection and communication about religion, both that which is practically or salvifically oriented (i.e., normative) and that which is theoretically, empirically or historically oriented (i.e., non-normative).³ Due to this delimitation, there will admittedly be two kinds of openly self-reflexive theory of religion – religious studies in general (in the modern academic sense), on the one hand, and the theory-cum-methodology of religious studies, on the other. But this potential complexity can be set aside – both because our focus will be the type-self-reflexive variety and because those two layers of studies often merge quite naturally (epistemology may be more prominent in the latter, but hermeneutics and historiography pervade both). There are many kinds of openly self-reflexive theory of religion; but one in particular is worth labelling here, which I will call '*meta-soteriology*'. I intend this to be the philosophy of religion's counterpart to meta-ethics, i.e., the semantic, conceptual, metaphysical and epistemological investigation of soteriological discourse – where such discourse is taken broadly to concern the distinctive axiologies of religion and spirituality, and hence not just 'salvation' in any narrow sense.⁴ As I use the term, '*meta-soteriology*' is not type-self-reflexive, i.e., it is not a soteriology of soteriology; it is a field of inquiry that does not *itself* honour, seek or encourage salvation or spiritual perfection.

Meta-religion, as defined here, *is* type-self-reflexive – but it is not a religiousness about being religious, whatever that might mean; it is, rather, an at least partly religious approach to analyzing and comparing forms of religious discourse. This definition is basically stipulative, since recent appearances of the term 'meta-religion' are too diverse and unsystematic to

serve as much of a guide to a philosophical use of the term. For what it is worth, however, one notable use of the term, by the eco-theologian Thomas Berry, supports our type-self-reflexive emphasis, insofar as he associates meta-religion with a religious attitude (albeit a non-partisan one) to the study of religion (Berry 1999, 84–85)⁵. Moreover, it is worth stipulating that we shall not treat type-self-reflexive meta-religion as just one form within a broader umbrella-category of ‘meta-religion(s)’. Considering the dual use of ‘meta-’, that would be one viable approach, but it would necessitate an almost constant use of the qualifier ‘type-self-reflexive’; so I will restrict ‘meta-religion’ to the type-self-reflexive case.

This yields, finally, some simplified terminology: (1) the openly self-reflexive area of theorizing we will consider is simply to be called ‘*meta-soteriology*’; (2) others would include other ‘*higher-order*’ fields within religious studies (‘higher’ used here without honorific connotations); (3) the type-self-reflexive form of meta-theory will simply be called ‘*meta-religion*’; and finally, (4) it is worth noting that all of these fall under the umbrella of *philosophy of religion*, which meanwhile includes many other areas, such as metaphysical cosmology, rational psychology, and so on. The proliferation of themes among the latter raises the suspicions about philosophy of religion as a discipline, which I noted at the outset of this paper; but the centrality – or perhaps, emerging centrality – of meta-soteriology and meta-religion may lend a new kind of unity to the field of philosophy of religion. In this paper, I will highlight the differences between these two forms of higher-order reflection on religious discourse; but *qua* higher-order, they do address many of the same basic problems in the philosophy of religion.⁶

Of course, we will need to put more flesh on the bones of this concept of *meta-religion* – whether in the guise of a religious attitude that can be directed towards higher-order reflections on religious attitudes, or in the guise of religiously-inflected discourse that is employed in higher-order reflection on religious discourse. In either case, we need to outline the distinctive characteristics of religious thought and religious discourse. To do so, I will take the latter as primary – on the premise that religious thoughts and religious attitudes cannot even enter into consciousness except through the medium of public or private religious *discourse*. As is often the case with concepts at this level of generality, it is easier to establish what such discourse is *not*, than to isolate what it most distinctively *is*. When it comes to religion, we may think that it is most certainly not in the same domain as things like sport, hedonistic thrill-seeking, musical training, political manoeuvring or business management – i.e., paradigms of secular or profane life. Yet, even with respect to the small grain(s) of truth in claims about such contrasts, the differences concern the *content* rather than the *form* of discourses that enable us to express thoughts and values pertaining to each. Someone like Thomas Berry, meanwhile, argues that the central themes of the empirical sciences are the same as those of highly developed religions. Even if he is right about the proper content of religious thought,

however (which is of course highly debatable), I believe a sound starting point for us lies in the recognition that the *form* of scientific discourse is nonetheless clearly contrary to the form of religious discourse, whereas the form of discourse(s) about music and sport is often notably similar to the form of religious discourse. The modes of language and symbolism that are characteristic of the empirical sciences will provide a key counter-paradigm in our investigation of religious paradigms.

AN APPROACH TO DELIMITING THE SPHERE OF RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE: THE PLEOSEMIOTIC NATURE OF ITS EXPRESSIVE DIMENSION

Any attempt to define ‘religion’ is to be approached with scepticism. Insofar as I am undertaking the almost equally quixotic task of defining religious *discourse*, scepticism is to be expected here as well. Part of the value in a fresh attempt may derive from the same feature that will generate the most scepticism, and this is the fact that what follows is, I believe, a novel proposal. In any case, there is another motivation for attempting this, and for using the proposed definition to give some content to the idea of meta-religion – and this motivation is to shed some light on where religious pluralism, especially of Hick’s paradigmatic variety, stands in relation to other theories of religion. In particular, the task is to understand where that field (to which pluralism belongs, as one position) stands in relation to the one that seems most akin to it, which I am calling ‘meta-soteriology’, i.e., the field in which realism and anti-realism compete to explain the axiological properties and concepts bound up with religious thought and practice. It is not often appreciated to what extent Hick and many other defenders of religious pluralism are not engaging in a standard form of the realism/anti-realism debate; nor have many been able to pinpoint the significance of their departures from the analytic tradition of philosophy of religion, which they otherwise seem to represent. The key, I will argue, is to understand that Hick and other religious pluralists are engaged in a form of meta-religion.

In the previous section, I began to distinguish scientific discourse and religious discourse, but the relevance of the contrast is not what might be expected. The point of highlighting this divide is not to contrast the status or type of cognition available in the scientific sphere with the type (or alleged lack of it) in the religious sphere. It is important to disavow this particular contrast here at the outset, because I will argue that it is instructive to compare the religion/science divide with the aesthetics/science divide. When I do so, the point is not to denigrate the epistemic status of religious belief (as some might assume, or at least those who assume that aesthetics involves ‘mere taste’, or at any rate merely subjective assessments). The philosopher and aesthetician Nelson Goodman argues that art and science are equally cognitively oriented, and that neither is epistemically privileged over the other (Goodman 1978). While I am not

about to defend those claims, it is important to keep this in mind, because it is Goodman's analysis of aesthetic properties that I will use to shed light on the distinctiveness of religious discourse. There is nothing in the former or the latter analyses that need be taken as debunking the values or insights of religious figures or writers.

There is a vast literature on religious art, and the role of the arts in religious life; but most of this will not be relevant here. Very little of that literature addresses the notion of a *necessary* connection between aesthetic symbolism and religious discourse. (But I should make clear that I shall not attempt to *equate* these spheres of expression; the question is not whether every work of art is to be conceived or received via some religious or spiritual understanding – the question is rather whether every instance of distinctively religious discourse is distinctive due to its aesthetic qualities.) Meanwhile, those who address the challenge of defining the 'religious' rarely consider aesthetic features or the role of artistic or poetic expression. There have been at least two notable attempts to characterize the 'sacred' at least partly in terms of aesthetic symbolism – those of Gerardus van der Leeuw (1963) and Mircea Eliade (1985, 1991).⁷ But this 'characterizing' is indeed as loose as it sounds; both authors shy away from entertaining any necessary (even any merely one-way) entailment of aesthetic features as present in all religious discourse. And in one recent list of sixteen proposed definitions of religion, ranging from those of William James and Emile Durkheim to those of Talcott Parsons and Clifford Geertz, not a single one highlights aesthetic features, practices or modes of expression (Diamond 2012, 330-333) – even though I would argue that introducing a clause about the role of aesthetics would be compatible with the main elements of most of these definitions.⁸

There are grounds for proceeding cautiously, then; but in the meantime, let us consider the five 'earmarks of the aesthetic' that Nelson Goodman highlights in his account of the main features of aesthetic symbol systems. We need not enter the debate about whether all works of art instantiate all five, since our ultimate focus is not art or aesthetics *per se*. However, I suggest that it is useful to see the first pair of features as disjunctive (since most poetry – let alone theological writing – does not exhibit the first). In any case, according to Goodman (1976, 252-255), the key features are: (1) *syntactic density*, which obtains in a symbol system or expressive spectrum that is not discretely or digitally ordered (e.g., hand-drawn lines as opposed to pixelated lines, or the colour spectrum available through the mixing of paint as opposed to a finite number of unmixed tones); (2) *semantic density*, which allows reference to qualities that are not discretely ordered, and which distinguishes poetry from accounting or logic, by highlighting the role of open-ended interpretation and the role of shaded meanings and intentionally polysemous expressions; (3) signifying via *exemplification*, whereby qualities of a work or discourse that are not necessary for denoting represented objects have nonetheless a symbolic significance, given moods or ideas that they directly or indirectly express;

(4) relative *syntactic repleteness*, whereby more aspects of symbolic expression are relevant to interpretation than they would be in the ‘attenuated’ focus of, for example, a scientific treatise (the semiotic attenuation typical of scientific papers means that font style, for example, is generally irrelevant; whereas it may be relevant in the printing of a religious scripture⁹); and (5) *multiple and complex reference*, whereby the chain of significant implications and suggestions – via exemplification as well as representation – is intentionally extended beyond what a scientific or mathematical statement or argument would require (this is a feature that was added in Goodman [1978, 67–68]).

There is a common theme in these features of the aesthetic: they all facilitate richness of detail (for the artist, musician, poet¹⁰ – but also in terms of resources for the audience’s interpretation). I will call these features collectively ‘*pleosemiotic*’ features, to highlight the *fullness* of signification, or semiotic *plenitude*, that they facilitate. Goodman acknowledges this when he notes that these features call for “maximum sensitivity of discrimination” (1976, 252), to which he might have added sensitivity of *contextualization*. Just by way of illustration – and without suggesting this is sufficient to establish the ‘*pleosemiotic*’ character of religious discourse – consider first the role of multiple and complex reference, and then the role of syntactic repleteness (accompanying semantic density), in the following examples. First, consider (1) how the metaphorical and the literal overlap, in unregimented ways, in uses of ‘light/dark’, ‘shine/shadow’, ‘day/night’, ‘awake/asleep’ in many sacred scriptures; and even in passages where the use of these terms seems primarily denotative, the denoted objects exemplify properties with multiple other significations. We may also notice, (2) how in reading a calligraphic scripture, such as the Book of Kells, an acknowledgement of repleteness (i.e., repleteness of potential symbolism in the work) directs our attention not only towards the semantically dense words and phrases but also the syntactically – or to be more precise, inscriptively – dense use of shades of colour and of complex curvilinear patterns.

Although it seems that any printing of the Gospel of Matthew (or any gospel or scripture) constitutes a *pleosemiotic* text, it is hard to deny that reading and experiencing a copy in a form along the lines of the Book of Kells is more robustly aesthetic than, for example, reading and experiencing this text in the form of an e-book with only the bare words in a plain font. The more interesting question here, though, is whether there is necessarily something more spiritual or hierophanous in reading the Book of Kells. I would argue that there is, for the same reasons that one would find a performance of Bach’s Mass in B Minor more spiritually inspiring than a copy of the score (even though the cases are not *entirely* analogous). In any case, it is crucial to add that the aesthetic/*pleosemiotic* form of a text or performance is not *sufficient* to guarantee religious or spiritual significance.¹¹ Religious discourse represents, at most, a subset of *pleosemiotic* discourse. *Prima facie*, for example, *pleosemiotic* oeuvres like

sitcoms and satirical cartoons fall outside that subset. The question now, though, is: must we look outside the sphere of the aesthetic to identify the missing condition(s) that will yield a definition of religious discourse?

Although I can defend this only briefly here, it seems we need not look further afield, as there is another aesthetic category, the *sublime*, that may provide the missing condition. This is a very different sort of feature, and a different concept, than those Goodman invokes – especially in the sense that it is an evaluative concept, whereas his ‘earmarks of the aesthetic’ are not. But its being evaluative is indeed a crucial aspect that must be incorporated into a delimitation of religious discourse. Unlike most works of art, religious speech and performance purport to offer soteriological value(s) to the listener. As far as aesthetic values go, there was once a common divide between beauty and sublimity; and while beauty is an important theme in many religious traditions, the search for beauty does not seem *definitive* of religious discourse. What seems right, however, and in particular what seems right about Rudolf Otto’s (1936) characterization of religion, is the emphasis on the sublime – not only in light of the characteristic accompanying emotions, but also in light of our sense of the infinite being a paradigmatic way of experiencing and/or understanding the sublime (something captured seminally by Kant ([1790] 2007)¹²).

My last conceptual distinction here will involve a distinction between the ‘sublime’ and the ‘hyper-sublime’. There are certain works of art or music that could qualify as ‘sublime’, but which fall slightly short of qualifying as religious discourse – though not as far short as satirical cartoons. Though many would be tempted to treat Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony as an expression of spirituality, Brahms’s symphonies seem more equivocal in that respect, even though most are arguably more robustly sublime. We can therefore call a pleosemiotic work ‘*hyper-sublime*’ if it highlights more emphatically (whether via text or context) themes of elusive or infinitely complex pattern, mystery, awe, overwhelming force, inscrutable design or purpose, and so on. The context of both composition and performance, in the case of Brahms’s symphonies, along with such features as his classical privileging of major key endings, leaves those works, at least *prima facie*, outside the sphere of the paradigmatically religious.

This is not true, on the other hand, of Bach’s Mass – nor of Shivaratri dance performances, Tibetan sandpainting, psalm recitation, the measured motions of Japanese tea ceremonies¹³, or those of other solemn rituals. Yet, however ‘hyper-sublime’ these may be, a more fundamental shared feature is their being pleosemiotic in the sense we have gleaned via Goodman; and it is important to keep in mind that their pleosemiotic status may be a necessary condition of their religious or spiritual significance. It is also important to remember that, apart from lacking syntactic density, theological and other religious writings are nearly as pleosemiotic as the sorts of discourse and communication just mentioned.

We can now ask what it is that makes meta-religious discourse *meta-religious*. It cannot *just* be the fact that such discourse addresses the nature of encounters with the infinite, and hence the sublime (or what Hick calls ‘limitless’ improvement, qua ascent to a transcendent ‘Real’); and it is not merely that it may express deep convictions (though such convictions are admittedly less salient in the non-religious context of other higher-order studies). The answer, I have been suggesting, is that such discourse, unlike analysis that is *purely* theoretical, is pleosemiotic. Since the richness of signification in such writing is found in its semantics rather than its syntax, it is not purely aesthetic (especially if one takes Goodman’s first condition to be the most paradigmatically ‘aesthetic’ – which, however, he rightly does not); but it *is* aesthetic in the looser sense we have developed. Meta-religious writing does not substitute aesthetically expressive musing or wordsmanship for reflective theory, but it does nuance its theorizing via an expressive dimension – whereas what I am calling ‘meta-soteriology’ attenuates that expressive dimension in the ways characteristic of metaethics and analytic philosophy more generally.

To make the case that this is a distinction worth applying to religious-cum-philosophical traditions in general, it would not be sufficient merely to cite examples from contemporary Western philosophy of religion.¹⁴ Before considering the religious pluralists referred to earlier, then, we should consider the formal features of religious discourse in at least one non-Western tradition – and the one I will consider here is the Buddhist tradition. There is one other concern to acknowledge here, though, and this is the question of *how much* pleosemiotic expression is required for a theoretical text to qualify as *meta-religious*. It would have to be more than one finds in perfunctory paeans to an author’s own tradition (e.g., at the beginning or end of a text) but, on the other hand, a meta-religious text need not be pleosemiotic throughout, for it to count as meta-religious. I will suggest that the key criterion should be the way in which an author or speaker uses his or her central concepts.¹⁵ But I will spell this out in the last section below. First, let us consider not only how classical Indian and Tibetan Buddhism pioneered both meta-soteriology and meta-religion, but also how some of its greatest philosophers acknowledged a distinction of this kind.

META-ETHICS, META-SOTERIOLOGY, AND META-RELIGION IN CLASSICAL BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY

The earliest Buddhist texts, those constituting the *Nikayas* of the Pali Canon and the Sanskrit *Agamas*, appear to be thoroughly pleosemiotic.¹⁶ Honorific epithets abound, each offering different shades of meaning; setting and character development are often relevant and interact to provide layers of meaning; and parables and metaphors are central, at least in the ‘*suttas*’ (sutras). Even ‘*nirvana*’ is a metaphor, and one without a settled interpretation (the word literally means ‘blown out’, although word play

was always present, e.g. playing on [out of] ‘jungle’ and [dis]‘entangling’ as other meanings of [nir]‘*vana*’¹⁷). On the other hand, to a greater degree than some religious traditions, Buddhist philosophy often self-consciously attenuates the mythological and symbolic richness of its heritage, and thus limits its exposure to pleosemiotic imprecision. For instance, in stressing that much of the Buddhist tradition is less religious – and more purely analytical – than the philosophical-cum-religious themes of Descartes and Leibniz in the West, Jay Garfield mentions “Dharmakirti’s investigations [into] the ontological status of universals, Tsong Khapa’s account of reference and meaning, and Nagarjuna’s critique of essence and analysis of the causal relation” (Garfield 2002, 252). These examples highlight the grain of truth in the often-heard remark that Buddhism is more a philosophy than a religion (which would have more than a grain of truth if it added the qualifier ‘*some forms* of Buddhism...’).

Moreover, classical Buddhist philosophy in the first millennium C.E. arguably pioneered that most analytic of philosophical fields, meta-ethics. This has been almost entirely overlooked, and is a fact of intellectual history that calls for fuller treatment than I can give it here.¹⁸ But the explanation for this oversight is revealing. For at least two thousand years (at least since the time of Nagarjuna), Buddhists have distinguished ultimate truth(s) and conventional truth(s); and as soon as those following Nagarjuna entertained the idea that there are only conventional truths, a debate about realism and anti-realism emerged. Since conventional truths are relative truths, and ultimate truths would be non-relative, the Nagajunian claim can be seen as amounting to a form of relativism (or as suggesting a two-level treatment, with relativism at one level and either scepticism or nihilism – albeit by another name – at another). This much is familiar and, indeed, some modern Buddhists embrace this relativism. Others make an exception for some kind of ultimate truth, but envision that ultimate truth as something that transcends the conceptual, and *a fortiori* the social and the cultural, as well as transcending the moral, the ethical, and even the evaluative in general. Both of these approaches assume that there is no prospect of semantic or metaphysical realism about the status of ethical truth; and so, while we could say that these approaches hold a default meta-ethical view, namely relativism, there is apparently no meta-ethical discussion or debate to qualify the defence of that view as properly ‘meta-ethical’. Be that as it may, it is important to recognize that the absence of this sort of debate was *not* a feature of classical Buddhist philosophy, from the beginning of the common era to the period in which Madhyamakas and Yogacarins and others were holding large-scale debates, both in India, and in Tibet, and elsewhere (up to roughly one thousand years ago, but also beyond, insofar as we consider the Tibetan context on its own).

Both of the approaches just mentioned narrow their discussions of ‘ultimate truth’ so as to focus on the idea of a value-independent reality – something encouraged in Western circles by existentialist readings of Zen on the one hand, and possibly also encouraged in the very different context

of Theravada teaching, via the mereological reductionism of the Abhidharma system. What is notable is not just that there was a more wide-ranging debate about the role and nature of the ultimate in Indian Mahayana philosophy, but that, in particular, its possible normative dimension was more explicitly considered. According to some, what would be absolutely true, if there were an ultimate truth, would be a normative truth – a truth about the ideal of *nirvana*, or perhaps about the ultimate spiritual value of ‘*apratisthita*’ nirvana, which was incorporated into the bodhisattva ideal.¹⁹ For these sages and philosophers, the ultimate would not be some alien reality, akin to the ‘substance’ to which Locke attributed primary qualities, or Kant’s noumenon. Instead, it would be a matter of axiology, i.e., of ultimate value. (Here is one case where deep differences between ‘West’ and ‘East’ – often overstated in other cases – are important to acknowledge.²⁰) Relativism with respect to this axiology was one position known from the ‘*sunyavada*’ tradition; but realism was a common position as well, and one that was defended in the face of *sunyavada* challenges. Since this axiological realism is evident in several different Buddhist traditions of thought (cf. Anacker [1984, 236-37], Burton [2004, 93], Collins [1998, 113, 141], Kapstein [2001, 217]), it is odd that this area of debate in Buddhist philosophy has not been seen for what it is: meta-ethics.

Admittedly, it might be tempting to call it ‘meta-soteriology’. But this raises the question of the semiotic or expressive *form* of these early forays into meta-ethics and the philosophy of religion. Were they generally pleosemiotic, or was their expressive dimension more attenuated, in the spirit of a pure theoretical science? I would argue that, in a way that parallels trends in modern Western philosophy, these discussions originated in a pleosemiotic vein, but after 500 C.E. moved in a more purely meta-theoretical direction. Prior to 500 C.E., two different traditions may be cited to illustrate the original pleosemiotic tendency – and thus, in effect, a tendency to favour *meta-religion*, as defined here. One of these traditions was the early Yogacara tradition, in which writers like Maitreyanatha and Asanga immersed themselves in the ‘multiple and complex’ symbolism that the Buddhist heritage offered (cf. Makransky [1997] and Burton [2004]). Another set of pleosemiotic traditions were those that promoted the *Lotus Sutra* (e.g., the Tiantai tradition) – and even though this *sutra* raises complex conceptual questions about how different Buddhist sects and practices should be seen as overlapping in their common pursuit of a common goal (cf. Pye 2003), its teachings are expressed by means of all the devices surveyed by Goodman.

Some might aver that the philosophical *modus operandi* changed with the arrival of Dignaga and Dharmakirti around 500 C.E.; but these authors did not directly address meta-soteriology. An even more robustly meta-theoretical inquiry was undertaken later by Ratnakirti – who was also in the Yogacara tradition, but sought to examine epistemology in ways that did not rely on the religious symbolism that Asanga and others had copiously employed (Patil 2009). I will argue, however, that it is in the

works of the fourteenth-century Tibetan philosopher Tsong Khapa that we notice meta-ethics in the form of a non-pleosemiotic philosophy of religion, as well as a self-conscious understanding of the difference between that form of inquiry and those which are meta-religious.

One need only glance at Tsong Khapa's commentary on the *Samdhinirmocana Sutra* to see how semiotically attenuated – even though richly *theoretical* – his vocabulary is (Thurman 1984). I will not dwell on the many passages that illustrate this, though it is interesting to note that Robert Thurman, the editor and translator of this work, adopts a more meta-religious tone than Tsong Khapa. Unlike Tsong Khapa himself, Thurman's own 'Introduction' is often highly expressive, as here:

'[P]hilosophy' in the Buddhist sense is not a matter of mere intellect, although intellectual genius is cultivated to the fullest. The Buddhist view is that the ultimate resolution of intellectual difficulties is simultaneous with the ultimately transformative experience of unexcelled perfect enlightenment... [Engaging with Tsong Khapa] is a matter of hanging onto the high trapeze of his thought [long enough] for it to swing us out beyond our habitual image of ourselves as perplexed non-geniuses into the free flight of the wisdom that we all possess... We thus must engage in the climb [up the ladder] with a fundamental openness... Constricting armor of habit peeled away, we are open for the encounter with the sharp sword blade of the liberative Word of the Father Tongue, a refined language that exudes awareness and is expert in the conventionalities of Mother Tongues, but transcends habitual acceptance of them... (Thurman 1984, 64-65)

Tsong Khapa himself generally steers clear of such open-ended metaphors – particularly when he employs technical terminology; but the same is true even when he does not, as for example here:

[T]o hold to the existence of an objective self is not (the same as) to hold to the existence of some other thing, such as to hold to the existence of a fire on the pass. Since the external objects and the internal subject of our own mind appear to be disparate [and we hold them to be established... as they appear], the remedy of that (habit) is the demonstration that the appearance of subject and object is not established as a substantial subject-object dichotomy... (Thurman (tr.) 1984, 245)

The point I am illustrating here is about the form rather than the content of these thoughts. As I was saying, the point could be made more forcefully by citing passages in which Tsong Khapa invokes technical terminology; but in the limited space I have here, I will highlight his use of only one pair of technical terms. It is by systematically resetting the use of

these terms that Tsong Khapa comes very close to making an explicit distinction between meta-soteriology and meta-religion. The way he does this is fascinating, as he invokes an early Abhidharma distinction, the *nitartha/neyartha* distinction, which is the contrast that first developed into the ultimate/conventional distinction around the time of Nagarjuna (such that this distinction was referred to by both those terms and the eventually more predominant terms *paramartha/satya/samvritisatya*), and then he recovers an earlier set of meanings in order to allow it cut across the latter distinction. According to Tsong Khapa, some discussions of ultimate and conventional truth are *nitartha* (expressed in ‘definitive’ ways), whereas others, especially those confined to a conventional level but *also* some that aim to address aspects of ultimate truth, are *neyartha* (expressed in ‘interpretable’ ways – either due to the use of colourful and accessible vernacular, or allegorical devices, or other indirect means of expression).

Thurman’s translation of the latter might seem odd, since strictly speaking *any* statement is ‘interpretable’; but what he means to convey is that *neyartha* claims are open-endedly interpretable, in contrast to those that are *nitartha* (which might be compared to logical or mathematical formulae, in their face-value finality²¹). In effect, *neyartha* discourse is pleosemiotic, and I believe this explains several of Tsong Khapa’s remarks,²² such as:

[T]eaching [via the interpretable] is teaching various meanings employing various expressions... [T]he meaning of the ‘to-be-led’ (*neya*) (portion of the term *neyartha* [interpretable meaning])... is the process of interpretation, in which it is necessary to ‘lead’ the [surface] meaning of the scripture around to a different meaning²³... There are two types of needs for interpretation... [e.g.] when a statement is obviously figurative [but also, in other cases, when unintentionally so]... (Thurman (tr.) 1984, 254)

Since these modes of expression are acknowledged as present in higher-order comparisons of different religious claims, we have here an awareness of the distinctive approach I have called ‘meta-religion’.

Part of Tsong Khapa’s agenda in his commentary on the *Samdhinirmocana Sutra* is to show not only that some claims about conventional truth can be spelled out in *nitartha* terms, but especially that some expressions of ultimate truth are cast in *neyartha* terms (since it is in those terms that, the sutra claims, the crucial *Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* is expressed; and Tsong Khapa wishes to vindicate both Sutras). Making the original distinction(s) multi-dimensional in this way is something I am not aware of the earlier Indian tradition having attempted; and it usefully opens up the realism/relativism debate to a consideration of different types of meta-theory, even different types within the sphere of reflection on soteriology (thus including ‘meta-religion’ in the resulting cartography of approaches). These differences bring us, finally, back to the topic of religious pluralism.

Most Mahayana Buddhists, with their emphasis on *upaya* (including techniques of what we might call ‘accommodation’), are to some extent religious pluralists (cf. Pye 2003). But there is an ironic difference between Tsong Khapa’s approach and those of contemporary Western pluralists. Whereas he was among the first to temper, if not entirely supersede, meta-religion as a general rhetorical framework, recent religious pluralists have been among the first to reintroduce elements of meta-religion into their philosophy of religion. The latter have done so, however, without thematizing this move – that is, without distinguishing meta-religion and meta-soteriology. In the next and final section, I will suggest that some disagreements and ambiguities within the contemporary pluralist tradition could have been avoided if, like Tsong Khapa, they had worked with this distinction in mind.

REALISM, RELATIVISM, AND THE ROLE OF META-RELIGION IN RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

One could easily have imagined a self-styled ‘religious pluralist’ movement emerging out of the findings of early twentieth-century anthropologists; and in such a scenario, one might have expected the writings of those ‘religious pluralists’ to have emulated the detached and clinical descriptive framework of those anthropologists. In reality, however, religious pluralists are highly engaged in honouring what we might call the *vocation* of religious orientation(s). This is reflected in a statement at the beginning of John Hick’s *An Interpretation of Religion*, in which he states that his goal is the “development of a field theory of religion from a religious point of view” (Hick 2004, xiii). The “religious point of view” does not refer to Hick’s own Christian orientation; but it does refer to a favourable attitude to spiritual aims and practices. And, despite deep philosophical divides within the camp of religious pluralists, they do share this favourable attitude, or perhaps an even deeper commitment to the religious spirit – in other words, quite the opposite of the anthropological paradigm that featured in my counterfactual scenario above. This is true of both partisan Christian pluralists such as Mark Heim (1995) and Joseph Runzo (2011), and of much less partisan, i.e. thoroughly ecumenical, pluralists such as Paul Knitter and John Cobb (see Griffin [2005]).

However, the philosophical controversy surrounding religious pluralism has focused on the content rather than the form of its message. An ongoing debate has concerned whether a ‘pluralist’ is ultimately compelled to settle for realism or relativism – where each would sacrifice a different desideratum of the original pluralist agenda. The early debate featured sympathetic commentators (mainly focused on Hick at that time) who felt that Hick should embrace relativism (Runzo 1988), opposing those who urged a robust form of realism (Plantinga 1995). This tug-of-war continued, with Runzo, Heim (1995), and Griffin (2005) arguing in effect that the pluralist should move in a relativist direction, while D’Costa (1996) and

Adams (2012) press the case for an inevitable recourse to realism. This apparently unavoidable fork in the pluralist path results from the need to explain what – if Hick is right – is the fact that “a number of historical [traditions]... mediate the Real to different groups of human beings... [and successfully] do so... to about the same extent” (Hick 2004, 375). Given that Hick means to include every post-Axial tradition, this leads us to wonder: what could explain their doing so *to the same extent*? Those varieties of realism that accept this claim can offer an answer that echoes Plato: it is not that the general form of the mediation is vindicated by the agreement(s) between traditions, it is rather that agreement is due to, and is vindicated by, a universal truth about what is worth mediating. This leaves it mysterious, however, how it is that all these ancient traditions equally and simultaneously grasped such an elusive truth, with more facility than they were able to agree on some much more straightforward truths. (Or to put it differently, how could it be that not one of the traditions got it wrong?) None of these awkward explanations would be required, on the other hand, if the pluralist just accepts relativism. In that case, each tradition would ‘mediate’ equally well, because any judgment of ‘success’ in mediating the sacred would depend on the standards of the tradition being judged; and since this dependence or relativity would be a general feature of religious ‘truth’, there could not possibly be any exceptions to this cross-cultural pattern of salvific adequacy.

One might summarize the situation this way: there are at least three views that *purport* to be both pluralist and philosophically sound, but arguably there are at most two views that can *consistently* claim both merits (assuming, just for present purposes, that some version of relativism can be made consistent with itself). But in any case, whether there are two or more such views, we need some criterion by which to distinguish realist-pluralist views from *other* realist views, and relativist-pluralist views from *other* relativist views – including ones that shun the pluralist label, and/or the pluralist tradition. That is, what if anything justifies speaking of a distinctive discussion about religious pluralism *per se*? Our reply, as proposed at the outset of this paper, is that the claim to distinctiveness can follow from noting the pleosemiotic *form* of its meta-religious discourse; and I would suggest that the distinctive formal features are even more evident in Heim, Knitter, and Cobb than in the work of John Hick. For this very reason, if we can make the case that Hick’s framework is pleosemiotic, then generalizing this to the others should hold *a fortiori*.

The key feature to highlight, for this purpose, is not the ‘engagement in a vocation’, as mentioned earlier, but rather the way in which certain terms and concepts are used. Consider this passage from Hick:

To see how others experience and respond to the Real can only enlarge one’s own awareness of that ultimate Reality in which we all live and move and have our being... [L]ife within each tradition

can be enormously enriched and expanded by openness to the accumulated experience and thought of other ways of being human in relation to the Real... [W]ithin a pluralistic understanding... [we] see the transformation of human existence going on in various ways and degrees throughout the world... rather than only within the borders of our own tradition. This means that the entire human story, with all its light and dark, its triumphs and its tragedies, is to be affirmed as ultimately good in the sense that it is part of a universal soteriological process. What I called earlier the cosmic optimism of each of the great traditions is intensified when we see them all as pointing to the possibility of a limitlessly better existence... (Hick 2004, 380)

Though I take it we require no explanation of how terms are used pleosemiotically in this passage, this example is not sufficient to show that Hick's approach is meta-religious, because we allowed an exception for works in philosophy of religion that indulged such formal features only in the 'paeans' that serve as stylistic bookends to an oeuvre – and indeed, this passage is from the very last page of Hick's *Interpretation of Religion*. Consider, then, an earlier passage:

[One] contention becomes crucial[:] ... the thought, following the insight of the Buddha, that such 'knowledge' [e.g., about the afterlife] is not necessary for salvation/liberation. Each such belief has arisen within a complex religious tradition... to which it is integral, and each such belief contributes to... the religio-cultural 'lenses' through which the Real is humanly perceived... [But] each of the great traditions constitutes a context and, so far as human judgment can at present discern, a more or less equally effective context, for the transformation of human existence from self-centredness to Reality-centredness. (Hick 2004, 369)

As I noted at the outset of the paper, this illustrates Hick's tendency to *use* as well as *mention* Buddhist insights (that is, to *invoke* as well as describe them), which poses a problem for the putative egalitarianism of his pluralism. But that is not the key element to notice for present purposes. The pleosemiotic element is not related to the degree(s) of partisan or polemical tendencies that we find in the text. After all, analytic meta-soteriology can be highly polemical. The key pleosemiotic element is illustrated, rather, in a phrase that Hick frequently relies on: "transformation... from self-centredness to Reality-centredness". To determine whether a text is *meta-religious*, again, we need to consider how an author uses *central* terms and concepts; and this phrase captures what Hick takes to serve in this role. These terms recur here:

[T]o say that the Real is authentically thought of within Mahayana Buddhism as the Dharmakaya is to say that in awakening to one's own Buddha-nature one is being effectively transformed by the Real. Thus Adonai and the Dharmakaya, although phenomenologically utterly different, may nevertheless both stand in their own soteriological alignment with the Real. (Hick 2004, 373)

Here, the apparent endorsement of Buddhist soteriology turns out to matter, in helping to highlight the features that interest us here – because, in this passage, the endorsement means that Hick is himself voicing the ‘Buddha-nature’ claim from his own (albeit pluralist) standpoint. He is therefore appropriating the pleosemiotic language of ‘awakening’, which connects – again pleosemiotically – to the notion of ‘transformation by the Real’ (i.e., *multiple and complex reference* enters in, because both the ‘transforming’ and the ‘transformed’ need to be interpreted in various open-ended ways to make sense of this as an ‘awakening’, not to mention that we are implicitly invited to access an open-ended set of both Buddhist and biblical images and metaphors to make sense of this).

One might object that I have overstated the incidence of such language in the work of a philosopher who is, for the most part, cautiously analytic in his approach. But the question is not how Hick *generally* expresses himself; it is rather a question of how he expresses and defends his pluralism. (Elsewhere in his works, for example, he defends what he himself calls soteriological ‘realism’; but what we wish to know is when and how his realism takes the form of *pluralism*.) Admittedly, the defence of pluralism against realist and relativist detractors may not benefit much, if at all, from our analysis of its expressive dimension. But it may offer at least a more adequate *characterization* of religious pluralism.

On the one hand, then, we have a further illustration of the distinctiveness of meta-religion within the sphere of the philosophy of religion, and thus some prospect of understanding the philosophy of religion as a *partly* unique field of inquiry, given this distinctiveness. On the other hand, there may also be a more concrete upshot to our analysis here – namely, that the project of integrating pluralism into the philosophy of religion need not collapse into either stark realist or stark anti-realist alternatives.²⁴

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NOTES

¹ Or at least, the specification of a more definite usage of the term 'meta-religion', which has been only sparsely and unsystematically invoked in discussions in recent years (as I note below).

² Further disambiguation would yield the phrase 'discourse-type-self-reflexive' (i.e., the 'type' in question is the discourse-type), and it may also be that a more precise term would be 'discourse-type-recursive'; but from this point on, I set out to shorten rather than lengthen the technical qualifiers that will recur frequently in what follows.

³ Since I take 'communication' to include communication via the arts and via ritual (including non-linguistic symbolism, as in music, dance, and also

rituals focused on ‘offerings’), and also some forms of putative communication that are directed to non-human others (as in prayer) or to oneself (as in some forms of mantra-recitation), this may cover almost all forms of religious thought and activity. In any case, I presume the general sphere of ‘discourse’ can cover all (or almost all) such forms, so long as we take it to include symbol systems generally, and not just ‘discursive’ ones in the sense of those that are fully conceptualized. I address below some apparent exceptions to the generalization, namely some forms of meditation and some forms of mysticism.

⁴ This is not to imply that the axiologies, or value-sets, of religions do not overlap with those of other ethical and political orientations – e.g., the value of personal *virtue(s)* is apparent in axiologies typically associated with *all* of these orientations; but some values are quintessentially religious or spiritual, and in calling them ‘soteriological’ I mean to include not only hope(s) for release from some literally understood bondage or sin, but also ideals of purification, emotional or intellectual purgation, spiritual cultivation or therapy, quest-fulfillment, etc. If I were not already at risk of introducing too many neologisms, it would be tempting to coin the term ‘*hiero-axiological*’ here.

⁵ Berry writes that the ever-expanding pluralism of what he considers a new spiritual-cum-ecological consciousness “might possibly be considered as a metareligious movement since it involves not simply a single segment of the human community but the entire human community” (and includes a consciousness of the pluralism in world religion(s)); and he writes that this “affects our perception of the origin and meaning of existence itself” and “affects our sense of reality and values at such a profound level that it can be compared... [to a] great classical religious movement” (Berry 1999, 84-85).

⁶ Some may see an echo of Paul Tillich’s (1946) distinction between the ‘ontological type’ and the ‘cosmological type’ of philosophy of religion in my distinction between meta-religion and meta-soteriology, and there is at least this parallel: the former in each of these pairs are more *engaged* in rediscovering – and renewing – the sacred, whereas the latter members of each pair are detached and disengaged; so each distinction follows this same pattern. The latter can accommodate rediscovery, if inquiry leads there, but not necessarily renewal – that is, the cosmological approach, like meta-soteriology, does not inherently *seek* to renew, or vindicate, any faith or piety. The reason, however, that Tillich’s distinction is not sufficient, is that neither of the types he considers are meta-theoretical; their objects are the sacred/divine and the nature of our relation to such things, whereas the objects of meta-theories are forms of discourse, beliefs, claims, debates, texts, etc.

⁷ Other notable appeals to aesthetic features include Rudolf Otto’s (1936) stress on the sublime, and Marilyn McCord Adams’s (1999, 140-151) stress on the beauty of divine design; but these treatments focus on experience rather than discourse – and putatively veridical experience, at that. (Adams (1999, 150) mentions Goodman’s account of aesthetics, but only to reinforce a way of seeing divine design that might overcome the ‘problem of evil’; unfortunately she does not consider the possibility that it could help to define religious discourse in general.) An objection to focusing on aesthetic discourse or symbolism, meanwhile, might be that some religious traditions privilege

experiences they regard as ineffable. It is interesting to note, however, that in one such ineffabilist tradition, namely monistic Shaivism in India, a major figure was the eleventh-century philosopher Abhinavagupta, who also regarded encounters with the works of classical arts as indispensable for mystical experience (see Lawrence (1999, 30-33).

⁸ Ironically, it is not clear that an aesthetic element would be compatible with a definition that initially seems kindred in some ways (Geertz's), the apparent incompatibility being due to his emphasis on an 'aura of factuality', which gives the impression that the aim of religious faith is to supersede the aesthetic. According to Geertz: "A religion is: (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivation seem uniquely realistic" (Geertz (1973, 90), quoted in Diamond (2012), 332-333). Phillips (1976) is perhaps right to argue – if only in this respect – that (4) is not a necessary condition of religion.

⁹ Early in the paper, I described the 'theoretical' (whether in the sciences or in philosophy) as non-emotive, non-aspirational and non-homiletic; but these are not the key conditions of attenuation that get set aside when we engage in aesthetic discourse. Even though emotion does have a greater role (in both aesthetics and religion), I argue that this comes via symbolic density, repleteness, and semiotic richness. A text that is purely theoretical, then, is not only non-emotive, etc., but also symbolically attenuated and (relatively) regimented. As for the aspirational and the evaluative, these may or may not be present in aesthetic discourse; but they do seem present in all religious discourse. I incorporate these below, by introducing further aesthetic qualifiers: the *sublime* and the *hyper-sublime* – but importantly, 'sublime' differs from 'dense' or 'exemplificational', in serving as an evaluative term.

¹⁰ Unlike the visual artist, the classical musician uses syntactically discrete scales, and the poet uses syntactically discrete letters (assuming s/he is not a calligrapher using a hybrid alphabet) – which is a *pro tanto* reason for the disjunctive treatment of (1) and (2), i.e., for making the first kind of density not strictly necessary. On the other hand, arguably the works of musicians and poets are more paradigmatically aesthetic, the more they exploit syntactic density in other ways. This can happen in music via dense volume dynamics and/or dense tempo changes (or via the use of *portamento*), and can happen in similar ways in the oral *recitation* of poetry.

¹¹ Nor do I mean to put any emphasis on calligraphy *per se*, in connection with religion; I mention it merely as an illustration. The more significant phenomenon for our purposes will be, so to speak, *semantic* 'calligraphy'.

¹² Kant claimed that the sublime is properly experienced via nature rather than via art – but if this were true (which is far from obvious), it could suggest a way of extending my account of religion beyond the sphere of religious discourse, perhaps to encompass religious experience more generally. One sort of religious experience that my semiotic approach may seem to bypass is the sort had in solitary engagement with pure wilderness; but Kant offers a

way to understand this aesthetically, in terms of the sublime, and if this (higher-order) understanding reflects the (first-order) interpretive process of the ‘solitary walker’, then there is scope for a pleosemiotic account of the latter. Incidentally, Kant also connected religion to the sublime, at Ak. 5: 263 and 5: 274 ([1790] 2007).

¹³ It may seem that the *simplicity* of this sort of ceremony runs contrary to the features just listed (complexity, awe, overwhelming force, etc.), but this is far from clear. To take another example: Erik Satie’s early piano pieces are strikingly simple; does this prevent them from being either pleosemiotic or sublime? Perhaps on the contrary: it is via the simplicity itself that such pieces *do* express sublime, and perhaps spiritual, feelings – and this is because the simplicity creates a clear background for the pleosemiotic, in particular for dense tempo transitions, and for expressive harmonic transitions.

¹⁴ At the beginning of this paper, I mentioned that “... ‘meta-religion’ may be a new (or perhaps revived) phenomenon in contemporary philosophy of religion”, but did not mean to imply that it was unheard of in pre-twentieth-century discourse about religion. In fact, it has been common in many traditions. And even more pervasive, of course, has been the more basic feature of pleosemioticity. (This is obviously true, whether or not my claim about its being *definitive* will hold up.) It is worth stressing that my claim is not that pleosemiotic features are new phenomena in a new religious landscape; on the contrary, those features are the most primal and primeval features of religious expression (and, I claim, part of any adequate definition of religion), even though very few observers of – let alone participants in – ancient religions noticed the patterns that Goodman makes explicit. Historically, they originally marked first-order discourse; later, they could be seen to mark higher-order discourse of the *meta-religious* kind – and only much later did the more analytic style of higher-order theory come to predominate, if only in academic studies.

¹⁵ It is naturally worth asking, similarly, how the central concepts utilized here in this paper are meant to be used – and whether their range of use extends to the pleosemiotic. Part of the point of coining new technical terms, though, and of giving explicit definitions, is indeed to allow this analysis to shed light on the phenomenon of meta-religion without presupposing or appealing to meta-religion.

¹⁶ ‘Appearing to be’, in this context, may be sufficient for *being* pleosemiotic; but this could be contentious with some adherents of Abhidharma orthodoxy – who might admit that many canonical sutras contain mainly figurative expressions, but who would limit the scope of ‘multiple and complex reference’ by asserting that only one ultimate interpretation of those expressions is relevant to an appreciation of the texts. By contrast, Mahayanists would generally reject such a conception of fixed, intended interpretation(s).

¹⁷ See Collins (1998, 191–95).

¹⁸ I tell part of this story in my “Moral Realism and Anti-Realism outside the West” (2013); but the full story calls for not only a comparison between early Buddhist meta-ethics and Buddhist meta-religion, but also a comparison between early Buddhist meta-ethics and the (in some ways less developed) forms of meta-ethics that contemporaneously grew out of Platonist

and Aristotelian traditions in the West.

¹⁹ See Makransky (1997) on the notion of *apratisthita* nirvana, which helped to adapt the early and (allegedly) ‘escapist’ ideal of nirvana to the more desire-friendly and more active Mahayana conception of wisdom.

²⁰ Even here, we risk overstating the case, since this is a divide between ancient ‘East’ and modern ‘West’, and there is no such divide, I would argue, between ancient ‘East’ and ancient ‘West’ (though in the latter case, the term ‘West’ – not to mention ‘East’ – is *even more* contentious than it is in modern contexts).

²¹ Tsong Khapa makes the comparison with logic at Thurman (1984, 255).

²² Which is not to say, of course, that Tsong Khapa’s own discourse is (pleosemiotically) ‘interpretable’; on the contrary, I think it qualifies as meta-soteriology rather than meta-religion. Naturally, it includes traditional book-ends, i.e., paeans at the very beginning and the very end; but the bulk of the discussion aims at a *nitartha*/definitive mode of expression, and often appears to succeed. (Note that this is now very different from saying it succeeds in capturing the ultimate truth!) As I noted in reference to Ratnakirti, the Indian tradition may have pioneered this (and not just the Buddhist philosophers in that context), but Tsong Khapa pushes it further. This trajectory appears to be confirmed by both the content and the style of Sonam Thakchoe’s book *The Two Truths Debate: Tsongkhapa and Gorampa on the Middle Way* (Thakchoe 2007).

²³ It is admittedly important to ask whether, in saying ‘a different meaning’, Tsong Khapa has in mind *various other possible meanings* or instead, *the correct doctrinal content*. As the Abhidharma orthodoxy illustrates (mentioned in note xvi), there is a way of defending the legitimacy of figurative language in scripture by appealing to some determinate decoding procedure (just for decoding doctrine) which would indeed *not* be pleosemiotic. Although Tsong Khapa’s doctrinal agenda may give the impression that he regards pleosemiotic language as a distorting influence in texts that aspire to ultimate truth, or even in religious discourse in general, there are a couple of reasons for doubting this: (1) he rejects anything akin to the Abhidharma understanding of ultimate truth; and (2) an attenuated conception of decoding would apply – at most – only to some, not all, religious texts; so he could not be proposing that conception as a necessary condition of religious discourse in general.

²⁴ The interest of this claim, of course, cannot be confined to its encouragement of a broader historical and anthropological consideration of the varieties of religious belief and practice; the scholarly merits of that are presumably obvious. Rather, the project that seems, more interestingly, able to withstand realist (e.g., exclusivist) critiques, as well as relativist ones, is a partly *normative* project, one that aims to vindicate the salvific importance of multiple, overlapping systems of symbolism, phenomenology and spiritual conceptualization. That project may presuppose realism, as Hick admits; but it may retain its distinctiveness via the form rather than the content of its own semiotic orientation.

CRITICAL THINKING VERSUS IDEOLOGY: CHALLENGING EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND RELIGION

Ramón Martínez de Pisón

Although the decline in critical thinking seems so evident, it nevertheless continues to surprise me every time I think about it. This decline occurs in society at large and in the areas of education, culture, and religion. It is quite disturbing, for such critical thinking is essential if we wish to learn to read between the lines of events, to recognize what is really going on in our increasingly interconnected world, to identify the root causes of the many complex problems we are facing, and to come up with creative solutions to these problems seemingly endemic to our modern way of living.

I shall proceed as follows. First, I shall point out how this decline can be recognized in many instances. Second, I shall note that the decline in critical thinking is accompanied by a resurgence of ideology that shows up in so many social, cultural, political and religious contexts and that brings with it all kinds of fundamentalist attitudes that we experience often and in many different venues today. Third and finally, I shall deal with the need to “learn by reasoning” and to challenge presuppositions and positions taken in the areas of education, culture, and religion.

However, before going further in the development of my topic, I would like to give an operational definition of two of the terms to be used here, namely, “critical thinking” and “ideology.” I use the term “critical thinking” as defined by the American Philosophical Association in its 1990 Delphi research study: “The process of purposeful, self-regulatory judgment. This process [gives] reasoned consideration to evidence, context, conceptualizations, methods, and criteria.”¹ For his part, after having presented the ways in which five philosophers of education defined critical thinking, Mark Mason describes it as “thinking that is of course not entrenched in dogma (although committed to reason), is willing to consider multiple perspectives, is informed, skeptical, and entails sound reasoning.”² In short, there is an important relationship between “critical thinking” and “reasoning.”³

Another term I will be using is “ideology,” understood here as a particular conviction taken as having an absolute, universal, value. So, “the proper nature of an ideology is that it is a conviction which is believed to be evoked by reality but is in fact kept alive by the desire to satisfy individual interests. . . . Ideology will always tend toward onesidedness.”⁴

THE DECLINE IN CRITICAL THINKING

I can illustrate a decline in critical thinking in various ways. In this regard, we need simply to look at the way in which the mass media in their coverage, and/or politicians and religious leaders in their speeches, have

dealt with various questions in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks that took place on American soil. We could point to prejudice, then and now, regarding Muslims in general. Underlying such prejudice (and so many other forms of it), there would seem to be a series of dualistic, Manichean, and apocalyptic conceptions of the world – of us being good and others, the enemies, being bad. These conceptions appear to be a constant in the history of humankind. In such views, the enemy's faults are magnified and the faults of “God’s chosen” are quickly passed over.⁵

Another example of this decline in critical thinking is the manner in which a few multinational mass media conglomerates and those in charge of them appear to control the distribution of information and manipulate the ways in which it is presented. In the midst of all of this, as Scott Eastham reminds us, we are experiencing an “information overload” which carries with it two negative consequences. The first one is the elimination of diversity through a process of “homogenization – of everything – into a single frame of reference.”⁶ This process downplays the possibility of alternative points of view and thus discourages more critical and comparative thinking. The second negative consequence is the risk of fragmentation, disconnectedness, and deracination. Besides the profusion of professional jargon, academic hyperspecialization, factions within factions, etc., there is also the individual solipsism of “information consumers” who are “cocooning” into their own “virtual” environments and “broadcatch” computerized video systems – programmed to show them only what they like to see, tell them only the news they want to hear, and allow them to be “distracted.”⁷

Furthermore, the wide-spread introduction of technology into the teaching process within the academy can impair critical thinking and learning that should occur more by collaboration and not by competition.⁸ Where there is a more mechanical and less sensitive use of technology in teaching, human beings not only tend to forfeit a freer frame of reference permitting them to integrate information within a more personal, experiential context, but they also risk losing the fundamentally important relational aspect of the process of learning. We cannot become fully human without “the power of human contact.”⁹ Adriana Paavo, who currently works as the education officer for the Saskatchewan Government and General Employees’ Union, says, “We can’t, and mustn’t, leave face-to-face contact behind. Education . . . isn’t a transaction. It’s a social process that unfolds through interaction with others.”¹⁰

This ongoing decline in critical thinking – indeed, to put it bluntly, the lack of critical thinking – is also affecting the way in which education is understood in many socio-political contexts, especially in the United States and in Canada. A British historian, Felipe Fernández-Armesto, has distinguished between “teaching” and “instruction” when he spoke regarding “the state funding for politically committed teaching”:

Most teachers who take a political line in class are liberal or leftist. When agitators or legislators demand politically neutral or socially responsible courses, they usually want students instructed in the merits of conservative values: the “basics” of family values and patriotism, mom and apple pie. Teachers who teach different values should be sacked or starved of funding. People who misconceive education as instruction are unaware of how the classroom works as an arena of criticism, a nursery of the unpredictable.¹¹

Political influence over academia leads to the “ideological exclusion” of many intellectuals in United States and in Canada, something which has become more common after the events of September 11, 2001. Such exclusions have been denounced by several professors’ associations, including the Canadian Association of University Teachers.¹²

Continuing our remarks concerning education, we should note the ongoing impact of “national security” ideology in the life of academia, especially after 9/11. We see this involvement above all when we think of the influence of what has been called the “military-industrial complex” on universities, their teaching and especially their research. The negative consequences of this influence have been enormous, and particularly in the area of education, as Henry A. Giroux, who holds the Global TV Network Chair in English and Cultural Studies at McMaster, states rather directly:

Rather than educating students with the knowledge and skills necessary to hold government and corporate power accountable, foster an investment in a critical sense of moral and political agency, and instill in them a responsibility to nurture a flourishing democracy, higher education increasingly views critical thinking as dangerous, treats militarized research as a fact of life, and subordinates democratically driven civilian, social, and political concerns to the purposes of the military-industrial complex.¹³

In short, universities themselves are at risk of failing to teach critical thinking. Joel Westheimer, who holds the University Research Chair in Democracy and Education at the University of Ottawa, and who is also a Professor in the Faculty of Education, addresses the influence of corporations in what could be called the “corporatization” of higher education. He concludes,

[t]here are many powerful ways to teach young adults to think critically about social policy issues, participate in authentic debate over matters of importance, and understand that people of good will can have different opinions. Indeed, democratic progress depends on these differences. If universities hope to strengthen democratic society, they must resist focusing curriculum and research on skills-training, workforce preparation, and the commercialization of

knowledge to the benefit of private industry. They must instead participate in the rebuilding of a public purpose for education. How to do so is a matter of professional imagination.¹⁴

As a further example of the ongoing decline in critical thinking, we can refer at the level of popular culture to the way in which so many people and groups rather naively interpreted novels such as Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* (2003) and *Inferno* (2013). These people and such groups often simply presumed that everything expressed in the novels is true. Indeed, many people seem to be losing the capacity to differentiate between "literary fiction" and "reality."

As we continue remarking on the decline in critical thinking, we might simply note in passing the growing tendency among some to encourage Catholics merely to accept whatever comes from the Roman Catholic Magisterium without asking critical questions that would permit them to receive doctrinal and other guidance from Rome in a deeper and more adult fashion. Cardinal Angelo Sodano, formerly the Holy See's Secretary of State, has spoken along this line. At the Sixteenth General Congregation of the Synod on the Consecrated Life and its Role in the Church and the World, on Thursday, October 13, 1994, he placed in opposition "love" and "criticism": "One who loves does not criticize. One who loves will pray, work and co-operate with his Bishop and with the Pope. One who loves has that ecclesial charity which, in the words of St Paul, 'omnia sperat, omnia suffert [hopes all things, suffers all things]. . . .'"¹⁵ It would be hard to find something farther from the attitude of Jesus in the Gospels than this reductionist interpretation of love. Posing critical questions in a responsible way and reflecting seriously on them is, rather, an important expression of love.

Finally, in our consideration of the decline in critical thinking we can reflect on the ways in which religion is manipulated for particular purposes. An example of this would be the wrongful use of God's name by Osama bin Laden (1957–2009) in his crusade against the Western world. Another example would be former President George W. Bush's crusade from 2001 to 2009 against evil in response to and after the terrorist attacks perpetrated by Al-Qaeda on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. This crusade led to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, an invasion supported by uncritical Christian leaders who justified counter-violence as a result of the ideology of "national security" which they embraced. However, once we turn to violence in response to violence, it becomes very hard for us to draw a clear line between a "just war" and "terrorism." Furthermore, violence is usually accompanied by the demonization of enemies which, in turn, then seems to justify taking violent action against them.¹⁶

THE RESURGENCE OF IDEOLOGY

The overall decline in critical thinking that we so greatly lament is in fact accompanied by a resurgence of ideology and a significant increase in the roles it plays at various levels in our public discourse. I have, for instance, just indicated that what we can call the ideology of “national security,” with its link to the “military-industrial complex,” is influencing education in a negative way by fostering what can be described as “dogmatic” instruction and competition rather than critical thinking and learning through collaboration with others.

Embracing uncritically and with a certain sense of paranoia the ideological dogma of “national security” has serious negative social-cultural consequences. We are seeing, particularly but not only in the United States and in Canada, that people seem willing and able to give up their freedom, privacy, and thinking critically in the name of this ideology and for the purposes it favors. We have, for instance, been faced with an international situation in which someone has dared to reveal the secret activities of his or her own government in its spying on other countries and whole populations as well as particular individuals, especially in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001. One who so dares to reveal such activities and denounce what some would disdainfully call that person’s “morbid curiosities” risks to be “charged with espionage and theft of government property.”¹⁷ To put it briefly, we see today a practice, common in certain contexts, to confuse the interests of a specific government with those of a country as a whole.

The resurgence of ideology shows up as well in relation to the phenomenon of globalization. Globalization can, from a particular perspective, be considered a new fundamentalist view of the world. This is the case especially when, in much of its present form, it takes on the character of an ideology that imposes a capitalist Western conception of life on the poor around the world. I understand, then, the ideological conception of globalization to refer, to a great extent, to the processes through which rich countries impose their neoliberal economic models on poorer ones. In so imposing their models, rich countries do not respect the unique and diverse cultures of the poorer nations, with a regrettable resultant cultural homogenization.

We should note a theological reflection written by Jacques Racine on “the forms of violence that emerge from globalization.” In this reflection Racine takes into consideration globalization’s negative connotations and understands globalization to be an “ideology”

that allows a dominant class to reap for itself the advantages of globalization ... in order to foster outcomes that are favourable to it. This ideology serves a politico-economical totalitarianism that obeys the logic of the market, a logic of unlimited profit that

reinforces the strong and debilitates the weak, eventuating their exclusion from the system.¹⁸

Given these realities of oppression and exclusion, it is easier to understand why some Muslim extremists carry out terrorist actions in reaction against this “ideological conception” of globalization. Many of these extremists feel humiliated, ashamed, and frustrated when they realize how their cultural, political and religious identities are being threatened by a Western universalizing “pan-culture” and a neoliberal economy. They see this culture and economy as being imposed upon them and resulting in the destruction of their own ways of life.

Finally, with regard of the resurgence of ideology we need also to look at its occurrence in religion, as exemplified in the rise of religious fundamentalism. Bruce B. Lawrence points out that fundamentalism is “a *religious* ideology since the beliefs of its adherents, their practices, their challenges, and aspirations, [are] all framed in discourse that authorizes action through scriptural, creedal, and moral referents.”¹⁹ These religious ideologies are dependent on socio-cultural contexts that are very clearly demarcated and influenced by complex personalities, often by intolerant people with low self-esteem.²⁰

I recognize that some psychologists do not believe that fundamentalism is rooted, at least not exclusively, in personality traits. Rather they consider fundamentalism to be “a meaning system.” This is the main argument of Ralph W. Hood, Jr., Peter C. Hill, and W. Paul Williamson:

We believe that the meaning fundamentalists derive from their religious beliefs is what allows them to persevere in an inhospitable culture: It creates a way for them to interpret the world, as well as themselves in relation to the world. This meaning system encompasses all of life and is strongly felt, for it deals with issues of eternal importance. It also provides a framework for motivation, and in the process helps meet several personal needs for meaning, such as purpose, value, efficacy, and self-worth. Meaning, for fundamentalists, is found wholly within the pages of the sacred text. Thus we propose that the primary criterion for understanding fundamentalism is its insistence that all of life be understood in relation to the text.²¹

Yet, even if fundamentalisms of various kinds can be understood in terms of this “meaning system,” the fact is that many of the people who share these fundamentalist outlooks share some of the personality traits being referred to here, such as low self-esteem. Often, people belonging to fundamentalist groups live a divided life, namely, between a life oriented toward obeying the external rules of an institution, and their own needs and desires to have a more personal and fulfilled affective life. Thus, the

psychiatrist James L. Griffith speaks about a certain “depersonalization” when referring to this situation in which adherents to a particular fundamentalist ideology find themselves so divided. In order to remain faithful to the system, fundamentalists quite often have to renounce their deepest needs and desires, even their own personal autonomy. In other words, they risk being “dissociated” from their self. This is evidently the result of a system in which, in order to assure its survival, leaders and members have set up a “dominant/submission” style of functioning not necessarily embraced by members of the group on the basis of their own conscious, free personal choice.²² As Griffith points out,

People in circumstances that demand conformity to group or organizational standards thus can appear dull, empty, and emotionally distanced from themselves and other people. In their docility, however, such individuals can enact group agendas, including abusive, exploitive, neglectful, or sadistic ones, that they could never enact as moral, reflective individuals away from the group.²³

The so-called “fundamentalist” operates according to a literal and/or selective interpretation of sacred texts.²⁴ Furthermore, according to Bruce B. Lawrence, “Fundamentalists are oppositional. They do not merely disagree with their enemies, they confront them.”²⁵ J. Harold Ellens, in turn, considers fundamentalism to be a “psychopathology” that can be found in all dimensions of life and not only in religious contexts:

An essential component of this psychology is a rigid structuralist approach that has an obsessive-compulsive flavor to it. It is the mark of those who have very limited ability to live with the ambiguity inherent to healthy human life; or have no capacity for that at all. Fundamentalism is a psychopathology that drives its proponents to the construction of orthodoxies in whatever field it is in which those proponents live or work.²⁶

I conclude this section on the resurgence of ideology by noting that religious ideologies deform the truth and can give rise to division, discrimination, and violence.

“LEARNING BY REASONING”: CHALLENGING EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND RELIGION

To counter this decline in critical thinking and the accompanying resurgence of ideology, we need to bring our capacity for critical thinking to bear on and characterize our analytical reflections and those of others on education, society, culture, and religion. Here I am bringing together the notions of “critical thinking” and what Michael Luntley refers to as

“learning by reasoning.” He says: “Learning by reasoning is learning in which the pupil works out what to do and what to think for herself. This is a form of mental activity that requires the pupil to think for herself and not just mimic patterns of thought and action proffered by others.”²⁷

But how do we think critically and learn by reasoning from an inclusive perspective that does not reduce others to enemies and opponents? This is what my colleague Miriam K. Martin and I have reflected on in a co-authored paper. In that paper, we presented the challenges of moving “from a rationalistic, conceptual, dualistic, and male-oriented understanding of reality, influenced by the Cartesian supremacy of reason, as it was in modernity, to a more inclusive view of reality [as it is in post-modernity].”²⁸ For us, within the paradigm of post-modernity, excellence is not synonymous with intellectual performance in an individualistic and competitive way. “Excellence,” we say, “is achieved in a relational environment, whereby students, together with educators, learn to regard others and creation itself as important and deserving of respect. Furthermore, to foster excellence also includes challenging a limited vision of the universe that is opposed to mystery and transcendence.”²⁹

True education is indeed synonymous with freedom and empowerment. Yet, in order to educate and thereby to empower and to render people freer in their lives and in their thinking, we need to challenge certain negative trends present in our academic and wider world by recognizing the process of education as really being a movement toward greater freedom. Challenging such negative trends will not be effective, not even possible, without the ability to think critically, and to question ideological presuppositions underlying unhealthy social, cultural and religious situations. In effect, there is a need to humanize and liberate knowledge.³⁰

By this humanization and liberation, namely, the transformation of knowledge into wisdom, we understand, in the first place, the fact that “learning is not only the accumulation of data [information] or its integration into a rational system [knowledge as such], but also it is a communication with the mystery of life in a reciprocity with others.”³¹ Secondly, wisdom “includes our recognition of diversity in the learning process.”³² Thirdly, education does not merely consist in presenting doctrine, but in engaging the learners in an existential way. Last but not least, the humanization and liberation of knowledge – namely, its transformation into wisdom and enriching human experience – is the challenge to which we as educators must respond. Thus,

Today, educators are invited to facilitate access to a more holistic and inclusive understanding of knowledge that integrates the unconscious and imagination, that is, to wisdom. Educators are not the only ones involved in the learning process, nor are they the ones who give birth to imagination and wisdom in others; they facilitate

the process, being engaged personally in it, in reciprocity among the community of learners.³³

To learn in a collaborative way rather than in a competitive environment, to have an inclusive perception of knowledge and reasoning that takes into consideration the ways in which women and people from cultural backgrounds other than westerners learn, is not something opposed to critical thinking and to learning by reasoning. In working together with our students and with others in various disciplines and cultural contexts, we need in effect to rediscover the fact that in our studies – not only in philosophy but also in society, culture and religion, carried out in the context of a more general understanding of these three – we share a common need for such critical thinking. On the basis of such critical thinking, our studies and our overall responsible participation in various societies, cultural settings, and religious traditions, will flourish.

As we know from experience in our own cases as well as in observing those of others, we are not necessarily innately critical thinkers. The ability to think critically, to “learn by reasoning,” does not, so to speak, “come out of the blue.” It is, rather, the result of the serious work of learning that normally occurs through education in the context of a wider and more holistic overall human formation. In short, as philosophers and as professionals in other fields of educational endeavor, we have a serious responsibility to help people learn to think critically rather than be at the mercy of rigid fundamentalism and ideologies, of passing trends in education, culture, society, and religion, and of simplistic analyses of complex questions that require study and reflection at a level and in ways appropriate to the seriousness of the questions being considered. Given our experience, insight, and expertise, we who are working in the area of higher learning have a particular duty to help our students and others to think critically about the complex issues we face in our contemporary world. We owe it to our students and others to develop the capacity to step back from that which is immediately presented, examine it from various perspectives, expose underlying presuppositions, and consider various ways in which to respond to the questions being studied. Such critical thinking will help us move from being satisfied with debilitating fundamentalisms and oversimplifying ideologies to envisioning creative responses to questions studied and problems facing us in various social, cultural and religious contexts. It will help us see these questions and problems as challenges presenting us with the opportunity to develop new and fuller insights which, in turn, will pave the way for further societal and cultural dialogue as well as genuine religious flourishing.

In response to the question as to how we help students think critically, Steve Joordens, a professor of psychology at the University of Toronto, Scarborough, says:

Teaching students the importance of critical thought, and the defences that impede it, should be viewed as one of, if not the, central role of universities in society. For students to really appreciate the importance of critical thought they need to see how it can change the world, as it did when slavery was abolished. For students to understand truly the psychological defences to thought, they need to experience them directly, preferable in a palpable manner.³⁴

Together with good, personally fulfilling and societally responsible education, we need to foster alternative ways of obtaining information that promote a culture of freedom and of peace, and a society in which thinking and questioning are encouraged. This is the way to counter the homogenization and manipulation of information, as well as the negative influence of militarization on the university and education in general. Henry A. Giroux writes:

Militarization poses a serious threat to higher education, but more important, it poses a danger to the promise of democracy and to the very meaning of democratic politics and the sustainability of human life. At a time when freedom, social justice, civil rights, politics, and the very concept of critical education are under siege, it becomes necessary for all of us, especially educators, to take a stand and oppose the death-dealing ideology of militarization with a strategy for resistance that foregrounds the hope and freedom necessary for the realization of a genuine global democracy.³⁵

To foster a culture of peace is one of the most important of our tasks in the field of education and will help us counter an “apocalyptic vision of the world” that is rooted in religious visions supporting a metaphysical and dualistic conception of the world locked into a global, transcendent, battle between “good” and “evil.”

Religions have been, and still are, instruments of cultural identity. The psychological and sociological power of religion as an organizing cultural factor giving meaning to the person and to society is well documented.³⁶ At the same time, and contrary to this positive function in establishing cultural identity, religion can as well play a more negative function in that religion can be manipulated for selfish and unworthy interests through violence.³⁷ In the process of identity formation, people often become aware of their specific cultural and religious identities not by looking to the identities of others as a source of inspiration and potential enrichment but, rather, as a threat to themselves: “We are not them,” “Our God is not their God,” “Our religion is not their religion.”³⁸ Thus, as the psychiatrist James L. Griffith concludes, “Religious beliefs can serve as powerful justification ideologies that turn prejudice and stigma into acts of righteousness.”³⁹ As a result of these “justification ideologies,” Díez de

Velasco points out that “a religious construction of identity and otherness can turn the different into a scapegoat, whose disappearance or annihilation is considered the solution to the problem.”⁴⁰

In this case, religion loses its capacity to bring people into true contact with the Divine. It becomes an ideology and its worship is transformed into idolatry. In short, then, we must consider religion as incompatible with violence in general and with violent ways of acting in the world in particular.

CONCLUSION

Seeing critical thinking as an essential component in good education and nurturing it there requires that we take into consideration the difference Felipe Fernández-Armesto makes between “teaching” and “instruction”:

Strictly speaking, education and instruction are mutually exclusive. You instruct soldiers. You teach students. An equipment manual contains instructions, but they are not instructions for instructing. An instructor lays down rules to be obeyed; a teacher strews ideas to be subverted. Instructions prescribe; education provokes. Instruction is regimentation; education is liberation.⁴¹

In order to provoke and to liberate, we, as educators, need to be more involved in the overall learning process.⁴² Mark Kingwell, a professor of philosophy at the University of Toronto, in turn highlights the fact that intellectuals have a duty in the process of education to foster critical thinking and learning by collaboration, not by competition, as well as to contribute to a socio-cultural context in which democracy and freedoms are a reality.⁴³ The philosopher is a “friend of wisdom.” Yet, “Wisdom,” Eastham says, “is not a form of knowing, but of *being*.”⁴⁴ Such wisdom is not opposed to but is fostered by critical thinking and reasoning. It permits us to live in freedom, dismantling fundamentalist dogmatic presuppositions, and overcoming ideological constraints.

NOTES

¹ Retrieved from <https://sites.google.com/site/qepcafe/modules/overview/facione> (accessed June 22, 2013).

² Mark Mason, “Critical Thinking and Learning.” In his *Critical Thinking and Learning*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008, p. 6.

³ I am aware that the very concepts of “critical thinking” and “reasoning” have been criticized “from postmodern and feminist perspectives,” as Duck-Joo Kwak writes: “The attacks appear to be directed primarily at the Cartesian sense of rationality on which the concept of critical thinking is based. This Cartesian rationality is criticized for privileging rational and linear thought

over institution, and for neglecting emotions and lived experiences from concrete situations. It is considered to politically exclude historically marginalized or oppressed groups by posing a universal standard of rationality as the formal procedure of thinking. In other words, this unfavourable attitude to critical thinking today derives mainly from a morally motivated aspiration for inclusion” (“Re-conceptualizing Critical Thinking for Moral Education in Culturally Plural Societies” In *Critical Thinking and Learning*, Mark Mason [ed.], p. 120). However, even while recognizing the importance of these criticisms, as I use the concepts of “critical thinking” and “reasoning” in this paper I do not intend them in any exclusivist way. Rather, I am convinced they can also be understood in a more inclusive way within a larger epistemological framework.

⁴ Concilium General Secretariat, “Utopia,” in *Concilium*, 5/1 (1969), p. 77.

⁵ See Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, *Is Religion Killing Us?: Violence in the Bible and the Quran*, Harrisburg, London (UK), New York: Trinity Press International, 2003, pp. 112-113.

⁶ Scott Eastham, “How Is Wisdom Communicated?: Prologue to Peace Studies,” in *Interculture*, XXV/2 (1992), p. 11.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁸ See Heather Menzies and Janice Newsonm “No Time to Think?,” in *Academic Matters/OCUFA’s Journal of Higher Education*, (Winter/hiver 2006), pp. 12-15.

⁹ Adriane Paavo, “The Power of Human Contact: Keeping a Foot on the Floor in the Online World,” in *CAUT/ACPPU Bulletin*, 60/6 (June 2013 juin), p. A3. In this line, Andy Miah, a professor in Ethics and Emerging Technologies and Director of the Creative Futures Research Centre at the University of the West of Scotland (UK), insightfully remarks: “The goals of teaching remain largely the same: to nurture in students the capacity for independent, critical thought and perhaps even a desire to continue learning throughout their lives. I also believe the aspirations students have for their Professors remain, for the most part, unchanged, as well. Students will continue to seek out inspiring teachers. Technology alone is unlikely to ensure this, although it may make a lot of average teachers seem a lot better than they are!” (“The Professor as Mass Communicator?,” in *Academic Matters / OCUFA’s Journal of Higher Education*, [May-mai 2012], p. 14; see also pp. 11-13).

¹⁰ Adriane Paavo, “The Power of Human Contact,” p. A3.

¹¹ Felipe Fernández-Armesto, “Teaching vs. Instruction,” in *CAUT/ACPPU Bulletin*, 53/6 (June 2006 juin), p. A2. He adds on the same page: “A well-taught course is always self-undermining, because it imparts the gift of a rational, critical response. The best teachers produce unruly and heterodox disciples. . . . But those who think of teaching as instruction will never see that, nor perceive the potential education has for enhancing lives and changing the world.”

¹² See Canadian Association of University Teachers, “Governments Told to Stop ‘Ideological Exclusions’,” in *CAUT/ACPPU Bulletin*, 56/4 (April 2009 avril), pp. A1, A4.

¹³ Henry A. Giroux, “Arming the Academy: Universities in the Shadow of the National Security State,” in *Academic Matters / OCUFA’s Journal of Higher Education*, (October/octobre 2007), p. 10. He continues: “It gets worse. Government agencies have on occasion used academic scholarship not for its purpose – to promote a spirit of understanding complex cultural differences, critical reflection, and self-critique – but to expand their own methods of torture and abuse. One such example recently surfaced at the 2006 American Anthropological Association’s annual meeting. Scholars attending the meeting were appalled to discover that the work of some of their colleagues in the field of cultural anthropology had been used by the U.S. armed services to develop certain interrogation tactics at Abu Gharaib prison and as well as other locations” (p. 11).

¹⁴ Joel Westheimer, “Higher Education of Education of Hire?: Corporatization and the Threat to Democratic Thinking,” in *Academic Matters/ OCUFA’s Journal of Higher Education*, (May/mai 2010), p.12.

¹⁵ Cardinal Angelo Sodano, “Rules for ‘Thinking with the Church’,” in *L’Osservatore romano* (Weekly Edition in English), 46/1366 (1994), p. 8.

¹⁶ See Ramón Martínez de Pisón, *From Violence to Peace: Dismantling the Manipulation of Religion*, Leuven/Paris/Walpole, MA: Peeters (Conflict, Ethics, and Spirituality, 1), 2013, pp. 6-7, 17-27.

¹⁷ I am referring here to the case of Edward Joseph Snowden, the “American former technical contractor for the United States National Security Agency (NSA) and a former employee of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) who leaked details of several top-secret U.S. and British government mass surveillance programs to the press. . . [And how] On June 14, 2013, U.S. federal prosecutors charged [him] with espionage and theft of government property” (Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Snowden [accessed July 8, 2013]).

¹⁸ Jacques Racine, “Les formes de violence émergeant de la mondialisation.” In *Mondialisation, violence et religion*, Pierre Noël (ed.). Montréal: Fides (Hétirage et Projet, 74), 2009, p. 33 (my translation).

¹⁹ Bruce B. Lawrence, *Defender of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt against the Modern Age*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989, p. 97 (italics in the original).

²⁰ See Richard G. Cote, “God Sings in the Night: Ambiguity as an Invitation to Believe,” in *Concilium* 4 (1992), pp. 95-105. In this article, Cote highlights the results of some research on the “psychology of intolerance”: “The focus of most of this research has been to determine how intolerance of ambiguity relates to other personality traits. The research findings have shown – indeed have shown quite convincingly – that people who are intolerant of ambiguity are more than likely to evince one or more of the following traits: low self-esteem, rigidity in thinking, close-mindedness, dogmatism, anxiety, strong ethnocentrism, religious fundamentalism, conformity, prejudice and low creativity” (pp. 97-98). For his part, Jamal Khader gives a very interesting description of fundamentalism: “Some common characteristics of fundamentalism include: 1) religious idealism as the basis for personal and communal identity; 2) an understanding of truth as revealed and unified; 3)

envisioning themselves as part of a cosmic struggle; 4) the seizure of historical moments and reinterpretation of them in light of a cosmic struggle; 5) the demonization of opposition; 6) selectivity in what parts of their tradition and heritage they stress” (“Opportunities and Threats for Religions in Conflict and Violence: How [Not] to Use the Name of God.” In *Postcolonial Europe in the Crucible of Cultures: Reckoning with God in a World of Conflicts*, Jacques Haers, Norbert Hintersteiner, and Georges De Schrijver [eds.] Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi [Currents of Encounter, 34], 2007, p. 142; see also p. 159 where he notes that fundamentalists believe themselves to be “God’s chosen” people and, as such, the other who “*is not*” chosen is excluded. Thus, the chosen one is “better and superior”).

²¹ Ralph W. Hood, Jr., Peter C. Hill, and W. Paul Williamson, *The Psychology of Religious Fundamentalism*, New York, NY/London, UK: The Guilford Press (Psychology), 2005, p. 5; see also pp. 187-190.

²² See James L. Griffith, *Religion That Heals, Religion That Harms: A Guide for Clinical Practice*, New York, NY/London, UK: The Guilford Press (Psychology), 2010, pp. 115-140.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

²⁴ See Simon John De Vries, “Scenes of Sex and Violence in the Old Testament.” In *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, J. Harold Ellens (ed.), vol. 1 (Sacred Scriptures, Ideology, and Violence), Westport, Connecticut, London, UK: Praeger (Contemporary Psychology), 2004, p. 75.

²⁵ Bruce B. Lawrence, *Defender of God*, p. 100.

²⁶ J. Harold Ellens, “Fundamentalism, Orthodoxy, and Violence.” In *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, J. Harold Ellens (ed.), vol. 4 (Contemporary Views on Spirituality and Violence), Westport, Connecticut, London, UK: Praeger (Contemporary Psychology), 2004, p. 120; see also pp. 119, 140-141.

²⁷ Michael Luntley, “Learning, Empowerment and Judgement.” In *Critical Thinking and Learning*, Mark Mason (ed.), p. 79.

²⁸ Miriam K. Martin and Ramón Martínez de Pisón, “From Knowledge to Wisdom,” p. 157.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

³⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 167-170.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 168.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

³⁴ Steve Joordens, “You Can Lead Students To Knowledge, But How Do You Make Them Think?,” in *Academic Matters/ OCUFA’s Journal of Higher Education*, (Oct-nov 2010), p. 14; see also pp. 11-13.

³⁵ Henry A. Giroux, “Arming the Academy,” p. 12.

³⁶ See Marc Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence and Peacemaking*, Oxford, UK, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 13; James K. Wellman, Jr., and Kyoko Tokuno, “Is Religious Violence Inevitable?,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 43/3 (2004), p. 292; Francisco Díez de Velasco, “Theoretical Reflections on

Violence and Religion: Identity, Power, Privilege and Difference (With Reference to the Hispanic World)," *Numen*, 52 (2005), p. 90.

³⁷ See Paul N. Anderson, "Religion and Violence: From Pawn to Scapegoat." *The Destructive Power of Religion*, in J. Harold Ellens (Ed.), vol. 2 (Religion, Psychology and Violence), Westport, Connecticut, London, UK: Praeger (Contemporary Psychology), 2004, pp. 265-283.

³⁸ See James L. Griffith, *Religion That Heals, Religion That Harms*, pp. 157-179.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 164. In short, as Griffith adds on the next page, "Religious beliefs that may have served in prior contexts as guideposts of wisdom become instead little more than identity flags for who is ingroup and outgroup. They no longer stimulate moral reflection or a quest for spiritual truth."

⁴⁰ Francisco Díez de Velasco, "Theoretical Reflections on Violence and Religion," p. 91.

⁴¹ Felipe Fernández-Armesto, "Teaching vs. Instruction," in *CAUT/ACPPU Bulletin*, 53/6 (June 2006 juin), p. A2. He adds further on in the same page: "Fundamental to the notion of 'instruction' is the doctrine that students must believe what teachers say. Fundamental to education is that they should question and quarry and challenge and harry it."

⁴² See Ann Sherman, "Creating the Engaged Student," in *Academic Matters/OCUFA's Journal of Higher Education*, (February-février 2008), p. 22.

⁴³ See Mark Kingwell, "Intellectuals and Democracy," in *Academic Matters/OCUFA's Journal of Higher Education*, (May-mai 2011), pp. 8-11.

⁴⁴ Scott Eastham, "How is Wisdom Communicated?," p. 18 (italics in the original).

RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY, AND CULTURE: A CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Anthony Chinedu Osuji

INTRODUCTION

Something interesting about relationships is the ambivalence of proximity. Common boundaries might make for closer interactions but also can mar it by engendering territorial clashes. Just as geographical propinquity might encourage co-operation but also engender border tussles, disciplinary proximity makes for interdisciplinary overlaps but also could be a source of ideological suspicions. Religion, theology, philosophy, and even culture have always shared borderline questions; that of the origin, meaning, and goal of existence and other questions about the ultimate and underlying issues of human life and living. ‘Territorial disputes’ notwithstanding, the dialogue between religion (or in our specific context here, Christian theology) and philosophy, or with culture, has often proved very fecund – something clearly attestable especially from the historical perspective. The most distinguished figures in the history of Christian theology, whether it be those of the times of yore like Origen, Augustine, and Thomas, or those of the recent times; Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, etc., for the most part are those whose thoughts succeeded in reformulating the theological tradition or faith on the platform of its encounter with the prevalent cultural and philosophical climate.

Taking the history of Christian theology as starting point, this paper attempts to demonstrate that at each epoch, theologizing has always been made possible only in and by means of the philosophical and cultural categories proper to the epoch. But because religious practice is always a cultic expression of the theological climate (*lex credendi lex orandi* – law of worship reveals law of belief), the implication then is that the Christian religion or theology and its cultic expression have been to a large extent determined by culture and philosophy. We shall not go into sampling every theologian but shall content ourselves with some epochal representations. The chosen samples will only aim at proving the central thesis of the paper, and we shall identify what could confidently count as the philosophico-cultural matrices open to Christian theology to operate meaningfully if it is to remain relevant to the contemporary society. We finally argue that while every science continues to have unsettled questions, the dialogue of theology with philosophy and culture also promises fecundity in our present – we now say, ‘post-modern’ – age.

THE NOTION OF (RE)CONTEXTUALISATION

From the start, we would need to address the importance of contextualisation and/or recontextualisation. This is certainly not a new concept, because from the ancient period, through the medieval, down to the modern period, theology has always been made possible only through the dynamics of contextualisation and recontextualisation. The notion of contextualisation stands for a systematic-theological approach which basically tries to articulate theological truth in response to context and history (Boeve 2009, 27). It is both a hermeneutical key to understand the way in which theological truth has always been reached, and also constitutes the normative framework for the future of theological exercise. It is a question of theological epistemology; the cognitive problematic of how to reach at theological truths of the Christian religion. As a category in theological thinking, it means that the Christian faith is contained and known in a specific historical, cultural, socio-economic and political context, and not only contained in, but is also co-constituted by this context. It is true that Christian theology does not accept that faith and tradition be reduced to context and history, or that the development of tradition be taken as mere adaptation to history and context. But even though truth is not reducible to time, truth may not be reached at or known outside of time.

The history of theological exercise in all its major epochs attests a procedure that can be described thus: new developments in context exact pressure on already historically conditioned expression of faith, and this triggers contextual sensitivities and thought patterns which begin to shift. This causes older forms of tradition to lose pertinence and plausibility, with possible effects of estrangement. Faith communities then find themselves compelled to search for novel forms of relationship between the deposit of faith and their new context, and end up formulating ways to express the faith in a manner that both respects fidelity to the tradition as well as relates adequately to the new context they find themselves in. In such a way, continuity balances with discontinuity. This theological epistemology is in contradistinction to an ahistorical model of tradition development which accentuates the timelessness of truth, an epistemological fault that Christian theology has been guilty of in many different epochs and in different theologians. Fundamentally, Christian theological recontextualisation takes root from her faith in the Incarnation; that Jesus, Son of God, co-substantial with God the Father, and therefore God, took human flesh, and was born as a human being of a particular race, of a particular culture, in a definite epoch. The eternity of God assumes the vagaries of the contingency of human life, thereby marrying Absolute Truth with relative context. It is the dynamics of this principle that gives rise to all contextual theologies posing in various shades and nomenclatures depending on the social, political, geographical, and cultural context: Inculturation, Indigenisation, Liberation theology, Black theology, Political theology, Feminist theology, etc.

THEOLOGY ENCOUNTERS A PHILOSOPHICAL CULTURE IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Following Jesus, the very first Christians were Palestinian Jews – adherents of the Jewish religion who came to believe in Jesus as their risen Lord and Saviour. But within the first decades of Christian history, Christianity spread and came into contact with non-Jews, mainly, those of the Hellenistic background who would eventually become dominant. It would be unfair to underestimate the impact of this contact. I would readily describe the phenomenon as a clash of intellectual civilizations, borrowing a recent expression from Huntington (1996). That was the beginning of the not so easy marriage of Christian faith and Greek philosophy, but which fortunately, one could say, became fruitful as it was the beginning of the systematic articulations of Christian theology. The outcome of the meeting of these two intellectual civilisations or traditions, in a way representing theology and philosophy, was that they became mutually fused during the first centuries of Christian history for good. To make the point clearer, we could describe the essential features of the two intellectual environments regarding faith. The God of the Jews from the Old Testament perspective was not essentially an object of thought as a subject of experience. Yahweh was not an object of human speculation, abstract knowledge or intellectual definition. He was the God of promise and action, who acted in history, who partnered in all the successive stages of the Jewish people's journey. For the early Jewish Christians, the concreteness of this God became dramatized in the Incarnation, in the human Jesus. When Christian faith entered the Hellenistic world already with its own wisdom patterned on the insights of the great thinkers of Greece (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, etc.), it entered into an environment with a very different intellectual view of reality. The non-Jewish world was generally unfamiliar with Jewish scriptures and with the categories of thought of Christian doctrine. The world beyond Palestine had been greatly influenced by Greek philosophy, and so this God of the Jews, the God of history, the God of Jesus, must be made intelligible to a people already tutored in different intellectual philosophical categories. Bonsor (1993, 25) makes an assessment on the issue:

For the Christian faith to get a hearing, it could not present itself as the contradiction of this ancient tradition. Jesus was, after all, a recent figure in history. The towering giants of Greek thought were figures of antiquity, fathers of an ancient wisdom. One could hardly expect people to jettison this ancient wisdom in favor of a recent Jewish rabbi.

A classic example was the first encounter of St. Paul with the Athenians in Acts of the Apostles, chapter 17, where the long interest in Paul's oratorical speech was disturbed when he alluded to the resurrection of Jesus – which was already established faith among Christians of Jewish

extraction but which to the Greeks sounded unintelligible. That meant that the story of Christ had to be re-articulated and re-packaged in ways that made sense to the philosophically-minded Gentile converts. And it was this fusion, this appropriation of the Greek and the Jewish, that determined the nature and formulation that many important Christian doctrines took. In fact, it was eventually Greek thinkers who reflectively articulated the principal tenets of Christian theology in the Councils of the fourth and fifth centuries, such as the Trinity and the doctrine of the hypostatic union, which states that the one person of Christ unites human and divine natures (Fay 2012, 35).

THE PATRISTIC ERA: AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

We use the term ‘apologists’ to describe the first Christian theologians who wrote around the second and third centuries CE. They took seriously this issue of making Christianity intelligible, and adopted the strategy of not making Jesus a contradiction of Greek wisdom but, instead, its fulfilment. St. Paul had argued, in the abovementioned failed attempt at convincing the Athenians about the resurrection, that the God he had come to preach, one they already worshipped but was yet unknown to them, had been spoken about by their own poets and philosophers (see v. 28). Justin the Martyr (c. 100-165) and Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215) said that the truth taught and explicated by Greek philosophers found fullest expression in Christ, and that the Being said by Plato to be the source of every other being was the Father of Jesus Christ.

I take the trend of this ancient period in theological enquiry to culminate in Augustine of Hippo, who has been described as “an excellent representative of an extensive Christian (theological) tradition in Antiquity” (Heybels 2006, 186). Definitely, the point of departure for Augustine in his academic enquiry was philosophy; this continued until his conversion, when he married his Platonic philosophical leanings with his newly acquired Christian faith. But philosophy in Augustine has to be nuanced. As wisdom, it was not simply an academic discipline, but the pursuit of meaning which transcended the frontiers of what are now viewed as the distinct spheres of philosophy, religion, psychology, and ethics. In particular, philosophy was a search for meaning in a world that is fraught with danger, an endeavor to navigate successfully both conceptually and practically in it; an effort to understand and live through its conflicts and contradictions, sometimes roughly referred to as the problem of evil. This wisdom would then be necessary to find the common denominator between the conflicting Hellenistic philosophical views of his time – Stoicism, Epicureanism, Skepticism, Neo-Platonism, Gnosticism – and the Christian claims of orthodoxy. Reading Plotinus and other thinkers that are now commonly designated as Neo-Platonists was essential to the conversion of Augustine to the Christian faith, and so the depth of theology that Augustine bequeathed to theological posterity reflects this philosophical perspective.

Human existence for Augustine is a search for happiness, a search only fulfilled in God who exists beyond the confines of the physical world in which we struggle. Like Plato's Good, transcendent and existing in inaccessible light, the God for whom we long in our quest is a spiritual source of the created world. As in Platonism, creation can be a locus that can awaken the human spirit to the higher reality, to the ultimate mystery God himself, and it is the duty of human beings to focus on this higher and inner reality. But due to sin, human beings stop at creation, which engenders human unhappiness and renders human beings in need of redemption. There is a legitimization, therefore, of the coming of Jesus as the Word made flesh. For this epoch, philosophy and the prevalent culture (considered pagan) were accorded merely instrumental use. Whatever good could be found among the pagan philosophers should be appropriated by theology as hers. In the *De Doctrina Christiana*, Book 2, no. 60, Augustine reasons:

Furthermore, if those who are called philosophers, especially the Platonists, have said things by chance that are truthful and conformable to our faith, we must now only have no fear of them, but even appropriate them for our own use from those who are, in a sense, their illegal possessors.... All the teachings of the pagans have counterfeit and superstitious notions and oppressive burdens of useless labor, which anyone of us, leaving the association of pagans with Christ as our leader, ought to abominate and shun. However, they also contain liberal instruction more adapted to the service of truth and also very useful principles about morals; even some truths about the service of the one God Himself are discovered among them.... They themselves did not create them, but excavated them, as it were, from some mines of divine Providence which is everywhere present, but they wickedly and unjustly misuse this treasure for the service of demons. When the Christian severs himself in spirit from the wretched association of these men, he ought to take these from them for the lawful service of preaching the Gospel... in order to convert it to a Christian use.

THE MEDIEVAL (SCHOLASTIC) SYNTHESIS: THOMAS AQUINAS

Thomas Aquinas is acknowledged as a great thinker not only for the content of his teaching, but also in the method he used; above all, his distinction and new synthesis between philosophy and theology. Before Aquinas, the Fathers of the Church, faced with different philosophies of a Platonic type, constructed a complete vision of the world and of life that included the question of God and religion. With faith as starting point, they used elements in Platonism to respond to essential questions about the human being. This mixture of biblical revelation and the interpretation of Platonic elements they referred to as 'our philosophy,' where philosophy does not

portend a pure rational system different from faith, but a reflectively thought out worldview, stretching beyond reason and constructed in the light of faith. For the Scholastic thinkers, Aquinas especially, the encounter with the philosophy of Aristotle, then rediscovered, opened a new perspective. Though it was a philosophy that was thoroughly pre-Christian, elaborated without revelation, they saw in it a consistent and convincing rationality in itself. So the ‘our philosophy’ of the Fathers no longer worked, and the relationship between philosophy and theology, between faith and reason, had to be reformulated in the context of the new Aristotelian philosophy in vogue. There came to exist a ‘philosophy’, complete and convincing in itself, thought out without revelation, and then ‘theology’, which is rationality with and in the faith – or, in the words of St. Anselm, faith seeking understanding. ‘Are these two rationalities then compatible or are they mutually exclusive?’ was the question the Scholastics tried to unravel. Aquinas clearly perceived the distinctiveness of the two sciences and their compatibility, thereby showing at the same time the independence of philosophy and theology and their reciprocal rationality. Aristotelian concepts and categories became first class theological concepts: substance and accidents, essence and existence, matter and form, causes, finality and teleology, necessity, contingency, etc. – all became ready concepts for Aquinas in his reformulation and giving of direction to Christian theology.

Whereas an exaggerated Platonism among the Fathers could lead to excessive spiritualization (with contempt of the body and matter, time, and history), the exaggerated Aristotelianism that was rediscovered by the Scholastics tended to introduce rationalism and nominalism. For a good balance, Platonism’s transcendence and Aristotelianism’s insistence on inner-worldly intelligibility should complement each other, since neither system is totally exclusive of the other. It was Thomas Aquinas who constructed a masterful synthesis of these two complementary perspectives to reality, using his Christian vision to moderate between essential and existential orders, nature and grace, necessity and contingency, and intellect and will, thereby preserving the intelligibility of the finite world in itself and at the same time referring it ultimately to God. Thus a clear Aristotelian philosophical ground is provided for marrying the truths which theology considered revealed and the immanent context of human existence.

THEOLOGY ENCOUNTERS MODERNITY

Between the medieval and the contemporary period, the story of the evolutions and revolutions in philosophy is well known, with its corresponding impact on culture as well as on Christian theology. From the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, down to the modern period, with the emergence of the streams of continental rationalism and empiricism, the intellectual climate changed from the Christian-dominated thought pattern of the Scholastics and their use of Aristotle, to the autonomy of the intellect

and suspicion of any other authority outside reason. With Descartes came the history of establishing human knowledge founded on rational principles, shaking the traditional foundations of Aristotelianism and Thomism. With modernity (especially in the second half of the 20th century) influenced or inspired by developments in philosophical hermeneutics and epistemology, new intellectual orientations have entailed shifts in thinking patterns; mainly from a cumulative understanding of tradition as fixed to models in which truth and history are now intrinsically connected. These shifts in philosophical orientations have their own impact, not only on the history of Christianity and Christian theology, but also on the way theological enterprise is perceived today. There is renewed awareness of the historicity and contextuality in the process of arriving at theological truths, even as historicity and contextuality have also become features of truth itself. Consequently, many modern theologians, in their methodological considerations, have underlined the pertinence of culture and society, or what one might broadly term ‘the prevailing context,’ in the understanding of the faith and in the fulfilment of the theological task. The awareness has grown. As Boeve (2009, 29) puts it:

- (a) that Christian sources and theologians have attempted from the very beginning to understand and express the Christian faith in relation to the context in which this faith was lived and practised, (b) that interpreting these attempts can only legitimately succeed when one takes this past context (and one’s own context) into account, and (c) that the current task for theology consists precisely of relating (‘correlating’) anew Christian faith and the contemporary context – the latter often on the basis of diagnosing the gap between the inherited tradition and a contextual newness which challenges this tradition.

As shown above, this is totally no new awareness, because theologians of the past era were already aware that theological truth was realised in history and context, or was expressed in human thought and language. The novel element – and this is important – is that there is now consciousness and acceptance of the fact that the changes undergone by history, thought and language also necessarily affect the understanding of the faith and truth that are expressed through them. Boeve (29-33), highlights two modern theologians, Edward Schillebeeckx and Hans Küng, and the concepts they used to articulate this. I intend here to briefly summarize his comments as a spring board for opening up the discussion on the evaluation of the current theologising project and the future prospects for Christian theology.

Highly influenced by the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Schillebeeckx speaks of the development of the Christian theological tradition in terms of consecutive fusions of horizons of understanding, thereby distinguishing successive epochs in the history of

the Christian understanding of faith, saying that each has or had its own horizon of understanding (Schillebeeckx 1990, 65). Schillebeeckx conceives of the Christian faith not as a fixed datum handed unchangeably from one tradition to the other, but something that is found in the different successive relationships. For him, as he titled one of his works, *God is New Each Moment* (1983). Since there are always bound to be historical shifts of horizons of meaning, the relationship between faith-understanding and the context would need always to be reformulated corresponding to the prevailing horizon of meaning, and this gives rise always to a dialectics between new contexts and old understandings from old contexts. This is a sort of rupture but which, instead of threatening the continuity of tradition, works at the same time to its guarantee. Faith expressions may differ without endangering identity and continuity, because of what Schillebeeckx calls ‘proportional similarity’. The notion of proportional similarity refers to that which is basically constant; the essence of the Christian tradition, its theological truth in relation to their different contexts. But the expression of that same identity is time-bound and inescapably contextual. To express this idea, Schillebeeckx distinguishes between the *interpretandum* of Christian faith and the *interpretaments*. The former can only be expressed in the latter. The *interpretandum*, which is the identity of meaning, persists through the subsequent proportions established through the *interpretaments*. But Schillebeeckx’s main contention is that this relation should, as ever, acquire a new form today.

Two basic strands in Hans Küng – “faith and history – constitute the epistemological rudiments of Küng’s methodology,” comments Catherine LaCugna (1982, 19). For his own part, Küng (1989, 123-126), adopts the popular theory of paradigm shift in the natural sciences developed by Thomas Kuhn in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (1962). According to Thomas Kuhn, reality impinges on us never through the naked eye, but through paradigmatic glasses which represent basically an assemblage of beliefs, assumptions, presuppositions, values, and modes of doing things, that are adopted by the members in a given place and time. These paradigms are radically historical in so far as they entail circumstantial factors such as ways of looking at, judging, and appreciating. In science, a paradigm shift begins by a crisis situation in that particular discipline or science, normally caused by shifts in the context, by new scientific discoveries or the emergence of new historical or contingent contexts. When such a crisis occurs, the first recourse by the scientific community would be to rely on the existing paradigms, which often reveal their limits and contradictions, and the need for change. The new paradigm may succeed in furnishing the models for a new era in the science when majority of scholars adopt it, putting adherents of the old paradigms in a marginal position.

As in every science, crisis situations do occur in theology due to the emergence of new contexts, intellectual or historical. Following this model or trend, Küng distinguishes various paradigms in the theological tradition.

In his *Theology for the Third Millennium* (1990), Küng charts the pattern of paradigm changes in the history of theology, beginning from the first century Jewish-Christendom to the 20th century contemporary ecumenical paradigm which branches off into Dialectical theology, Existential theology, Hermeneutical theology, Political theology, Liberation theology, Feminist theology, Black theology, Third World theology, etc. In fact for Küng, theology is inescapably bound to be affected by these changes in paradigms. He writes (1989, 126).

Yet the question thrusts itself upon us: Does not theology, even Christian truth itself, faced by nothing but paradigm changes and new conceptions, become a victim of historical relativism, which makes it impossible any longer to perceive the Christian reality and make every paradigm equally true, equally valid?

Like Schillebeeckx, Küng believes also that a theological paradigm shift does not entail complete discontinuity or rupture with the tradition but spins in the dialectic between continuity and discontinuity, identity and difference, stability and change. Thomas Kuhn, who provided him with this model, had stressed the fact that in the natural sciences, there is a fundamental continuity; it is always “the same bundle of data as before” which however are placed “in a new system of relations with one another” (1962, 85).

These methodological reflections have led these two modern theologians, Schillebeeckx and Küng, to emphasize, with modern hermeneutical categories, the long established rapport between the Christian faith and the context.

THEOLOGY AND THE PHILOSOPHICAL-CULTURAL CONTEXT TODAY

The story of Christian theology has therefore been that of efforts to understand the Christian faith through and within the different cultural and intellectual contexts of the past and present. As Bonsor (1993, 22) writes, “Whether believers are aware of it or not, the philosophical presuppositions of time and place profoundly affect how Christians understand their faith”. It would be natural then to conclude that for contemporary theology, the task would be to identify those contemporary experiences and evolutions that would provide clues for theological recontextualization, so that inherited tradition and contemporary context would blend. What then do we say about the philosophical and cultural matrices underlying our times? Different authors have different ways to respond to this, and have different areas of emphasis when referring to our contemporary philosophical and cultural landscape. New directions in natural and human sciences, democratic, diverse and pluralistic societies, globalisation, liberation movements and the autonomization of thinking – all have their impact on

every science, and theology too. Elizabeth Johnson (2007, 28-29) summarises the philosophical and cultural climate of our times thus:

For modern society is marked not only by atheism and agnosticism but also by positivism, which restricts what we can know to data accessible from the natural sciences; secularism, which gets on with the business at hand, impatient of ultimate questions, with a wealth of humanistic values that allow a life of ethical integrity without faith; and religious pluralism, which demonstrates that there is more than one path to holy and ethical living.

Coming to faith expression, in an interview later published *Faith in a Wintry Season* (1990), Karl Rahner used the metaphor of winter. Rahner describes the situation of the Christian faith in the world in terms of a wintry season, where the luxuriant growth of devotions and secondary beliefs – all those leaves and fruits that unfurled in the season when Christianity was dominant in the culture – have fallen away. He suggests that in such a season, belief and theology must get back to basics and not waste time and energy on peripheral problems. This will help theology revive the innermost core that alone can warm the heart in winter. For him, the only big issue is the question of God. Otherwise put, Christian theology has, as usual, to muster the internal dynamics that has and should characterise it, to address the essentials of the multi-faceted contemporary society.

One of the intellectual accents in our modern society is a historical approach to reality. It is today commonly agreed that people from different places and times will perceive reality differently. Different cultures, with different histories and traditions, normally harbour different structures and values. Times and places have their imprint in the order of things. In many disciplines, even in the sciences said to be ‘sacred’, works and writings need to be placed in their historical context, knowing that their content reflects the values, controversies, and perspectives of their times. “Thinking historically about human existence and, therefore, all manifestations of human life, is a characteristic of the contemporary intellectual life. Philosophers now debate whether there is anything but history, whether there is anything like an enduring human nature or lasting truths” (Bonsor 1993, 101). This reign of history and historical consciousness continually puts challenge to Christian theology, especially in its central tenet, the unicity and the universality of Jesus, the *christos*. Christian faith, like some other religious confessions, makes a claim to universal truth. This claim is that Jesus, a man who lived in the first century Palestine, is God’s full and final revelation for all humanity, of every time and place. From a very purely logical point of view, there is obvious tension in this claim: Jesus, as said above, was a first century Palestinian of Jewish stock. His teaching, life and fate reflected this spatio-temporal context. If Jesus is then God’s revelation, must one also accept his historical perspective? Early Christians

grappled with this problem, especially as Christianity made inroad into non-Jewish cultures. The book of Acts of the Apostles and the letters of St. Paul in the New Testament gave a clear answer to the effect that Gentile (non-Jewish) converts needed not become Jews in order to be Christians; that is to say, they needed not to concentrate much on the historical significance of Jesus. But the relationship between Jesus' historical particularity and the universality of his relevance remains a theological debate. As Jack Bonsor (1993, 22) asks: "How does this individual reveal God to all the times and cultures which constitute human history?" To the extent that Christian theology responds to this question, especially in dealing with other faiths and philosophies in a fast changing and multi-cultural world, it determines her relevance today.

We might also bring in here the wave of post-modern thinking and its impact on Christian theology. Post-modernism has criticised modern epistemological standards of universality, even putting modern culture to the test. It has questioned certain basic presuppositions of modernism, calling attention more to heterogeneity and radical historicity. In the wake of disillusionments from some aspects of human history, like the absolute pretensions of the Enlightenment, Marxism, Communism, etc., post-modernism became suspicious of what are normally today referred to as 'master narratives' (Lyotard, 1984) and their hegemonic frameworks, and called attention to their radical limitedness, to the contingency and particularity of any construction of meaning. Christian faith, considered along many other religious faiths as a master narrative, cannot but be affected. Christian theology becomes radically aware of its identity as a participant on the pluralistic field, aware of its particularity amongst other religious claims and ideologies, with its own history, narrative, and profile, and thus opens itself to the challenge of difference and otherness.

From a related angle, more than ever, there has been an emergence of the politics of difference in the West, the re-awakening of ethnic and cultural conflicts in the non-Western parts of the world, and the conflicts between modern technological and more traditional cultures. These situations mean that one can never disregard cultural differences in the scheme of things, and there is every reason to believe that the problem falls directly on theology as it does on many other social and human sciences. As Judith Gundry-Volf and Miroslav Volf (1997, 8-9) write: "If we continue to treat group identities as neglected orphans, we should not be surprised if they behave as unruly children. It is high time to give them serious and sustained attention". Today, theology cannot exist unless it is contextual. That is why the recent development of the theological recontextualisation of the Christian tradition into diverse cultural contexts – contexts different from the European or the mainstream – cannot but be welcome news. Rightly said, such shift "is but a synchronic translation of what has already been occurring diachronically from of old" (Boeve, 39). It is also pertinent to remark that Christian theology is naturally destined to be attentive to cultural differences, and has traditionally solid resources to promote this

reflection on the relations between cultures. The birth of the Church on Pentecost was a classical expression of the confluence of cultures and the dignity of differences. On that day, reports the Acts of the Apostles, Jews who came from different nations heard in their own languages the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:6).

The above paragraph thereby points at many tensions that still exist, and where Christian theology is called to dialogue with modern culture: the question of religious pluralism and the challenge of secularism, with sensitivity to the dangers of cultural hegemony in theological paradigms and categories. Within Christianity and ecclesiastical disciplines, many serious issues reflecting the cultural state of the contemporary world loom large – the question of more democratization in the power structure; pro-life issues and related questions; questions of sexual equality and other forms of discriminations – while their stand on socio-ethical questions remain continuously a rendezvous to which Christian theology can never afford to shy away from. In all these and many more, it is clear that theology has to concentrate on the essentials and put away marginal issues from the centre to the periphery, since experience has shown that, more than the cardinal issues of any religious confession, the marginal ones are troublesomely divisive.

THE PHRASE ‘PHILOSOPHY AS ‘HANDMAID OF THEOLOGY’”

Philosophy has often traditionally been designated thus: *philosophia ancilla theologiae* – ‘philosophy as handmaid of theology’ – a medieval designation. The question is: what did this appellation mean to those who used it first, and, if we are still to retain this appellation, what is the possible shift of meaning? If ‘handmaid’ implies an instrumental use, whereby philosophy simply serves theology in the latter’s effort to sustain her doctrines and tenets (as meant by Augustine and also implied in many of the Scholastics), then this is a misnomer by today’s standards. Though Aquinas insisted on the harmony of faith and reason and respected the autonomy and complementarity of the two ways of arriving at the truth, he still believed that knowing the truth had its ultimate source in the word of God through revelation, since it is faith which draws light from revelation and supernatural knowledge, and sheds fuller light on the truth. Though according philosophy an autonomous scientific status, still for Aquinas, reason (philosophy) has as principal tasks to demonstrate the foundations of the faith, to explain through similarities the truth of the faith, and to refute the objections that are raised against the faith. This is still a quasi-instrumental use, and does not accord philosophy or the sciences the right to contradict theology or to disagree with it. Kant (1959, 21) later tried to put things in order when he wrote in his *Der Streit der Fakultatem* of 1798: “One can only grant the theological faculty the arrogant claim that the philosophical faculty is its maid-servant (leaving aside the question of whether the latter bears the torch before, or carries the train after her

mistress) on the condition that she is not banished or gagged". Writing this shortly after being freed from a ban from writing about religion, Kant says that the role of philosophy is to lay down the truth for more practically-oriented disciplines, theology inclusive. What Kant implies here is that the idea of handmaid is compatible with freedom.

But philosophy is really the handmaid of theology – and not only to theology, but to all other academic disciplines (Baber 2001, 286). Like a typical handmaid in the basic understanding of home economics, and most importantly, a free handmaid, philosophy does conceptual housework, clarifying concepts and setting up necessary distinctions and precisions as in arrangements of household effects. That is why we have ‘philosophy of...’: philosophy of science, of art, of religion, of metaphysics. It has to be noted that, in the beginning of Western intellectual enquiry, everything was philosophy. It was only gradually that other disciplines became autonomous about their goals, and branched off – natural philosophy eventually evolved into physics, chemistry, and biology, with various sub-disciplines, mathematics, and later economics etc. As *fides quarens intellectum* (faith seeking understanding), theological world views, the intellectual grasp of God’s revelation in history, have been challenged by several forms of reflective thinking in the course of history. But it has been more so by philosophy and developments in philosophy. While philosophy has always offered a reflective of the context proper to each epoch, this has been in a large part the intellectual horizon in which theologians have done their business of articulating their understanding of Christian faith. This has also led in many occasions to new ways of doing theology, and even helped in navigating the directions of the content of the faith. It is part of the business of philosophy as *ancilla theologiae*, on her capacity as an independent critical discipline, to question, criticize, scrutinize and even evaluate religious claims and presuppositions. Finally, this critical role of philosophy should not be seen as anti-theology, but rather makes theology stronger by allowing it to eschew undue dogmatism, and develop some self-resilience in the world that is often wrongly thought to be anti-religious.

Does that entail simply adaptation of the Christian faith to the context, to the current philosophy in vogue? No. What is outlawed is the case where a question is said to be definitely closed. There are no closed questions, or there should be none, because contexts are always evolving and changing. An episode in Jesus’ life has always been interpreted partially. This is in Matthew, chapter 8. A man wanted and expressed the wish to follow Jesus wherever he went, and Jesus tells him: “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (v. 20). This for me also points to the ever-open significance of his message. The message cannot be boxed in a hole or netted in a nest. The message is on the move, meeting and greeting different contexts. But the posing of a question does not necessarily mean a shift in theology or an uncritical giving-in to secular culture. Real contextualisation is only achieved when there are deep theological grounds for it. And that is why,

while participating in the modern context and theologising in and through this context, Christian theology has also often offered a direction, a solution, at a point where the context reaches its limits; for example, when Christian theology eschatologically corrects mere mundane utopian aspirations of secular currents like Marxism and Communism; and at times offers the glimpse of hope in a world already disillusioned with its absolute confidence in the power of science and technology.

CLOSING REMARKS: NEITHER COLD WAR NOR COLD FEET

Theology, philosophy, and culture have enjoyed a peculiarly intimate relationship, as they have always been concerned with basically the same issues, even though we must admit that this familiarity of interests often breeds interdisciplinary clashes. But one can also confidently assert that among all institutionalised religions, or at least among the so-called revealed religions, Christian theology can pride herself as one that has to a larger extent taken philosophy and culture seriously into consideration in history. Without prejudice to historical evidences when Christian theology seems closed up to itself, cloaking itself in a garment of exclusivity (for example, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*¹ in the narrow sense), Christianity has allowed itself to be impacted by philosophy, by the secular and human sciences, and by the cultural evolution of peoples. The accents of many documents of the Second Vatican Council show to a great extent Christian theology's awareness of the need to adopt the spirit of '*aggiornamento*', to update herself with the changes in the world. That does not entail that there are no conflicts, no frictions, or no unsettled questions.

For the rest of the yet unsettled questions, I do not think that theology has any need for an uneasy self-doubt – cold feet – because of the difficulty in responding to the type of scientific paradigm that philosophy tries to adopt or of the difficulties posed by ever-evolving cultures. Unfortunately, Christian theology, in some instances, and due to pressures from the overwhelming secular culture and a thoroughly humanistic philosophy, seems quickly to throw in the towel, to assume that religious or theological doctrines are not very logically coherent or rationally defensible, and so has recourse to the notion of 'faith as mysteries' as an escape. Let us consider the doctrine of the Trinity. According to Christian theological formulation, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, each is God, one in substance with the others, but none of the three Persons as it is called, is identical to any other. Added to the issue of identity, some qualities can be ascribed to individual persons, without being ascribed to the others or to God unqualified. For example, God the Son, the second person was incarnate, was born, was crucified and died. But one cannot say unqualifiedly that God died, or that God the Father suffered (the doctrine of *patrification*). Such 'logical' problems as posed by this doctrine or by other Christian theological doctrines gave rise to many of the famous Trinitarian controversies of the history of the early Church. These puzzles,

intriguing and admittedly tangling are no more mysterious or puzzling than other purely philosophical issues. Consider for example the question of the identities of human and material objects. Harriet Baber (2001, 288) mentions some of the intriguing questions and concludes:

What are physical objects: do they exist independent of minds? How do we know? What is it to perceive a physical object: is it to be directly aware of an object or its proximate surface? If so, how do we explain illusion, hallucination, and other cases of non-veridical perception? What are persons: are they identical to their bodies or to some bodily parts, such as their brains? What is our criterion for personal identity: what is it that makes me-now the same person as me-five-minutes-ago? ... Do numbers exist? If so what are they?

And she concludes: “These problems are more vexing than they may appear to be at first blush and are not amenable to scientific investigation. They are peculiar in that even when all the data is in, even when we have all the facts, we still may not know what to say” (Baber 2001, 288). Whether in ordinary human experiences or in fundamental physics, life is fraught with logical problems and is, to that extent, mysterious. Theology is not significantly different or worse off than other sciences or even common sense. The difference is that in our normal human relations, we take many things for granted, especially when they are on the experiential level and we do not impose the rigorous scrutiny that we readily do to religious or metaphysical questions. The conceptual house cleaning job of philosophy is never ended, even in the domain of philosophy itself. The problems of the universal and particulars are yet not concluded. The argument against motion and change in Zeno’s paradox of Achilles and the tortoise is not yet dismissed definitely as of no import. The problem of personal identity and other likely puzzles remain intriguing. With emerging contexts and new discoveries, the handmaid brings more sophisticated conceptual tools and more powerful clarifying solvents to the business of housekeeping. But the handmaid job continues.

Though Christian theology could be, in many respects, problematic – just as some claims of science and common sense –, her task as for other sciences, is to establish her own rationality among other rationalities. Theology does not need to knock-down refutations of all skeptical arguments just as human beings engaged in social interactions with one another do not need the final solutions to the problem of other minds or the problem of perception and the external world before going about their normal business. Faith seeking understanding means to make sense of what it believes, and to establish the rationality behind it.

But the problem arises when a theological formulation, or prescription, impedes on human flourishing. There is no refuge in revelation for justifying inhuman prescriptions or restriction of critical enquiry. It is

not a question of the religious stage of Kierkegaard where there should be a suspension of the legitimate where God is realised as the ‘other’ (*The Sickness unto Death*, XI 128, see Garff, p. 541) and so anything believed in this suspension could be justified. Neither is it a misunderstanding of the famous dictum of Kant in the preface to his *Critique of Pure Reason*: “I have ... found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to give room for faith” (*Critique of Pure Reason*, B30, see Guyer and Wood, p. 152). Kant’s conception of faith here is quite different, for he is not referring to some esoteric conceptions arising from some supernatural endowments, but to that which is grounded in the moral experience common to all who are rational human beings. Citing Peter Baelz (1968, p. 13) in conclusion then,

In any case, faith can claim no exemption from the summons to give an account of itself and of its relations to other forms of human apprehension. Even if it has in certain aspects some kind of a privileged position, it must justify its privilege and provide its credentials. We have already suggested that anyone who wishes to continue to speak significantly of God in any way at all, whether he avows or eschews the approach of natural theology, must face certain fundamental questions which may properly be called metaphysical.

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NOTES

¹ The phrase, first used by St. Cyprian of Carthage in the 3rd century, means 'outside the Church there is no salvation'. It has been variously interpreted. Reflecting the epoch, the Council of 1442 at Florence-Ferrera declared: "The holy Church of Rome firmly believes, confesses and proclaims that no one – not just the heathens but also the Jews, heretics and schismatics – outside the Catholic Church can have a part in eternal life, but that they will go to the hell fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels' (Matt. 25.41) unless they allow themselves to be received into the Church before their life's end"

(Denzinger-Schoenmetzer, *Enchiridion*, no 1951, see Schillebeeckx, *The Human Story of God* (p. 247). It is generally today understood in its inclusive sense as expressed by the Vatican II Council, *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church*: “Those who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – those too may achieve eternal salvation. (no 16)

THOMAS AQUINAS, AMARTYA SEN, AND A CRITICAL ECONOMIC DISCOURSE

Timothy Harvie

INTRODUCTION

Writing in 1944, Karl Polanyi stated that,

To allow the market mechanism to be the sole director of the fate of human beings and their natural environment indeed, even of the amount and use of purchasing power, would result in the demolition of society.... no society could stand the effect of such a system of crude fictions even for the shortest stretch of time unless its human and natural substance as well as its business organization was protected against the ravages of this satanic mill. (Polanyi 2001, 76-77)

Polanyi's assessments of a market which is utterly free of regulation, the incursion of "market forces" operating as a solitary guide for public discourse, social interaction, and governmental action resonate with an uncanny contemporaneity. When the global economic crisis occurred in 2008, resulting in a crash of financial stability, housing, welfare, and the questionable likelihood of maintaining secure, dignifying employment, talk of economics was on everyone's lips. Moreover, much was written that was critical of the financial sector's dubious use of retirement funds, housing mortgages, and investments in highly volatile collateralized debt obligations (CDO's). This article will argue that a sustained, critical, and philosophical engagement is needed to reorient economic aims, conduct, and location in the public sphere.

The underlying principles have been addressed by Michael Sandel (2012). He writes,

The most fateful change that unfolded during the past three decades was not an increase in greed. It was the expansion of markets, and of market values, into spheres of life where they don't belong....The reach of markets, and market-oriented thinking, into aspects of life traditionally governed by nonmarket norms is one of the most significant developments of our time (Sandel 2012, 7).

This claim highlights the underlying discursive logic in societal discourse to be addressed in this article. However, one must still test whether such a statement is warranted. To begin this task, consider the following statement: "Morality... represents the way that people would like the world to work – whereas economics represents how it actually *does*

work" (Levitt and Dubner 2006, 11). This statement is indicative of the approach to economic discourse in much of the current public sphere. On the one hand, talk of morality is tantamount to an existential wish list which simply reflects the preferences or preconceptions of individuals who are bound to disagree. Morality, therefore, is ineffectual in shaping policy or society in concrete ways. Morality is distinct from reality. On the other hand, economics is about reality. Its descriptive and explanatory power is empirical, accurate, objective, and divulged of personal bias which may skew the results of inquiry. In other words, "economics is above all a science of measurement" (Levitt and Dubner 2006, 11).

While economics, insofar as it seeks to collect data and mathematically determine the results to explicate systems of exchanges in markets, does represent the above description, the rendering of economics as a dispassionate, objective science does not entirely account for either the entirety of the discipline or the functioning and goal of economic exchange in the real world. This article will focus on the latter of these charges through a critical examination of the incursion of what Sandel calls "market values" as a discourse which trumps all other modes of civic engagement. The discourse of market values coincides with a "discursive shift to radical individualism." (Briskin 2010, 219). This occurs through an ideological overreaching of the market to transform other areas of civic life through the commodification of such life. Through the ideas of Thomas Aquinas, this paper will argue that a philosophical account influenced by the medieval scholar contains a robust critique of this incursion of market values. Moreover, it will also argue that the account offered does greater justice to the daily workings of economic exchange, as exemplified in the work of Amartya Sen. Sen's capabilities approach to economics, coupled with his philosophical account of justice and his affirmation of morality having a key role in economic exchange, offers a modern alternative for an engaged citizenry.

MARKET VALUES AND NEO-LIBERAL DISCOURSE

Descriptive accounts of economic exchange compile results from sets of data gained from the social reality of a market exchange of goods. However, the accompanying narrative which explains the interactive types of exchange is predicated on an account of human self-interest within a broadly utilitarian framework (Moyo 2011). In this understanding of economics, human choices are eminently rational. That is to say, they are analytically comprehensible and may be given clear explication. From the standpoint of this definition, actual choices, whatever they may be, are in fact rational choices. The choices are internally consistent. Amartya Sen describes the framework utilized in modern economics thusly: "One is to see rationality as internal *consistency* of choice, and... to identify rationality with *maximization of self-interest*" (Sen 2005, 12). Sen is not the only

economist who interprets the state of the discipline in this manner. Economists from differing specialities advocate this position.

Economists indeed assume that people are interested only in their own consumption, yet paradoxically, economists judge the world according to an ethical framework that is selfless in the extreme: Utilitarianism.... Economists share Plato's view that the ideal government would be composed of wise Guardians, although, of course, those Guardians should be economists rather than philosophers (Collier 2010, 10).

What one has here is a view that all human action is predicated on the motive of self-interest which results in the maximization of the aggregate utility of the greatest number. Simultaneously, economics is a discipline free of such self-interested motives. It is seen as a benevolent descriptive enterprise with the scientific objectivity and accuracy of the experimental physicist.

At this point, the internal contradiction of the dichotomy claimed between morality and economics begins to emerge. If morality is an expressed desire or argument of how one would like to the world to work whilst economics is a scientific enterprise describing how the world does work free of such moral encumbrances, then how is it that the discipline of economics is predicated upon two particular accounts of how humans morally engage each other: egoism and utilitarianism? One sees here that economics is not simply making an observation, but rather putting forward a moral hypothesis. That is to say, economics relies upon a particular philosophical and ethical stance which claims that the self-interest of market participants governs the decision making processes pertaining to exchange, with the aim being the increase of aggregate utility for said participants. Moreover, economics makes proposals as to what constitutes optimum functioning markets. The economic proposals for a well-functioning economy, even the very definition of what constitutes a well-functioning economy, are reliant upon antecedent claims of what constitutes human being, action, motivation, and desire. This directly affects the purely objective and scientific results of economic study and proposals which are supposedly divested of moral bias.

One poignant example of this occurs in the work of eminent Harvard economists, Carmen Reinhart and Ken Rogoff (2010). In its fundaments, their paper argues that economies do not stabilize or grow through deficit spending (i.e., economies cease to grow when the size of a country's debt rises above 90% of its GDP), and that social welfare programs, government spending, and government regulation in the economy needs to be limited or eliminated (e.g., through austerity measures). The statistical evidence cited several countries where once this type of deficit spending on the part of the government occurred, the stability and growth of the economy was stalled. However, the paper contains an egregious

methodological error, which was noticed by a graduate student named Thomas Herndon. When including the appropriate information in the actual calculations, the Harvard professors omitted 5 of the 20 countries their study was to include and which they had researched. The countries of omission were: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada and Denmark. These were also the five key countries whose economic results were contrary to the policy point and conclusions being advocated in the paper. When notified of their error, the Harvard economists responded,

We are grateful to Herndon et al. for the careful attention to our original Growth in a Time of Debt AER paper and for pointing out an important correction to Figure 2 of that paper. It is sobering that such an error slipped into one of our papers despite our best efforts to be consistently careful. We will redouble our efforts to avoid such errors in the future. We do not, however, believe this regrettable slip affects in any significant way the central message of the paper or that in our subsequent work.¹

The message appears to be clear. Recognition of flawed methodology resulting in flawed outcomes will not change the ideological message put forward regarding policy, austerity, or the functioning economy. If this is the case, then what assumptions are guiding economic discourse and how is this discourse functioning in the public sphere?

Canadian and American scholars in the sociological, economic, and political disciplines, have discussed the growth of what is called the “new economy,” coinciding with the increased dominance of neo-liberal (and neo-conservative) discourse (Brownlee, 2005; Pupo and Thomas 2005; Harvey 2005). Neoliberalism favours economic liberalization, open markets and free trade, alongside the removal of government interference in the public sphere through economic deregulation. Neoliberalism emphasizes the eminence of the individual. With the elevation of the individual’s freedom to choose, set goals, and make exchanges, social bodies (unions), programs (welfare) and state aid are viewed as harmful intrusions of the public into domains which ought to be private. Neoliberalism refers to the increasing deregulation, decreasing political influence into corporate interests (though, contradictorily, increasing influence in labour interests with right to work legislation), and the increasing commodification in broadening areas of public life which are to be left vacated through governmental retreat. Of particular relevance to the present discussion are two related economic phenomena: the role of incentives and commodification.

Incentives are a market mechanism whereby an exchange is made with the aim of altering the behaviour of one or more persons in the exchange. “Incentives are the cornerstone of modern life” (Levitt and Dubner 2006, 11). Incentives produce a market value for a given product, or more often, behaviour. For example, one might produce an incentive for children to read by offering them a monetary sum for each completed book.

While one dollar may not be adequate incentive for a child to read during the summer break, five dollars per book may suffice. The result is an agreement between parties suitable to both. The child is properly motivated to read through the incentive of monetary gain and the parent is satisfied that the child is reading. So what is the problem? Sandel argues that such a role for incentives may potentially alter the manner in which such activities (in this case, reading) are valued. He writes, “the market is an instrument, but not an innocent one. What begins as a market mechanism becomes a market norm” (Sandel 2012, 61). The result is that the child is conditioned through the incentives to value reading as a means of making money, rather than as something of intrinsic worth. The net result is that over a lifetime reading is lessened, rather than increased, because eventually the incentive for reading is removed. In other words, the practice of reading is commoditized.

The point is that incentives are not neutral. They do not leave the value or nature of a thing unchanged. As Sandel states, “markets are not mere mechanisms. They embody certain norms. They presuppose – and promote – certain ways of valuing the goods being exchanged” (Sandel 2012, 64). What incentives in fact do is turn values, goods, behaviours, labour, and people into commodities. The commodification of civic participation, knowledge, and aims reduces their value to be determined solely in terms of economic gain. Any state involvement to regulate or corporate involvement in society, politics, environment, or in even university research is decried by neoliberal interests as a denial of freedom (Harvey 2005).

The twofold neoliberal emphasis on incentives and commodification result in the transformation of an engaged citizenry and civic virtue to two corresponding activities: production and consumption. If all manner of public activities can be incentivized, that is, bought and sold, then all civic virtues become commodities which are produced and consumed and their market value determined by the cost of consumption. Therefore, in a neoliberal economy, production and consumption become the ultimate virtues and the only virtues government may become involved with and then only to ensure this cycle is protected. This has had a one-sided benefit for an “economic elite” in Canada. For the Canadian advocates of neoliberalism,

it was not less government intervention that was called for but a different kind of intervention. Only state intervention in the interests of workers or that which constrained capital mobility and profit-making was to be reduced.... business... still wanted a powerful state – one that protected it, directed resources its way and was generally removed from public control (Brownlee 2005, 27).

The irony is that in a neoliberal economy the government is also criticized if it exercises the virtues of the consumer. If the government

increases corporate taxes or taxes amongst the economic elite, then it is roundly criticized as wasteful, against growth, and taking the money of private citizens. Despite the fact that this is a misconstrue of the government's involvement and of the nature of taxation (i.e., the government does not "consume" goods, but reallocates goods by consolidating resources and disseminating them for public usage) the most pertinent point for the present discussion is that citizenship and civic virtue are transformed to a near synonymy with the categories of production and consumption (Heath 2009). The result of this is that through the incursion of market values into non-market, civic, and public sectors, the nature of those sectors and virtues are transformed through commodification and only deemed valuable if they aid the production or consumption of the economy. Any other civic or governmental participation in the economy (e.g., through regulation of corporations or the gathering of individual citizens in unions) is anathema.

The result of this is that the economy is viewed as its own end and all other means of public engagement (social discourse, public debate, governmental legislation, or the defining of freedom and an engaged citizenry) are in service of that singular end. However, this opens a philosophical question of ends. Is the economy sensible as a functional social entity under the framework of it being its own end? If neoliberal discourse on the economy not only describes, but transforms, other values or modes of public engagement, then it begs the question, "What is the purpose of the economy?" "What is its end?" This, of course, is a teleological question which from the outset offers a critique from outside the utilitarian mode of self-interest assumed by many economists and neoliberal advocates, in particular.² For instance, Aristotle maintains that the end of economics is the production of wealth, but only insofar as it serves the master art of politics and governance of the social body (i.e., the community). Money has the extrinsic use of making differentiated services equitable and comparable, but can also be detrimental to more ultimate human ends such as friendship (Ward 2010). A detailed offering of the relationship between civic virtues, justice, and economics in the Aristotelian vein can be found in the work of Thomas Aquinas. With Aquinas we will find an account of economic discourse located within a broader account of social interaction in the public arena in which justice is the paramount civic virtue. As such, economics is reoriented in the service of equitable social relationships rather than self-interest or aggregate utility.

AQUINAS, JUSTICE, AND ECONOMICS

Aquinas, like Aristotle, does not view economic exchange either as an isolated form of human interaction, or as a totalizing discourse, rooted in self-interest and utility, with its own perpetuation through production and consumption as its final aim. Rather, economic exchange is one part of the structuring of the home and society and is, thereby, contextualized within a

broader schema of social life. Therefore, to understand the proper structure and functioning of an economy, one needs to properly articulate a network of more broadly fitting human interactions within a society. Thomas does this under the category of justice.

When introducing the discussion on justice, the medieval scholastic states, “The proper characteristic of justice, as compared with the other moral virtues, is to govern a man in his dealings with others” (*Summa theologiae*, IIaIIae, 57.1). While Thomas discusses the other moral virtues as a person’s dealings with her or himself, justice is oriented to establishing right relations with others. This relational orientation to others is not a simple phenomenon of contractual agreements and obligations between competing and compromising self-interests. The notion of justice is derivative of complex phenomena, stemming from a carefully articulated understanding of both natural right and positive right. Natural right, for Thomas, can be understood empirically. When explicating natural right, he describes it thus: “natural equity requires a deposit to be restored to the depositor” (*ST*, IIaIIae, 57.2). A sum which has been given can be measured, given an accounting, and then returned in equal measure to ensure equity between partners. Positive right, on the other hand, is a matter of contract. In the concept of positive right, “by mutual agreement the human will can establish that which is just in matters which of themselves do not conflict with natural justice. It is here that positive right has a place” (*ST*, IIaIIae, 57.2).

With this framework Thomas proceeds to offer a more formal definition of justice: “justice is the habit whereby a person with a lasting and constant will renders to each his [or her] due” (*ST*, IIaIIae, 58.1). Being a habit, justice denotes an activity participated in with external effect. Thomas notes that, in the definition of justice, such habitual practice must be lasting and constant. “Lasting... designates the purpose of keeping justice...constant... the firm perseverance in the resolve” (*ST*, IIaIIae, 58.1). So for Thomas, for justice to be lasting is to say that the goal of justice is to give a person their due in perpetuity, while constancy is to persevere in this habituated activity. The idea of giving each their due stems from an understanding of natural justice as that which leads to not only an individual’s flourishing but recognizes that any understanding of an individual requires a social context and necessitates the flourishing of the group as an entity as well as the individuals comprising it. It is with this philosophical background in mind that Thomas then affirms the resplendence of justice in affirming, “the common good surpasses the individual good of one person” (*ST*, IIaIIae, 58.12). It is because of the social nature and goal of humanity that Thomas then elevates social justice over private liberality and generosity. “Though by liberality one gives from one’s own, the emphasis there is on the good of the giver’s own virtue, whereas with the justice of rendering to another that which is his, it is on the social good” (*ST*, IIaIIae, 58.12).

From this broad and foundational understanding of justice, Thomas further distinguishes between commutative justice and distributive justice. He defines them in the following way: “distributive justice governs the apportioning of community goods, whereas commutative governs the exchanging that may take place between two persons” (*ST*, IIaIIae, 61.3). Hence, commutative justice is a form of contract and therefore is associated most closely with positive right. Commutative justice is the rendering of an exchange between two persons resulting in an arithmetical, quantitative measure governing the exchange between persons. It is conceived as one part of a whole relating to another part of a whole. Such is the case in a simple account of buying and selling between two persons. On the other hand, distributive justice is conceived as the whole relating to a part. This is “the bearing of the community on individual persons” where distributive justice “apportions proportionately to each his share from the common stock” (*ST*, IIaIIae, 61.1). Whereas commutative justice is a proportion or equality between two things, distributive is a proportion between things and persons (*ST*, IIaIIae, 61.2).

Recognizing the relationally constituted nature of human society, Thomas includes distributive justice in terms of the logical necessity of reciprocally relating parts to whole, and vice versa. Because justice is the social structuring of relationships to the common good, the definition of justice as giving to each their due affirms a relationally self-giving approach to what is due, rather than a meritorious view of self-interest such as that found in neo-liberal discourses resulting in the incentivization of activity and the commodification of non-market aspects of civic participation (Cavanaugh 2008). Aquinas argues that a definition of justice as each person receiving her due entails a relinquishment of one’s own profits. In the *sed contra* of the relevant article, he argues that justice “disregards one’s own profit in order to maintain a common equity.” He repeats similar ideas in the response of the same article: “Now each person’s own is that which is due to him in proportion to making things even” (*ST*, IIaIIae, 58.11).

Thomas’s logic of economics, predicated upon his social account of justice, entails a notion of ownership which holds the neo-liberal assumptions of production and consumption deeply suspect. The privilege of production, through use of skill, the cultivation of resources, or even hereditary status does not have a relationship of necessity with ownership. The relationship between production and ownership, for Thomas, is contingent. Due to the social account of justice and civic participation, ownership is contingent upon the needs of all being met in such a way that the flourishing of all, both the individual as a part and the group as a whole, is ensured in accordance with the nature of each and all.³ Thomas redefines the relationship between ‘production,’ ‘ownership,’ and ‘consumption’ by inserting a middle term between production and ownership. This middle term is “the met needs of all.” The trajectory now appears: ‘production,’ ‘the met needs of all,’ ‘ownership,’ ‘consumption in moderation.’⁴

At this point the neoliberal might put forward a moral counter-argument. The argument may be phrased in the following manner,

Now it is harmful to the common good for the goods of the community to be distributed among the many, both because it would exhaust the common resources and because it would corrupt men's morals... he who receives becomes worse, and ever more ready to receive more. So therefore [re]distribution is no part of any kind of justice (*ST*, IIaIIae, 61.1).

This, of course, is a quotation of the first objection Thomas mentions against distributive justice. The neoliberal concerns are commonly stated, and reflect a worry pertaining both to a society's ability to produce in adequate measure to sustain for its entire citizenry. Additionally, the concern over the morally corrupting influence that redistribution of produced wealth encourages laziness through the expectations of hand-outs, is not uncommon among politicians and pundits alike.

Aquinas does not concur with this line of reasoning. He calls the logic of production and consumption, incentive, and commodification into question. He does this by inserting another mode of logic into public discourse on distribution: the logic of justice. Thomas then associates the logic of justice with another way of engaging in human relations: love. Quoting Augustine, Thomas brings religious discourse to bear in affirming that justice is love serving God, and that "loving our neighbour is comprised in loving God" (*ST*, IIaIIae, 58.1). The societal structuring of love is in the register of *caritas*, charity. For Thomas, charity takes the Aristotelian mode of friendship, in which one person wishes well for the other (*ST*, IIaIIae, 23.1). Friendship binds persons together in such a way that each partner reciprocally works for the betterment and flourishing of the other. Friendship does not make demands of the other, but rather aims at their wellbeing, maturation, and the satiation of their needs. The filial love of friendship aims at our friend herself as well as at the good desired for that friend. For Thomas, it is a sharing of the spiritual life where the intellectual, physical, emotional, and social needs of each person are mutually enhanced in the longevity of commitment (*ST*, IIaIIae, 25.2). In loving friendship, abilities, capacities, aims, and goals are integrally connected to each person, and cannot be abstracted apart from those social realities. Thomas recognizes that economy, in the Greek sense of *oeconomia* (management of the home), requires another mode of discourse for its own intelligibility. It requires an account of justice predicated upon the social matrixes comprising concrete relationships. It requires the language of morality and a recognition that the aims of a functioning economy are not internal to its own discourse. "The problem with our politics" and our economy, "is not too much moral argument but too little. Our [economy] is overheated because it is mostly vacant, empty of moral and spiritual content" (Sandel 2012, 13). This is not simply the earnest, yet ultimately misguided, desire of

a person who desperately wants his hobby of reading medieval saints to have contemporary, political cachet. In the final section of this paper, it will be argued that economist and Nobel laureate, Amartya Sen, argues similarly in his capabilities approach to markets.

SEN, JUSTICE, AND ECONOMICS

Amartya Sen agrees with the summation that modern economics is distanced from ethical considerations in favour of a disciplinary self-understanding of scientific objectivity. Likewise, Sen notes that modern economics views the primary motivating factor of individual self-interest, and that this is a near universal assumption of the discipline. Where Sen differs is that he offers a resounding critique of these disciplinary assertions. He writes, “there is... something quite extraordinary in the fact that economics has in fact evolved in this way, characterizing human motivation in such spectacularly narrow terms. One reason is that economics is supposed to be concerned with real people.” Sen’s primary point is that economics needs ethics in order to be intelligible. When people make economic choices, their motives are manifold and ethical considerations are not least among them. The Socratic question, “How should one live?” factors prominently when a person constructs the vision of their life in a society and its own sense of wellbeing. Sen argues that this “resilient question” cannot be ignored by economics precisely because it is not ignored in a person’s economic decision-making (Sen 2005 1-2). The conceptual distancing of economics and ethics is to the impoverishment of economics (Sen 2005, 51-55).

The argument that is put forward is that there are other, non-market values that have intrinsic value apart from economic benefit, but which contribute to one’s functioning in an economy and which affects economic decisions. Sen argues that “political liberty and civil freedoms are directly important on their own and do not have to be justified indirectly in terms of their effects on the economy” (Sen 1999, 16). The result of this is that the economy is in service of human, societal benefit and not vice versa. Market functioning and participation is aimed at enhancing the capabilities of each member in the civic group. This falls under the rubric of freedom, which Sen classifies into five types: 1) political freedom, 2) economic faculties, 3) social opportunities, 4) transparency guarantees, and 5) protective security (Sen 1999). However, these freedoms cannot be enhanced or protected under a neo-liberal or utilitarian framework.

Sen argues that an economic approach of utility is unsatisfactory in no small measure because it neglects what he calls the “distributional indifference” in a system which aims at aggregate accounts of pleasure or self-interest (Sen 1999). The potential for gross inequities remain within a system concerned with aggregate accounts of the good. A majority may experience a state of flourishing where education, dignifying work, gratifying relationships, and the ability to fulfill one’s own life project are

accessible and attainable by a majority at the expense of a smaller group whose lack of all of these capabilities facilitates the superabundance of the former. Moreover, Sen is aware that “deprived people tend to come to terms with their deprivation” (Sen 1999, 63). Minority groups in intolerant communities, such as undocumented workers, labourers in clothing sweatshops, and immigrant home-carers sending money to families remaining in their country of origin come to terms with their deprivation from the sheer necessity of survival. The result is that a psychological acceptance of one’s situation occurs, not because such marginalized workers are seeing their capabilities fulfilled, but because the more extreme destitution of not being located in these situations is an even worse prospect (Sen 1997). Like Aquinas, it is important for Sen to recognize that an account of justice, as it is exercised in the economy, gives to each their due to succour the needs of those who have them over against the extraordinary surplus of a numerical majority. Accounts of self-interest or utility do not offer a resolution to the conflict of distribution between an affluent majority and a deprived minority let alone a state where the majority are deprived (Sen 1997, 96).

It is with these considerations in mind that Sen defines poverty as not merely low income, but a deprivation in capabilities (Sen 1997). A deprivation of capabilities incorporates both notions of absolute poverty (say, in transnational comparisons of poverty) and relative poverty (intra-national comparisons of poverty). However, capabilities approaches have the advantage of incorporating both aspects whilst, similarly to Aquinas, illustrating the non-reducibility of human flourishing and capability to commodities. Sen claims “that absolute deprivation in terms of a person’s capabilities relates to relative deprivation in terms of commodities, incomes and resources” while commodities are only useful in enhancing one’s capabilities (Sen 1997, 326). For example, someone may own a bicycle, which is a commodity. However, the bicycle has the characteristic of transportation and thus gives a person the capability to be mobile in ways that are unavailable without the bicycle. It is the third category of capability which actually enhances a person’s standard of living. It is also why enhanced living through increased capabilities cannot be reduced to commodities. The commodity is not the proper locus of attention, but rather the capability it has the potential to produce. Place the same bicycle in the ownership of someone with a particular physical impairment or disability, and that same commodity becomes useless in terms of enhanced capabilities conducive to the impaired person’s flourishing (Sen 1997, 334).

Sen’s account of a capabilities approach to the economy can highlight the inadequacy of the neoliberal discourse of self-interest, profit maximization, and an individualist approach through a governance of non-involvement. Similar to Aquinas’s account of social connectedness where justice sees each person getting her due, Sen highlights the interpersonal implications of fulfilling one’s capabilities to enhance human flourishing. Accompanying this is a practical effort, through a comparison of

capabilities, which results in a distributive emphasis of justice for the allocation of material goods. This distributive emphasis could receive philosophical bolstering from Aquinas's explication of distributive justice within an explicitly social anthropology with the metaphor of friendship arising from the philosophical motif of love. Without such an account of friendship and love as a civic virtue, it is possible that Sen's account is apt to lack a critical edge regarding neoliberalism's favouring of corporate elite. Speaking of Sen's account of justice, Thad Williams has written, "Sen's comparative approach, taken alone, runs the risk of badly obscuring fundamental issues of power and control over capital" (Williams 2012, 74-89). Sen and Aquinas offer complimentary accounts of justice and economics within the human community. On the one hand, Aquinas offers a critical apparatus to deconstruct neoliberal assumptions of individuality, self-interest, and economic exchange. On the other hand, Sen provides an economic apparatus within a capabilities approach to broaden the philosophical assumption of economists to a more thorough vision of human flourishing. Both are needed to critically analyze the shortfalls of neoliberalism and provide societal alternatives in a viable way.

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NOTES

¹ 19 April 2013. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-22223190> (Accessed 28 June 2013)

² It should be noted that there are utilitarian arguments which would deny the neoliberal assertion of the economy being its own end (Singer 2001, 191-215).

³ The manner in which the "nature" of "each and all" is, in fact, discerned is notoriously difficult and has the potential for many pitfalls and inequities. My purpose here is more modest: simply to highlight that the relationship between production and ownership is one of contingency for Thomas.

⁴ The "in moderation" of the final phase is now mandated with the newly-introduced term "the met needs of all" and is in keeping with Thomas's Aristotelian development of the virtuous mean. The middle term "the met needs of all" constricts one's opportunities for the excess of overconsumption and the deficit of being unable to maintain viable health.

LOVE AS POLITICAL CONCEPT: A SHORT GENEALOGY ELUCIDATING THE BACKGROUND OF ANDERS BREIVIK'S MANIFESTO

Marc De Kesel

Although I do admit that I am disgusted by the current development, I would rather say I'm driven by my love for Europe, European culture and all Europeans.

[...]

I have prepared mentally for a very long time and I will gladly sacrifice my life for the benefit of my European brothers and sisters. My love for them exceeds my own self-serving interests.

-- Anders Breivik¹

Omnia vincit Amor: et nos cedamus Amori.

-- Vergilius²

“Greater love hath no man than this, than to lay down his life for his friends.” This is a well-known sentence from the gospel of John (15:13). Anders Breivik quotes it in his 2083, a megalomaniac “Compendium” of more than 1500 pages, in which he legitimizes the bloodbath he caused on the island of Utøya, near Oslo, Norway, on the 22th of July 2011. The context in which Breivik employs this quote is that of a discussion of a few misunderstandings concerning the medieval crusaders (p. 139). It is true they were out for loot and plunder, Breivik admits, but their deepest motive was nonetheless a willingness to follow the example of Christ and to take up the cross out of love for the Lord – or, what amounts to the same thing, for truth and justice. Elsewhere in this manifesto, Breivik puts himself forward as a confessional Christian³ and, in his eyes, the crusades did what all today’s Europeans now should do and what he, as one of the few, is really willing to do: to defend Europe against Islam, even if this is at the cost of his own life.⁴ Yet, according to him, non-Christian Europeans, too, could recognize themselves in Christ’s word and follow the example of the crusaders. Facing the threat of Islamization as well as the decadent deterioration of left-wing, multicultural politics (of which the current Islamization of Europe is but a symptom), Europeans must put aside their personal interests and, if necessary, give their lives for the preservation and restoration of Europe.

For Breivik, it is first of all a matter of reasonableness.⁵ But it is also a matter of emotional attachment – of love for Europe as well. He does not quote from the gospel of Saint John because they are the words of Christ, but because of the love he appeals to: “Greater love hath no man than this, than to lay down his life for his friends.” That, because of that love, he has sacrificed the youth – and the future – of leftist Norway, is only

one thing. He has sacrificed himself as well, aware as he was of the juridical sentence that awaited him. It is his way to show how great his love is for Europe.

In spite of its length, Breivik's manifesto is nothing more than a pamphlet: a patchwork of divergent arguments that cannot stand any reality test. His world is a delusion which, on that particular day in 2011, was a '*passage à l'acte*'. But, like any other delusion, his is composed of ideas gathered from the more or less normal world. This goes not only for the content of his discourse, for the racist plea in favor of the European identity, for instance. It goes for the emotional, libidinal side of his engagement as well. For his *love*.

This paper presents some reflections upon the use of the term 'love' in Breivik's manifesto. First, I examine love in general, and how it has obtained a place within the political discourse of the West. Only then, I focus on Breivik's love for Europe and discuss its pathological character.

EUROPA, A PALESTINIAN GIRL

Who was the first to love Europe? This is an uncertain and complicated story – which should be no surprise, since it happened in immemorial times when the gods lived among humans and love was simply love: *eros*, nothing more, nothing less. Zeus was the first to love Europe, i.e., a non-European beauty, seduced on a non-European shore, and kidnapped and taken to a European island in order to be raped there – as at times still happens today to stranded refugees. Robert Graves tells the story as follows:

Agenor, Libya's son by Poseidon and twin to Belus, left Egypt to settle in the Land of Canaan, where he married Telephassa, otherwise called Argiope, who bore him Cadmus, Phoenix, Cilix, Thasus and Phineus, and one daughter, Europe.

Zeus, falling in love with Europe, sent Hermes to drive Agenor's cattle down to the seashore at Tyre, where she and her companions used to walk. He himself joined the herd, disguised as a snow-white bull with great dew-laps and small, gem-like horns, between which ran a single black streak. Europe was struck by his beauty and, on finding him gentle as a lamb, mastered her fear and began to play with him putting flowers in his mouth and hanging garlands on his horns; in the end, she climbed upon his shoulders, and let him amble down with her to the edge of the sea. Suddenly he swam away, while she looked back in terror at the receding shore; one of her hands clung to his right horn, the other still held a flower-basket.

Wading ashore near Cretan Gortyna, Zeus became an eagle and ravished Europe in a willow-thicket beside a spring; or, some say, under an evergreen pine-tree. She bore him three sons: Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Sarpedon.⁶

Europa is originally from Tyrus in Canaan. In other words, she is a Palestinian, Philistine or, yet another synonym, Phoenician. And on the side of her father, Agenor, her origin is Egyptian. Zeus abducted her to Crete, where she stays, becomes a goddess after her death, and after a while lends her name to a territory. According to some, Europe is etymologically the ‘land of the West, of the sun going down’ (in opposition to Asia that originates from the Akkadian word ‘asu’ – to rise up – and signifies the East).⁷

In the light of opinions like Breivik’s defending the European identity in its historical dimension, it is good to remember this first, complex and hybrid meaning of the name ‘Europe’. From a European perspective, Europe is of foreign origin, and the first one who declares his love to her does not exactly give us an example to follow.⁸ The fact that the girl, Europa, could give her name to a continent is due to a divine but not less condemnable seduction followed by rape. If love is at the base of Europe, then, it is certainly not the sacrificial love Breivik refers to in his quote from the gospel of Saint John. Europe is not the result of a heroic founding act, but of merely erotic love, a love that transgresses the ruling laws. That this amorous transgression violates territorial limits as well, is an extra issue for reflection here.

The transgressing and hybrid background that resonates in the name ‘Europe’ is confirmed by the rest of the mythological story. Her father, Agenor, does not let it go at that.⁹ He wants his daughter back at any cost, and orders his four sons to go searching her, adding that they are not allowed to return without her. They swarm out over the world in all directions, and give their names to the tribes they conquer or create, but none of them succeeds in the mission Agenor has ordered.

Cadmos is the only one operating on the territory of the Greeks. When, visiting the Delphian Oracle, he asks where he can find his sister, “the Pythoness advises him to give up his search and, instead, follow a cow and build a city wherever she should sink down for weariness”.¹⁰ This town is Thebes, a city that will be the victim of a series of transgressions, all of them in the line of the one committed on Europa. There is, among the many, the story of Laios, offspring of Cadmos who, before becoming king of Thebes, was raised secretly outside the city, with Pelops, whose little son (Chrysippus) he seduced and, thus, introduced pederasty in Ancient Greece.¹¹ The curse Pelops put on him and his posterity results in one of the most well-known myths of Ancient Greece: the myth of Oedipus killing his father and generating with his own mother his own brothers and sisters. Both his sons/brothers will kill one another and thus make an end of the house of Cadmus.

Thebes is a town founded by a stranger and it bears its strangeness as its fate. That kind of Thebes is a valid emblem for the essentially hybrid Europe, both for the beautiful girl of Tyrus who was already marked by such fate, and for the kind of Europe to which that girl has given her name.

Sophocles wrote *Oedipus Tyrannos* for an Athenian audience. It is not a mere coincidence that the mirror in which Athens was looking was Thebian. And similar is the mirror in which today's Europe is looking at itself. But, in that mirror, Breivik had obviously not looked at all.

EUROPA ROMANA

The idea that Thebes can be seen as Europe's mirror does not imply that Europe is originally a Greek project. As a political project it is, rather, Roman – although the Romans did not use the term Europe to refer to their empire. That empire was a matter of '*urbis* and *orbis*', of the city (Rome) and the surrounding world. There was no reference to the frontier dividing the East and the West, Asia and Europe. Rome's surrounding world is the area of the Mediterranean Sea, in the broad sense of the word: from the north of England and the mouth of the Rhine up to the Euphrates and Tigris, and the bends in the Nile deep down in Nubia.

Is it *love* that binds the Roman – the Italian, Gallic, Jewish, Egyptian, African – to Rome and its empire? Is his political binding a matter of *amor*? Of course, he loves his country, but his patriotism does not refer to 'love'. Patriotism is for the Roman part of what he calls *pietas*, which we translate as 'piety.' A misleading translation, because it names an attitude that, although religious too, concerns the entire life of a Roman, including his attitude with regard to the republic or the empire. To us, piety is linked to religious asceticism, i.e., with a religiosity distracting us from the world and orienting us towards the world 'beyond'. Asceticism is unknown to ancient religiosity, including Roman religion. In the eyes of the Romans, too, gods are immortal and have access to the domain of the 'beyond', but their *religio* supposes the gods to be *here*, and that it is a matter of making them feel good here, among the mortals. Prayers, processions, sacrifices, feasts are supposed to satisfy the gods here and now. 'Religio' (a word that has no equivalent in any other language in antiquity) means literally something like 'acting scrupulously', 'doing the rituals without making any mistake'. For the Romans, this is the sole way to propitiate the gods here.

'Here' is, first of all, in Rome, and the gods there are not exclusively Roman gods, but also those of other people in the empire. Before waging war against the mortals of a people, Rome had already 'fought' against their immortals. The ritual of the *evocatio* – to mention one single example – was a way to seduce foreign gods and to invite them to come to Rome, where a 'house' was built for them.¹² No wonder the *urbs* was full of temples. Only with their gods on your side, only when they feel at home with you, can you undertake a war against a people in order to make them, too, feel home with you in your empire. Thus we see Rome's imperial attitude towards other people.

Not love, but *pietas* binds a Roman to his country. In politics, 'love' means nothing to him. Just as the word 'Europe' is without sense for

him. Yet, the project of ‘Europe’, and even the ‘love’ for Europe both have a Roman signature.

The project emerged in the wake of the declining Empire. From the third and the fourth century onwards, the Empire could less and less stand the pressure of the invading tribes, and collapsed at the end of the fifth century. At that time, the old Greek ‘caesura’ had already re-appeared. Its first shape was the caesura between the Western and the Eastern Roman Empire and was situated on the line between Italy and Greece. When, after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, the Eastern Roman Empire progressively disappeared (under the pressure of the Arabian conquest), this area too (present-day Greece and Western Turkey) became part of the Occident, distinct from the East, the Levant, i.e., the Middle-East and Egypt. The Occident has always been (and is still) full of nostalgia for the Roman Empire. The impact of that nostalgia on the history of Europe is difficult to overestimate.

More than anywhere else, the political nostalgia for Ancient Rome had been cherished in the bosom of the *ecclesia christiana*. From the fourth and the fifth century onwards, the Church had strongly promoted herself as the new – this time *true* – *religio romana*. She has remained thoroughly Roman up till now. It is not a coincidence that the Pope’s benediction on Christmas and Easter is called ‘*urbi et orbi*’ (for the city – Rome – and for the surrounding, i.e., the world). Here, the idea of uniting love to politics has its origin. For Christianity, *love* does have a political connotation. That connotation is genuinely Christian and it was reinforced when Christianity replaced (and became) the *religio romana*.

LOVE AND BODY

‘Love’ is a core concept in Christianity. But the first Christians, whose language was Greek, did not use the then common word for love, which was *eros*: the blind, unsatisfiable hunger which was able to destabilize even the highest god, as is illustrated in the adventures of the Palestinian girl called Europe. The Christians used the word ‘*agapè*’, the Greek word for non-erotic love, for love naming a state of satisfaction, a state in which the lack that moves *eros* has been filled up: the state that makes people live together in peace, as ‘brothers and sisters’. While *eros* is the name for unsatisfied and unsatisfiable desire, *agapè* is the one for desire’s satisfaction.

Not specifically the satisfaction of *sexual* desire, Christian *agapè* refers to a desire which occupies a much larger field and even the entire universe. Originating in the bosom of the Jewish religion, Christianity defines itself as the fulfillment of a desire that constitutes the core of that religion. Though originally pure, God’s creation has been spoiled by man’s sin. In order to help overcoming that condition of ‘sin and death’, God had given his people the Law – the *Torah*. If they obeyed its commandments, people would again be ‘in line’ with God, which means as well that they could achieve a ‘just’ society in which “the infant will play near the cobra’s

den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest" – images used by Isaiah (11, 8) to say that, in God's 'Promised Land,' social justice will reign, since there, justice will be done even to those who are without rights.

Yet, that Promised Land failed to become real and, in the second and first century BC, the religious imagination put forward a new basic idea. Because man did not succeed in delivering the world from its state of sin and death, God himself would intervene in order to realize that deliverance. Creation as it was now would come to an end ('eschaton'), God would make himself entirely clear ('apocalypse'), and God's own messenger – the Messiah – would come to launch both *eschaton* and *apocalypse* and, thus, introduce a new world without sin, death or any other kind of lack.

While the Jewish religion of the first century waited for the Messiah to come, a small group began to believe that this hope was redeemed by Christ. By his resurrection, he had overcome death and definitely introduced the 'Kingdom of God', i.e., the new Creation without any lack, the realm of Eternal Life. Certainly when that message found its way to non-Jews (and in this, Saint Paul was decisive), the base was prepared for a properly new religion: Christianity.

A central point in Paul's letters (the oldest Christian sources) states that the Christian lives in love, in *agapè*. It becomes the fixed term to express the state in which people live, claiming that Jesus is the Christ/Messiah, a state which for that reason is no longer marked by sin and death – a state as well, so they immediately add, that is still not fully realized, but soon will be. 'Soon' means: when Christ, who in his 'ascension' has returned to the Father for a while, will be back in order to 'judge the living and the dead' – the dead who will have risen from their graves and the living who, without ever having died, will enter directly into the Eternal Life of the Second Creation. *Agapè*, love, is the Christian term for the fulfillment of that messianic expectation, i.e., of the divine promise that was at the basis of the Jewish religion. This is why the *First Letter of Saint John* (4:16) put forward *agapè* as the proper name of God.¹³

But what has all this to do with politics? Is Christian love not a pious, merely religious matter? Yet, do we not forget, then, that, in antiquity, religion was an inherently political matter? This goes not only for the Roman religion, but also for Judaism and, thus, for Christianity. The *eschaton* would mean the end of all that exists, including the entire existing political order; and the messianic era would establish 'God's Kingdom', a term with an obvious political connotation. It is true that in the beginning, the young Church stayed away from politics ("So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's", Matthew 22, 21), but already the way in which that young community organized itself anticipated a universal 'empire' in which *agapè* will reign over all.

In that context, an image is used which will play an immense role in the politics of the West: the image of society as a body. Christ is "the head

of the body which is the Church”, we read in Paul’s *Letter to the Colossians* (1:18). The Christian community lives “in Christ” and what binds that community is love: not the dividing and lack-producing *eros*, but *agapè*, that is beyond division. Hence the idea of a community being one body, with Christ as its head. That image is not only applied to the Church but to the worldly political sphere as well. For more than one and a half millennia, the image of an undivided love community was a major concept in all kinds of political discourse in the West.

What binds people to one another is supposed to be their common love for Christ as the head of the body that they together constitute – a head that has its earthly representation in the king, the pope or other local authorities on lower levels. This, however, does not mean that this image simply mirrors reality. It is, first of all, a ‘weapon’ in the fight for conquering or beholding political power. Even on the highest level. Remember the never-ending fight in the Middle Ages between the pope and the German emperor about which of them is the real head of the *Holy Roman Empire*.

The love that binds people to the body of their community is mediated by Christ. This brings in a second metaphor into Christian political discourse. If Christ is the head of the human love community, he is that because he has sacrificed himself for that community.¹⁴ “Greater love hath no man than this, than to lay down his life for his friends”, we read in the gospel of Saint John as quoted by Breivik in his *Compendium*. And ‘friends’ is not an exclusive term here. All human beings are Christ’s friends. The passage in the *Letter to the Colossians* is very clear:

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Col 1:18-20)

What makes a community, what makes a multitude of individuals one body, is the love of Christ, a love that shows its true nature in the “blood, shed on the cross”. What binds people in a community is the love for Christ, a love that recognizes the one on the cross as the example to follow and, thus, includes the possibility (or even the imperative) of self-sacrifice in favor of the community.

PATRIOTIC LOVE

Although Breivik’s criminal act on the isle of Utøya might at first sight look eschatological and apocalyptic, a closer look reveals it, on the contrary, as a denial of what is crucial in the idea of *eschaton* and *apocalypse*, for it is essential to notice that these still *have to happen* and that, therefore,

everything as it is now, is to be put under ‘apocalyptic reserve’. The uncertainty about the current situation is an essential dimension of Christian self-understanding, and is definitely absent in both Breivik’s *Compendium* and his massacre.

Historically, the decline of medieval thought changed that uncertainty into certainty, a certainty which was no longer founded in God (and which consequently was uncertain for us humans), but in man himself: in his Cartesian *cogito*, doubting about everything in order to discover in that very doubt its self-assured ‘self’ – its ‘subject’. This subject will be, as well, the base on which modernity ascribes a similar certainty to the things outside, to the ‘objects’ of knowledge. This is the way Descartes gave modern science its new foundation.

The political equivalent of that new paradigm can be noticed in the formation of the European *states*. The medieval kingdoms did not have as solid a base of certainty as modern states are supposed to have, if only because they were divided both internally and among one another by the hornets’ nest of contradictory feudal requests – a hornets’ nest which was redoubled by a second one of a religious character which was equally structured in a feudal – and thus dividing – way. The one binding all together was a God who, despite his promise of unity, in fact sustained the unstable character of the feudal system. During the sixteenth-century Reformation, God was definitely attacked as factor of cultural and political unity. A century and a half of religious wars changed God into the major divisive element of the time.

At the beginning of modernity in the seventeenth century, God loses definitely his binding and founding function – including in politics, where that function is now left to the human *cogito*, the modern *self* or subject. Unlike the medieval feudal kingdoms, the states, which (only) now emerge, define themselves as sovereign. From now onwards, they legitimize themselves *only apparently* by referring to God. In fact, they situate their legitimate ground merely in themselves. They suppose their identity to be the point of certainty beyond doubt from where they relate to the surrounding world in absolute freedom. Of course, the modern free community is also prone to negative affections, but these are not supposed to affect its identity, and the state allows itself everything to avoid such things. This implies that the sovereign identity of the state becomes the ultimate reason why war can be waged. The Cartesian *cogito* has its political equivalent in the sovereignty of the modern nation-state.

It is within this context that the Christian metaphor of ‘love and body’ re-emerges. For the identity of the state cannot defend ‘itself’: only its citizens – its subjects – can do that. This is why it is necessary that these subjects are emotionally related to the identity of their state, in other words, that they *love* their country. To be what it is, to secure its own identity, the state is dependent on the passion of its citizens. Only the love of each of them individually allows the state to be the united sovereign body it pretends to be.

Because each one of the citizens has to guarantee the identity of their state, each of them must be willing to prefer the love for his country to the love for himself. This is why the citizen's love for the state – his patriotism – implies his willingness to sacrifice himself for it. The state's identity lives by the love of its citizens who, if necessary, are ready to give their life for it. Here, we see how the old link between love and politics, originating in the earliest age of Christianity, is far from being absent in modernity. It is still fully operational in modern patriotism in all its variations.

MODERN IDENTITY

In modern age, identity is an abysmal political problem, if only because it is fundamentally related to freedom. Pre-modern man understood himself as being created by God, as a gift of the Creator and, consequently, as being mutually given to – and dependent on – one another. Since modernity, we no longer understand ourselves as given and dependent, but as autonomous and free. We relate to reality proceeding from the certainty of a sovereign self. This is why we understand ourselves precisely in terms of 'identity': not as the image of God, as in medieval times, but as identical to ourselves, as beings basically coinciding with themselves. This identity is our ground, our foundation, and in this, we are identical to each of our fellows, to the collective of identities constituting our society.

In turn, however, society also understands itself as free, i.e., as an entity having its ground in the point in which it sovereignly coincides with itself. Society, too, defines itself as an autonomous subject and a free identity.

Yet, the identity of the individual and the identity of society are not really reconcilable with one another. On the one hand, a freedom-based society founds itself on the possibility that each of its members has the freedom to turn his back on that society, and so enables its own dissolution. This is why, on the other hand, a freedom-based society is inclined to sacrifice the liberty of the individual citizens to its own interests, and to sustain itself by the virtual sacrifice of the citizens in favor of its own (collective) freedom.

Modern politics fluctuates between two models. One model opts for the freedom of the individual and gives as little as possible free space to the collectivity. The seventeenth century Dutch Republic listened to that paradigm – as, in our time, does neoliberalism. The other model gives full room to the liberty of the collectivity, which unavoidably is at the cost of the individual's freedom. Remember early modernity's absolutism (the regime of Louis XIV, for instance), or the Marxist regimes of last century, that were infected by this totalitarian logic.

In the model embracing the primacy of collective freedom over that of the individual, the old metaphor of 'love and body' strongly persists. There, love for the fatherland is not a hollow concept, because the

individual is supposed to derive his own identity in large part from the identity of the collectivity and, if necessary, to sacrifice his individual freedom in favor of it.¹⁵

In the first model, where individual liberty has a primacy over the collective one, the metaphor of ‘love and body’ persists less. There, society *as such* almost disappears underneath the requirements of its particular individuals. A reference to sacrificial love does not have a great chance to be heard there.

Is this to say that, on this political model, love is merely absent? Not exactly. Love is only left unused for political purposes. But it does leave room to love: not the sacrificial love – *agapè* – that unites us in one body, but *eros*, the kind of love that puts people (and, as we saw, even gods) against each other in a never-ending ‘love battle’. Politically, that kind of *eros* can be translated into democracy, since democracy is based upon dissensus and encourages opposition instead of discouraging it (as is the case in the other model). In a democracy, citizens are supposed to have different opinions about what the identity – and even the ‘body’ – of the society is, and that dissensus is supposed to be the best guarantee for a freedom-based society.

The other model that puts the freedom of the collectivity above that of the individuals, describes the kind of love present in its counter-model as ‘selfish’, and ascribes the anomalies of that model to this kind of asocial, egoistic love. By succumbing to it, the citizens subvert the collective identity and endangers its survival.

PCCTS

These last lines could be read as a summary of Breivik’s *Compendium*. The mass murderer of Utøya is indeed an extreme advocate of the model preferring the collective identity over the individual one. He is certainly ‘extreme’ concerning the concrete consequences of his political choice. Reading his *Compendium*, it is difficult not to notice how thoroughly out of touch with reality he is. Yet, not without reason, some commentators remark that “the bizarre thing is that his ideas, as Islamophobic as they are, are almost mainstream in many European countries”.¹⁶

After all, Breivik’s message is quite simple. In the name of a wrongly-understood freedom, Europe has neglected its identity in such a way that it is now on the verge of getting lost forever. Responsible for this are the ideas of ‘left’ modernity, which have now taken the shape of *political correctness* dominated by multiculturalism and “cultural Marxism”, which (according to Breivik) amount to the same thing. Europe’s hospitality with regard to immigrants, and more specifically the generosity that gives room to Islam, has made the continent blind to the “demographic Jihad”, i.e., to the fact that, within the time of only a few generations, the Muslim population will be the majority in Europe, which definitely will ruin its identity.¹⁷ And it is a fact, Breivik adds, that it is simply too late to look

for a political solution. Before the governments of Europe will have passed the necessary measures through their parliaments, the continent will already have collapsed and been irreversibly Islamized.

The *Compendium* therefore opts for a violent solution: a “European civil war” in three phases.¹⁸ The first phase (1999-2030 – when the Muslim population in Europe is still under 30%) has to concentrate on the “European Resistance Movement”, more precisely on the PCCTS, the new “*Pauperes commilitones Christi Templique Solomonici*”, the new “*Order of the Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon*”, in other words, the modern version of the medieval Knights Templar. This is also the phase in which public opinion must be pushed in the right direction by means of ‘shock-actions’. In a second phase (2030-2070 – when the Muslim population reaches the peak of 40%), the number of such actions has to increase, as well as both the number and the strength of PCCTS cells. In the meanwhile, *coups d'état* must be prepared for everywhere in Europe. In the third phase, 2070-2083, these *coups d'état* take place and the “cultural conservative agenda” is implemented. In that same phase, begins both the execution of the leftist leaders (“cultural Marxists”, “multiculturalists”), and the deportation of Muslims.

In 2083, for the third time in history, Europe will stop the invasion of Muslims, so Breivik prophesizes. This happened a first time in 732, when Charles Martel defeated the Saracen army penetrating Europe from Spain and the south of France. By forcing them back to Narbonne and further, Charles Martel enabled the emergence of a proper, Christian Europe. A second turning point was the battle of Vienna in 1683, when, after a siege of two months to the city, the Ottoman empire was on the verge of obtaining access to Central- and Western-Europe. Nowadays, the Islam is waging a third war against Europe, this time by “demographic” means, and again, it is high time to join forces. This is the hope of Breivik, who puts forward 2083 as the year in which Europe will turn the tide (p. 1098). Having this year as title, the *Compendium*, together with the new *Knights Templar*, intends to prepare Europe for the ultimate battle against the Saracen.

On Utøya, Breivik did not kill Muslims but young Norwegians, all of them members of the Labor Party whose political agenda is multiculturalist together with other left, socialist ideas. Following the logic of his three-phased plan, he first wanted to strike ‘Europe’, i.e., the future left avant-garde, that will lead the continent in the coming century – not in order to start their extermination, but to warn them with a strong signal in order to put them back on the right track. He also wanted to strike the false idea of ‘Europe’: ‘false’, because it is cosmopolitan and, consequently, suicidal. In the name of that idea, they have delivered Europe to foreigners and neglected what, out of love for Europe, they should have done the most: cherish its identity. Allowing non-European Islam into its bosom – which is to say: allowing the *Christian* identity to be raped – they have given up both the idea and the reality of Europe.

Given the increasing speed of Islam's "demographic warfare," Breivik urges Europe to immediate and resolute action (p. 807 ff.). Notice that Breivik himself declares his own action on Utøya *not* to be such action. It was nothing but a extra support accompanying the launching of his *Compendium*, which is intended to be a call to action for others. His own individual act is but a way to awaken the other cells of the PCCTS. Breivik mentions himself to be a member of this new Knights Templar Order, which was created in April 2002 in London, as an international movement to organize a new crusade against the Islamic Jihad (p. 817). He declares himself to be the Norwegian 'one man cell' of that movement.

This new order of fighters is named after an alleged medieval, Christian predecessor, and it looks as if Breivik has in mind a new religious, Christian Europe. Yet, this is not exactly the case. He explicitly turns against what he calls a "Christian European theocracy". What he has in mind is a "a secular European society based upon our Christian cultural heritage".¹⁹ Christianity has been a constitutive element in the formation of Europe's identity. Breivik's fight concerns European identity, not Christianity as such.

LOVE / HATE

Breivik's *Compendium* is thoroughly penetrated by hatred against all that is supposed to be politically correct, multi-cultural, social-minded, cultural-Marxist, leftist, et cetera. Yet, the *Compendium* nowhere explicitly calls for hatred. Breivik turns things upside down here. What Europe has to hate, is precisely hatred; he repeats this again and again in his manifesto. The contemporary ideologies of that continent are all dominated by hatred, hatred against Europe. According to Breivik, the PCCTS fights against the "hate-ideologies" of the last century: communism, Islam, cultural Marxism and Nazism (818).²⁰ Perfidiously, they have impregnated today's common sense with hatred. Indeed 'perfidiously', because everybody presents Europe as preaching a mission of love, love for the other, the foreigner, the refugee, the cosmopolitan, et cetera, while all this is but a veil for destructive self-hate. Since modernity, Europe has become too slack to be interested in its own identity and, therefore, has created a kind of hate against itself. It is up to the PCCTS to fight that hidden hatred – for the moment still in a kind of avant-garde position, but soon in open *pole position*.

The basic grammar of Breivik's thought is the one of love and hate. He loves Europe, which is why he hates the hate for Europe. His love is hating hatred. This is, at least, how he would like things to be: dialectical – as a negation which, once negating itself, turns positive.

But this is not how things work – if only because the object of both this hatred and this love is not what he supposes it is, i.e., something with a fixed identity. There is not *first* a kind of natural identity called Europe

which, secondly, is hurt in its identity by hatred, in order, finally, to find its love for itself in hating that hatred.

In a way, Europe emerges in the commitment of its citizens, in their very love for Europe. This is at the same time Europe's weakness, delivered as it is to the whimsicality of its citizens' love. What is more, being the ground upon which Europe rests, this love itself inclines to deny this, i.e., to deny that Europe has no proper ground in itself, that it is what it is because it is what we *want* what it is – because we love something that for a larger part exists precisely thanks to that love of ours.

Some say that love is the 'ground' of all what is. Even if they are right, love is itself inclined to deny this, because this implies that, since love itself is without ground, then *nothing* has any ground. In order to be what it is, love has to deny this. That denial is the reason one can say that love, basically, does not love itself. Is this not what a modern poet tries to say when he sings that 'Love is not loving'?²¹ Love cannot love itself, since it has no 'self', no ground at any other point where it is able to appropriate itself. And this is precisely what love cannot but 'hate'. It cannot but hate its own groundlessness.

So, what Breivik's love for Europe hates is the idea that it might not have a ground in itself, in its own fixed identity. He hates that Europe's ground might be nothing but the groundless love of the 'multi-cultural' multitude of its citizens. At the end of the day, he cannot stand that only the love felt for Europe is Europe's 'ground'. He wants his love to be anchored, grounded in Europe or, what amounts to the same thing, he wants a love that loves itself, that starts from a 'self', a 'ground', that it can appropriate as the ultimate guarantee of its identity.

Here, both Breivik and the ideas he defends, miss the core of modernity's self-understanding. If modernity stands for the idea that we no longer relate to reality proceeding from reality itself, i.e., proceeding from the link that binds us ontologically to reality, then, Breivik's manifesto can be read as one of the many attempts to turn the shift of modernity back and to restore the ontological, 'essential' relation with reality which we supposed we had in pre-modern times. His claim is that Europe *itself*, the community *itself*, identity *itself*, make us love it. This is the old, metaphysical foundation of 'political love' as it was practiced in antiquity and in the Christian Middle Ages: love as grounded in the fullness it desires – an *agapè* based *eros*.

In the first years of the seventeenth century, Bartolomeo Manfredi, an artist in the line of Caravaggio, painted a scene in which Mars furiously whips Eros, while Venus tries to protect her little son against the beating of her lover. The interpretation of that painting is uncertain, if only because of a lack of references to concrete mythological stories in antiquity.²² But it may not entirely be baseless to say that, here, Mars's fury turns against the whimsicality of Eros, against the unreasonableness and the groundlessness of the way he shoots his arrows, both the golden ones (making someone falling in love) and the lead ones (making someone hate his partner or

lover). Breivik's position is maybe similar to the one of Mars. He, too, hates that kind of love and declares war against it.

CHRISTIAN LOVE AND DEMOCRACY

What if the kind of love Breivik declares the war on, is the love underlying today's democratic culture? For if it is love that binds us to democracy, it is certainly that whimsical, groundless kind of love Mars is whipping on Manfredi's painting – a love not anchored in any given, fixed 'self' or identity, neither in our own identity nor in the one of the community's 'body'. The love underlying a freedom-based society is itself to be defined as free, i.e., as having no ground, either in its subject or in its object. It is love as desire, unfulfilled and unfulfillable desire.

It is one of the hallmarks of democracy to give a central place to that kind of open desire. Parliamentary work, public debates, free press, and other democratic procedures never stop encouraging citizens to change again and again the actual state of their society, but it does not provide any prescription concerning the content of those changes. All this requires a commitment and an active engagement of citizens. They have to invest their desire and, so to say, love their society. Yet, *what* precisely they have to love is not known in advance and depends finally on the whimsicality of their wishes and desires. It depends on their groundless love for democracy. That love is democracy's abysmal base.

This kind of democratic love is much closer to the paradigm of *eros* than of *agapè*. If it is to be associated with a god, then, it is Venus' little son who cannot stand either sacrifices or altars, as we read in Euripides.²³

So, is Christianity and its *agape* paradigm incompatible with modern democracy? Not exactly. Of course, Christianity is responsible for the idea of the society united as a body, as it has been the 'regulative idea' for more than a millennium of western politics. And that idea, indeed, originates in *agapè*, in love thought from (an as) satisfaction – love thought from (and as) the shore of eternal truth it longs for. But Christian love is not solely *agape*; it has incorporated Greek *eros* as well. And *eros* fits with one of the core concepts of Christian doctrine, more precisely with the apocalyptic and eschatological condition we humans are in. More exactly does it fit with one of the dimensions implied in these concepts. They claim that we live in the fulfillment of time and, thus, in the satisfied condition of *agapè*. Yet, at the same time, these concepts say that the *eschaton* and the *apocalypse* are still to come and that the world as it is now – including its political system – is under reserve; that nobody knows the truth the Messiah will reveal at the end of time.

Here, *eros* clearly appears as a paradigm underlying Christian tradition as well. Here enters love in its quality of still unsatisfied desire, of unfulfilled messianic expectation. It is not a minor line in the Christian tradition. Despite its strong line of asceticism, Christianity has at the same time a genuinely 'erotic' dimension, living love as groundless desire.

Remember its rich mystical tradition. Mystics lost themselves in Christ who, however, even in that very moment, remained the impossible and unreachable object of their desire – an impossibility they embrace precisely with love. This is the ‘nada’ that John of the Cross waits for at the top of the Mount Carmel.²⁴ This is the God Simone Weil experiences as the one who, while satisfying her desire, stimulates it even more.²⁵ It is the God who brings Teresa of Avila into a state in which she ‘dies of not dying’: satisfied, though at the same time suffering of not disappearing in that very satisfaction and, thus, of keeping desiring.²⁶

This is a strong line in Christian tradition, and it has both roots in antiquity and representatives in modernity. If Christianity is able to connect with modernity and, especially, with its political, democratic culture, this is one of the possible lines. The fact that Christian love is eschatological and apocalyptic does not only mean that we can presume to lay down upon the shore of truth. It means also that no shore in our entire universe is yet the shore of truth, for the truth is still to come.

Here, Christianity meets its modern mission. Democracy requires a culture of desire, of unsatisfied and unsatisfiable desire, and Christian tradition has expertise in this. Not exactly a political expertise, it is true. But reconsidering its tradition, it can see how its own theory, acknowledging the apocalyptic openness of desire, fits with the openness of today’s democratic culture. And it can add to the formal openness of today’s democratic desire a hope that is more content oriented. Longing for a community of love united as a body, it can at the same time acknowledge and privilege that longing as what has to be lived by the sake of that longing as such. Christianity is able to acknowledge the metaphysical situation beyond finitude and human condition, but it can at the same time keep people longing for it, acknowledging desire – unsatisfiable desire – as what in Christian culture too is at stake.

Referring to elements from the Christian tradition, Breivik’s love for Europe has denied the dimension of desire inherent in genuine love. It is up to Christianity now to correct the Breiviks in Europe and to show that it can help us to build up a modern, free democracy.²⁷

NOTES

¹ Thus writes Breivik in the “Interview with a Justiciar Knight Commander of the PCCTS, Knights Templar”, one of the last chapters in his *2083: A European Declaration of Independence*, the document that he put on the internet the day that his bomb attack in Oslo killed 8, and his massacre a few hours later on the isle of Utoya took the lives of 69 persons. Quotations from Breivik’s *2083: A European Declaration of Independence*, are from the internet pdf-file (<https://sites.google.com/site/knighttemplareurope/2083>). For the quotes here, see p. 1382 and 1403.

² “Love conquers all; let us all yield to love!” Vergil, *Eclogues* X 69.

³ “My parents, being rather secular wanted to give me the choice in regards to religion. At the age of 15 I chose to be baptised and confirmed in the Norwegian State Church. I consider myself to be 100% Christian. However, I strongly object to the current suicidal path of the Catholic Church but especially the Protestant Church. I support a Church that believes in self-defense and who are willing to fight for its principles and values, at least resist the efforts put forth to exterminate it gradually. The Catholic and Protestant Church are both cheering their own annihilation considering the fact that they embrace the ongoing inter-faith dialogue and the appeasement of Islam.” A few lines further, he is much less affirmative concerning his religious identity: “Regarding my personal relationship with God, I guess I’m not an excessively religious man. I am first and foremost a man of logic. However, I am a supporter of a mono-cultural Christian Europe.” (pp. 1403-1404)

⁴ Breivik spends seven pages convincing his Christian reader that violent self-defense is without doubt a Biblical virtue (p. 1327-333).

⁵ “It’s essential that we don’t allow the passion to control us. It’s critical that we are cool and act rationally with a long term perspective. Our day will come, have no doubt about it. Just act rationally in the mean time and don’t sell your life cheaply. Make sure you have many children or fight for the armed resistance movement. You may fight with the pen or with the sword, every effort counts!” (p. 1403)

⁶ Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths, Combined Edition*. London: Penguin, 1955, rev. 1960, repr. 1992: 58 a-c.

⁷ That the etymology of ‘Europe’ goes back to the Semitic *erebu* (sunset) or the Phoenician *ehreb* (evening) is not uncontroversial. The common etymology is that it is a compound word of *eurys* (wide) and *ops* (face): broad face. Graves mentions this etymology, as well as another that see a composition of *eu* (good) and rope (willow) “good for the willows,” “well watered” (Graves 2000: 193). Some versions of the myth state that the affair or, as Graves suggests, the rape of Europe took place under a willow.

⁸ For those of us who are drawn by monotheism this may be difficult to understand, but the ancient Greek gods did not act as models for human ethical behavior – on the contrary.

⁹ For an in-depth study of the Phoenician identity of Cadmus and his relationship with the Greek Thebes, see the following: Ruth E. Edwards (1979), *Kadmos the Phoenician: A Study in Greek Legends and the Mycenaean Age*, Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert.

¹⁰ Graves, *Greek Myths*, 58 e.

¹¹ Jean-Pierre Vernant, « Le tyran boiteux : D’Œdipe à Périandre », in *Œdipe et ses mythe*, Jean-Pierre Vernant et Pierre Vidal-Naquet, Bruxelles: Editions Complexe, 1988, p. 60.

¹² Eric M. Orlin (2010), *Foreign Cults in Rome: Creating a Roman Empire*, Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 26, 38. Clifford Ando (2008), *The Matter of the Gods*, Berkeley / Los Angeles: The University of California Press, p. 130.

¹³ “Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us

and his love is made complete in us. This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.” (1 John 4:11-16)

¹⁴ Not only for the members of the Christian community, but for the entire human community (and even for the universe) as well.

¹⁵ Think of the place love has in the political thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The citizen must be taught a love for his ‘*patrie*’, so that his individual will is in perfect conformity with the general will (‘*volonté générale*’). Love of the fatherland, he writes, is a “gentle and lively sentiment which combines the force of *amour propre* with all the beauty of virtue, endows it with an energy which, without disfiguring, makes it into the most heroic of all the passions”; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. V. Gourevitch, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 16. For a comment, see: Simon Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology*, London / New York: Verso, 2012, p. 44.

¹⁶ Aldus William Maclean and Catherine Hornby in: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/08/26/us-norway-breivik-europe-idUSBRE87P01N20120826>

¹⁷ In the introduction to his *Compendium*, Breivik writes: “Time is of the essence. We have only a few decades to consolidate a sufficient level of resistance before our major cities are completely demographically overwhelmed by Muslims. Ensuring the successful distribution of this compendium to as many Europeans as humanly possible will significantly contribute to our success. It may be the only way to avoid our present and future dhimmitude (enslavement) under Islamic majority rule in our own countries.” (‘Dhimmitude’ is derived from ‘dhimmi’, the Arabic term for non-Muslim people under Muslim government.)

¹⁸ See: p. 803 e.v.; 822 e.v., p. 1257 e.v.

¹⁹ “It is therefore essential to understand the difference between a “Christian fundamentalist theocracy” (everything we *do not* want) and a secular European society based on our Christian cultural heritage (what we *do* want). So no, you don’t need to have a personal relationship with God or Jesus to fight for our Christian cultural heritage. It is enough that you are a Christian-agnostic or a Christian atheist (an atheist who wants to preserve at least the basics of the European Christian cultural legacy (Christian holidays, Christmas and Easter)). The PCCTS, Knights Templar is therefore not a religious organisation but rather a Christian “culturalist” military order.” (p. 1361; bold by Breivik)

²⁰ Breivik considers Nazism not as an ally or a predecessor. Like Islam, Nazism has no respect for boundaries, we read in his *Compendium* (p. 122). After all, it is a national socialism and, thus, a socialism; and, so he writes, “It is striking to notice that these writers were inspired by a Marxist worldview and consistently refused to see the heavy Socialist influences on the Nazi ideology anyway” (p. 639). On the next page, he cites Winston Churchill (one of his ‘favorites’), who wrote in his diaries concerning Hitler’s *Mein*

Kampf: “Here was the new Koran of faith and war: turgid, verbose, shapeless, but pregnant with its message.” (p. 640)

²¹ David Bowie, in ‘Soul Love’ (*The Rise and the Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*, 1972).

²² For the reference to antique and baroque painting, see Alfred Moir, “An Examination of Bartolomeo Manfredi’s *Cupid Chastised*, *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, 11 (1985) 2: 156-167.

²³ *Hippolytus*, verse 544.

²⁴ John of the Cross (1987), *Selected Writings*, translated from the Spanish by the editor, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, p. 19.

²⁵ Simone Weil (2003), *Gravity and Grace*, with an introduction and postscript by Gustave Thibon, translated by Emma Crawford and Mario von der Ruhr, London / New York: Routledge, pp. 10-15.

²⁶ Teresa of Avila (2000), *The Way of Perfection*, Text prepared by Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD, Washington: ICS Publications, p. 215.

²⁷ The present essay is based on “From Utøya, With Love: Reflecties over liefde en politiek naar aanleiding van Anders Breiviks Compendium,” which appeared in *Tijdschrift voor Theologie* 53 (2013) 2: 217-228.

THINKING INTERVENTION: FROM WESTPHALIAN NON-INTERVENTION TO MILITARY HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION

Richard Feist

INTRODUCTION: THE DECREASING USE OF VIOLENCE

Another version of this paper's subtitle would be: "from minding your own business to minding everyone else's – can it go too far?" But this presupposes that there is some justifiable distance that the minding can go before it goes "too far." This is easily seen in cases such as a parent's minding her child's business. The parent is not only justified in minding, but obligated. However, views on using force in minding children have changed. Decades ago it was axiomatic that corporal punishment was not merely useful, but necessary: "spare the rod and spoil the child." Today many would question force's use and then argue that corporeal punishment has negative effects. We have gone from "spare" and "spoil" to "render the rod and ruin the child." (Pinker 2011, 429-432) But given that children grow up, this minding is variable and eventually comes to an end.

There is also a justifiable distance of minding between rational adults. If your intoxicated friend attempts to drive, you are justified to mind his business and stop him. But you are not justified in humiliating or berating your friend for drinking or trying to force him into a rehabilitation program. Moreover, this minding of the business of other rational agents is always a matter of degree. In our daily actions, by simply doing and expressing ourselves in the world, we interfere in the lives of others. Short of withdrawing completely from society, interference to some degree is unavoidable. One can reduce one's "interference footprint", but one cannot make it vanish.

Indeed, we are moving away from employing violence either in the raising of children or in dealings with fellow adults. The lessening of violence as a means of persuasion can be found in the embedding society – especially in liberal democracies. Various scholars, from Foucault to Tilly, have traced the decline of violent means in society and the localization and eventual monopolization of violence by the state. These types of analyses have lent great support to the view that many problems, which were long thought solvable only through violence, can be solved – indeed, have been solved – by other, mainly legalistic, mechanisms. This move towards non-violent means of persuasion, long in the making, led eventually to Max Weber's controversial definition of a state, namely, the particular human community with a legitimate monopoly of violence within a given territory, to gain intellectual traction. (Tilly 1992, 70) The same kinds of arguments apply to governing society. For instance, capital punishment was long seen as absolutely necessary for maintaining society. In 1822, England had 222

capital offences on the books, but by 1844, there were only 4. Reducing capital offences was not unique to England; numerous other European nations did so – and at roughly the same time. Nonetheless, the retention of capital punishment itself, to the nineteenth century mind, would have been seen as necessary in some cases. Abolishing it would have seemed foolish and dangerous, for it would have removed a key deterrent. But it has been duly noted that homicide rates have been declining throughout the West for some several hundred years as well. The result is that, on the one hand, there have been declining homicide rates, the reduction of capital offences and the near abolition of capital punishment. On the other hand, the overall homicide rates have also continued to decline. It has been pointed out that:

...today we know that abolition, far from reversing the centuries-long decline of homicide, proceeded in tandem with it, and that the countries of modern Western Europe, none of which execute people, have the lowest homicide rates in the world. It one of many cases in which institutionalized violence was once seen as indispensable to the functioning of a society, yet once it was abolished, the society managed to get along perfectly without it.
(Pinker 2011, 153)

Like individuals, states cannot help but interfere in one another's lives. It is always intellectually risky to move from the societal level to the international level, to employ the "domestic analogy" as it is often called. (Suganami 1986). Nonetheless, states are much like individuals in that they have two kinds of lives: internal and external. As an individual has an internal life of beliefs and values organized into some kind of applicable conceptual scheme, states have an internal life of political and economic ideas organized into an applicable conceptual scheme. This resembles Easton's classic definition of the political as the "...authoritative allocation of valued things." (Easton 1965, 50) As individuals have an external life in how they relate to other individuals in larger kinds of structures, states have an external life in how they relate to other states in larger kinds of structures. The individual's internal life and external life are closely related; they are mutually causal. The same bi-directionality would hold for the majority of states; with the odd exception of states like North Korea, few states have a water-tight barrier between their internal and external lives. The notion that domestic policy influences foreign policy and vice-versa is nothing new, nor is the view that borders are ultimately porous. Like individuals, the internal lives of some states will be more sensitive to external realities than others. Hence the interrelationship is not invariant across all states. Moreover, a given state may at some times be more sensitive to external realities than at others.

Like individuals, states interfere in various ways with each other, and these patterns of interference in turn have causal effects on the internal lives of states. Consequently, states cannot help but interfere in each other's

lives. Entanglement is the norm, not the exception. Moreover, the general level of interference has been growing as states enter into ever-larger trading blocs with ever-deepening rules and regulations. Some trade deals enable governments to sue other governments regarding the latter's monetary policies. States may enter freely into such agreements, but the fact remains that states are increasingly beholden to each other.

This interference of states in each other's lives has traditionally been grounds for war. But, like the reduction of violence on the domestic scene, many scholars have pointed out the trend of the decline of "major war," that is, the large-scale wars that one associates with World War I and II. (Vayrynen 2006) This thesis of the decline of major war is not without its critics, for indeed much turns on how one defines the terms involved. So while large-scale war may in fact be on the decline, there has been a proliferation of smaller-scale conflicts. Nonetheless, one of the decline thesis's critics has pointed out:

Clearly, the thesis has to be narrowed in range. It fits only a limited category of wars; wars done in a particular way, conducted between particular parties. This should not be dismissed as insignificant, however. It is important that there have been no wars in Western Europe, notably between France and Germany, for more than 50 years. It is a shift in European history. Prior to this, this particular pair of states recorded three major wars in less than 75 years. Another 25 years without war, which seems likely, will make the non-war relationship of states a 'normal' one. For several generations, peace has been the experience, not war. The probability of war has declined dramatically. (Wallensteen 2006, 90)

John Mueller, who argues in favour of the decline thesis, suggests that the trend away from major war is likely part of the broader trend (within the West) that I drew attention to previously. Mueller writes that, overall, there is a trend "...away from the acceptance of a number of forms of deliberate, intentional killing." (Mueller 2006, 65) Still, Mueller agrees with Wallensteen that some kinds of wars remain despite the decline thesis. Mueller classifies these remaining kinds into two types: the extremely common, unconventional civil wars and the less common, 'policing wars'. (Mueller 2006, 74)

It is the last kind of war, the so-called 'policing war' that I would like to examine here. The issue is, what is the justifiable distance of intentional state-to-state interference and what does this mean when it moves from non-violent interference to violent interference? But this investigation is done within the general pattern that I have hitherto described. That is, at all levels of human interaction, violence was thought to be either a necessary means of resolving differences or enforcing laws and morals or at least an option that should be kept alive. But history shows that this view of violence as either necessary or at least optional has

drastically declined and, alongside of that actual violence, rates themselves have also declined.

INTENTION, INTERFERENCE, INTERVENTION AND WAR

Although I use the term “intentional”, no attempt will be made in this paper to unpack the complex notion of “a state’s intention.” The complexity is due to the fact that states are not identical to individuals. For instance, different branches of a state’s government may all (or mostly) agree on some kind of action, but such agreement does not by any means ensure unanimity of intent. After all, different intentions can easily lead to similar actions. Moreover, it is not necessary for my argument here that “state intention” serve as a sufficient causal variable for state military action. Indeed, in many cases, it simply does not. Levy and Thompson point out several instances from history, such as Hitler’s and the Nazi party’s extremely belligerent intentions that did not, for some time, result in any kind of military action. It took the actions of other states in order to have the conditions under which military action occurred. (Levy and Thompson 2010) My point is that state intention is not a sufficient condition for military action, but is a necessary one. This will avoid the debatable notion that “war simply breaks out” and that states are simply “dragged in,” a notion that has been popularly accepted but rejected as long ago as Clausewitz. Suffice it to say that this paper’s view of a state’s intentions will be kept simple: that the actions of a state, X, were at least foreseen and desired by a majority of those in positions of power in X.

The second clarification concerns definitions and relationships among a pair of terms “interference”/“intervention” and the all-important, but extremely elusive term, “war”. As my previous discussion indicates, “interference” has an expansive extension, that is, it has a wide variety of instantiations. I will use “intervention” as a special class – an extreme class – within that of intentional state to state interference. As a state, X’s interference in the internal life of another state, Y, becomes more focussed and its causal ramifications mount, X is moving from simple interference to intervention. The end of the continuum is that X’s interference has a huge causal impact on Y’s internal life and does so against Y’s intentions and despite Y’s actions. It is important to consider the intentions and reactions of the target state, Y, since these are large determinants in the success or failure of interventions.

The inspiration for considering the target state responses is two-fold. This first concerns the notion of moral hazard as applied to military interventions. I will return to this issue in a later section of the paper. What I will consider here is the long-held view by Just War theorists that violence – namely, military violence – is in some cases the only solution to a problem. The difficulty is judging when the case truly demands a military solution. Just War theory tries to capture this via the *jus ad bellum* stipulation that war be “the last resort.” There has been much discussion as to the precise

meaning and procedure of applying last resort, but the discussions all presuppose that one start with the current situation and then ask “what can be done to avoid war?” But this of course ignores how conflict situations come into being, that they have long histories and develop over time. Consequently, one can argue that, throughout a conflict situation’s history, there were a variety of non-military options available and it was only at a particular time, t , that these options were closed off leaving the military option. This does not force the issue of preventative strikes. Preventative warfare may have only been one option in the set. There is a need to think more broadly about preventing war than simply using violence earlier and earlier. The goal is to circumvent violence altogether.

Perhaps other states, through their actions or their omissions, permitted non-government actors to assist in the creation of the conflict situation in question. There are historic precedents for this. Consider the common claim that World War II was a just war. Some say that it was the last “good war.” Jeff McMahan and Michael Walzer, both Just War theorists who are as far apart as two Just War theorists can be and still be called “Just War theorists,” hold this view. (McMahan 2009, and Walzer 2006) The necessity component stems from the view that Nazi Germany could not have been stopped except by military resistance. “Last resort” was fulfilled and so was “just cause”: Nazi Germany was a morally monstrous regime and could not be allowed to continue its European expansion. Moreover, prior to its expansion, Germany’s rearmament violated the Treaty of Versailles, but this was not justified grounds for invading it. This is analogous to the purchase of a weapon not being the grounds for a murder charge. However, this is an idealized view of a complex historical situation and it creates a false dichotomy. States surrounding Germany were not faced with either having to watch Germany rearm and then necessarily be forced to fight or invade Germany rearming and start an unjust war. This false dichotomy ignores what I discussed above, that states constantly interfere in each other’s affairs. Nazi Germany did not rearm itself in a vacuum. It has been well-documented that the means by which the Nazi state obtained its arms was through heavy international support. A broken economy could not have rebuilt itself simply by pulling on its own bootstraps. That is, non-military action was readily available to states surrounding Germany during the latter’s military buildup. The same applies today: many of the nations who behaviourally run afoul of the international community’s views on human rights do so via the use of weapons that are readily available from the international community. It is analogous to building a weapon that is solely used for killing humans, selling that weapon, and then complaining that the purchaser used the weapon according to the designer’s intentions. More relevant to my concern here is that states directly sell arms or do not regulate or control arms manufacturers within their own borders. These arms ultimately are sold to states that use it against their own citizens. Of course, once this happens on a large scale, the argument is then made that it is necessary to intervene.

Once again, this is an example of a violent situation that eventually necessitates a violent solution. But this is clearly only if the build-up to that situation is fundamentally ignored.

Regarding “war”, it is curious that Just War theorists tend not to offer definitions of this term. They offer an ethical analysis of when war is justified, but not what it is. However, this can lead to counterintuitive results. For instance, McMahan states that war typically refers to “an aggregate fighting of a number of belligerents” and that is aggregate is neither just nor unjust. (McMahan 2009, 5) Ethics only comes into play when we consider a side of the war – as in its possession of (or not) of a “just cause.” Political scientists and historians would take exception to this characterization of war. For it would make almost any kind of conflict into war, essentially confusing the terms. Moreover, war nearly always involves the large-scale destruction of property and people. Regardless of perspectives, ethics must in some way be involved here. To tie ethics to the taking of perspectives equates Just War theory with the ethics of war in general. Anyone outside the Just War camp, then, by definition does not have a moral perspective on war. They would simply have to say that war is outside moral discourse.

A NOTE ON ETHICS

“Casuistry” animates my approach. Toulmin and Jonsen point out that this term has a bad reputation. (Jonsen and Toulmin 1988, 11-16) However, they stress that the casuists stressed that we must escape the false dichotomy of ethics as either algorithmic or relativistic. Aristotle recognized this false dichotomy but he did not develop a full-blown sense of casuistry. (Jonsen and Toulmin 1988) Aristotle expressed his views of ethics via the context-dependent nature of rigour.

...it is the mark of an educated person to look for precision in each kind of inquiry just to the extent that the nature of the subject allows it; it looks like the same kind of mistake to accept a merely persuasive account from a mathematician and to demand demonstrations from an expert in oratory. (Aristotle, 2002, p. 96)

Aristotle’s recognition that failing to see that rigour is a genus, not a species, anticipates the problems of rule following in ethics.

Prima facie, rule-following appears simple. Kant’s ethics is often classed as the typical example of a rule-based ethics. But Kant stressed that applying ethical rules is most often extraordinarily difficult. Like Aristotle, Kant held that true ethical training was not learning rules, but developing the ability to make moral judgments. (Kant 2002, 63) Unlike Aristotle, Kant held that, in principle, moral judgments could be as accurate as those of mathematics. But for both ethics is not a simple algorithm. One finds this view expressed in current writings on humanitarian intervention, especially

by those of a more “cautious nature.” For instance, Chris Brown, who writes:

...the demand that the United States and other Western countries formulate an uncompromising and universal principle which will tell them when to intervene and when not to intervene, is fundamentally misconceived. (Brown 2003, 43)

Anthony Coates comes to a similar position, based on a historical context. He borrows from the work of noted war historian, John Keegan, who argues that war must be seen within the context of the culture. That is, culture determines the way that war is fought. Coates goes on to stress that morality, too, influences the way that war is fought, and that this morality is also a product of the culture. The net result of this approach, Coates points out, is that we should reject views that try to sever war from the embedding culture, that is, the society’s culture and moral dimension of war. Coates writes:

The tendency of realists to overlook that culture is matched by those moral philosophers of war for whom the ethics of war consists exclusively in the articulation and application of abstract moral principles and concepts. (Coates 2006, 209)

Coates’ concern for the embedding culture can be traced back to Michael Walzer, who stresses that his concern is not to dive deep into the philosophical depths, but simply to look at the “moral reality of war,” that is, how we actually talk about war. This “we,” according to Walzer, is not simply composed of philosophers, but comprises many others from society as well, the “opinions of mankind.” (Walzer 2006, 15). Finally, Walzer also embraces a kind of casuistry. Examining military ethics is ultimately a kind of practical ethics, and the proper method of practical ethics “...is casuistic in nature.” (Walzer 2006, xxiv)

MILITARY HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS: HISTORY AND DANGERS

History is replete with states not simply interfering but intervening in each other’s affairs. The story of the origins of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) is enormously complex and resists summarizing, but a few results of the treaties of Westphalia, which ended the war, are relevant. It is often said that these treaties mark the birth of the international system of states, but this has been challenged recently. (Havercroft 2012) In any case, Westphalia provided results that transcended their European origins, as they were refined and eventually dominated global views on international relations. Today Europe and non-European, liberal democracies like the US and Canada, are abandoning Westphalia while non-European states, like

China and Russia, hold quite firmly to them. One might say that with military humanitarian intervention we have another example of a particular group of states exporting their ideas.

The first key result of Westphalia is that the European community recognized the state level as the highest level of authority, as manifested in the non-interventionist principle: *rex est imperator in regno suo*, “a king is an emperor in his own realm.” The second, related principle, is that no state can legitimately intervene in the internal affairs of another state on the basis of religious grounds. This principle results from the fact that religious interference played a large role in the lead-up to the war and was later roundly denounced by then Pope Innocent X, who famously referred to the treaty as “...null, void, invalid, iniquitous, unjust, damnable, reprobate, inane, and devoid of meaning for all time.” (Havercroft 2012, 120)

There are numerous examples in the writings of Just War theorists in which intervention in other states is justified. Saint Augustine held that a war may be fought for the sake of the vanquished. (Christopher 1994, 38) Hugo Grotius, building on Seneca’s view that “men were born to aid one another”, holds that a king may intervene in another kingdom to protect the latter’s subjects. (Grotius 2012, 317) But for Grotius this is solely because the subjects of a king lack the right to protect themselves from their sovereign; only a king can challenge a king. Still, Grotius, no doubt imbued with the spirit of Westphalia treaties, feared having an opening for intervention. But his fear did not stop him.

We know, it is true, from both ancient and modern history, that the desire for what is another’s seeks such pretexts as this for its own ends; but a right does not at once cease to exist in case it is to some extent abused by evil men. Pirates, also, sail the sea; arms are also carried by brigands. (Grotius 2012, 318)

Grotius is making the simple, but important point: just because the right to intervene may be abused, that does not nullify the right to intervene *per se*.

This should be put into perspective, namely, that history is full of the use of military intervention or military interference for all kinds of nefarious reasons. Most of these reasons do turn on claims to “universal justice” or “the proper order of things.” But in the end, they are highly questionable and would appear as the kinds of precepts that concerned Grotius. For instance, Churchill is often lauded for his views on human rights and his early opposition to Hitler. However, consider his views on Indian Independence. Churchill’s views on intervening and supposedly doing the right thing for another nation are revealed as strong paternalism. (Churchill 1931) Through Britain’s “help”, the people of India have been:

...lifted to a civilisation and to a level of peace, order, sanitation and progress far above anything they could have possibly achieved themselves or could maintain. This wonderful fact is due to the

guidance and authority of a few thousands of British officials responsible to Parliament who have for generations presided over the development of India.

The British must refuse to “surrender to Gandhi.” Surrender would be a moral outrage, “a desertion of duty”, since it would not be bad for Britain (although it will hurt British business), but would be tantamount to allowing India to “...fall back quite rapidly through the centuries into the barbarism and privations of the Middle Ages.” Churchill’s views are clearly at odds with his great British predecessor John Stuart Mill, who insisted that interference in other nations was always problematic and usually ends in disaster. (Christopher 1994, 245) But Churchill’s views are neither out of sync with many historical trends nor are they non-existent today. In an interesting – and provocative – analysis of the rise of “humanitarian intervention,” Mahmood Mamdani writes:

The era of international humanitarian order is not entirely new. It draws on the entire history of modern Western colonialism. At the very outset of Western colonial expansion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, leading western powers – UK, France, Russia – claimed to protect ‘vulnerable groups.’ When it came to countries controlled by rival powers, such as the Ottoman empire, Western powers claimed to protect populations they considered ‘vulnerable’, mainly religious minorities such as specific Christian denominations and Jews. The most extreme political outcome of this strategy can be glimpsed in the confessional constitution bequeathed by France on independent Lebanon. (Mamdani 2010, 55)

In general, historically, Mamdani states, and in particular, as the example from Churchill shows, the rhetoric involved the juxtaposition of civilization’s promise versus barbarianism’s threats. Descriptions abounded of Indian practices such as child marriage and sati and African practices such as slavery and female genital mutilation. Of course, these atrocities were not simply fictions, but they were pressed into political service. Mamdani concludes that the “technique of power” transformed victims of such atrocities into “...proxies whose dilemma would legitimate colonial intervention as a rescue mission.” (Mamdani 2010, 56)

This probably explains why certain countries are in favour of humanitarian intervention while others are not. It all seems to line up exactly in the way that Mamdani suggests. Bluntly put, humanitarian intervention is an invasion such that the invading state (or states) has decided two things: first, that the host state does not follow the appropriate moral standards and, second, that it is justified to invade that host state and impose those standards. In such an invasion, the invading states fully expect to engage the host state’s forces, defeat them, and impose, to varying

degrees, their notion of a proper order upon that host state's society. This is nothing other than armed paternalism. Even if the military intervention is solely intended to stop or prevent an atrocity, it remains the result of a judgement and subsequent action by the invader.

One might consider that Mamdani's thinking is too broad and outdated. But consider the recent military humanitarian invasion of Libya under United Nations Resolution 1973. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon articulated the general feeling that things were dramatically different by linking R1973 to the arrival of 'the Responsibility to Protect.'" (Hehir 2013, 137) In other words, a new world order has arrived in terms of protecting the innocent, one based on ethical considerations alone. No doubt ethical considerations played a role, but certainly were not the entire cause of R1973. The US staunchly supported R1973, but acknowledged that its motivation included their strategic interest in removing Qaddafi. (Hehir 2013, 155) It is hardly surprising that a union of interests and values contributed to R1973. Historians have traced the highly selective pattern of humanitarian interventions. The governing rule is simple: if there are no vital interests involved, then there is no intervention. (Hehir 2013, 156) This is not necessarily an evil issue, unless one stipulates that there must be an intervention if ethical grounds alone demand it and that it is unethical to mix any ethics and national interest. This is a strong rule-bound form of ethics for international intervention, one that I have rejected in my previous note on ethical theories. The problem is not whether there is a mix, but what kind of mix is realistic and ethical at the same time.

Another serious problem in deciding on humanitarian interventions is captured by the old saw that, in war, truth is the first causality. At the outset of the Libyan crisis, Western media reports held that Qaddafi immediately used indiscriminate force and even deliberately targeted civilians in the attempt to suppress dissent. There was the French physician's report of some 2,000 civilian deaths during his time in Benghazi, and the report of Qaddafi's air force strafing Benghazi's and Tripoli's citizens. Both reports were false. There was no such strafing and the citizen death count for all of Libya during that time was 233. (Kuperman 2013, 111) Of course 233 deaths is tragic, as is any human death in war, but 233 across Libya is much different than 2,000 in one city. The former lends little support to "indiscriminate use of force" and even less to "deliberately targeting civilians."

Finally, consider the problem of moral hazard as applied to humanitarian interventions. States are easily provoked. The second reason for considering the target state's response to the intervention deals with two kinds of problems that arise in economics, "moral hazard" and "morale hazard." In both cases of hazard, a party, P, is offered protection from harm. But the result is that P will be more likely to engage in behaviour that increases the probability of harm. For instance, if a person has no fire insurance on her house, statistically speaking, she will be incredibly careful regarding any kind of fire hazards. Bring a large insurance package into the

situation, and the person will be less careful. If the person is intentionally less careful, perhaps thinking about cashing in on the insurance, that is an example of *moral hazard*. If the person is unintentionally less careful, that is an example of *morale hazard*. It has long been recognized that humanitarian intervention, if implemented as a kind of international policy, could lead to large scale cases of moral and morale hazard. (Kuperman 2008) Reflections on this problem will also have to be factored into any examination of what could constitute a justifiable distance of intentional state to state interference. This is extremely important given that there is much scholarly agreement that the current trend is to allow more and more state-state interference, including military interference. (Semb 2007, 218-230)

MILITARY INTERVENTION: THE ETHICAL ISSUE

So far I have been drawing attention to the dangers – that is, the consequences – of humanitarian intervention, i.e., the pretext problem (hegemonic tendencies) and moral hazards (that are basically problems of the abuse of military intervention). I now move towards a more deontological investigation, namely, that military intervention is a form of war, and that war kills, so that we have an instance of killing to prevent killing.

Although there are many interpretations of the ultimate foundations of Just War theory, one view is that the essence of the theory is to address the issue of how best to preserve respect for human life within the context of killing humans. The theory separates people into two groups: combatants and non-combatants. Justificatory grounds for killing combatants are much stronger than for killing non-combatants. Nonetheless, Just War theory presupposes that it is possible to justify killing a completely innocent and non-threatening person against his will.

One issue that I have mentioned earlier is that non-interference is not possible as a general principle. A related view is expressed by Norman when he points out that the language of human rights is so common now that it is virtually unavoidable. Various organizations, such as Amnesty International, routinely criticize governments, but no theory of state's rights could support the claim that such criticism violates state sovereignty. Moreover, a state's refusal to sell arms to a given state is also a kind of interference in the latter's budgetary decisions. This could result in various kinds of interference. For instance, refusing to sell arms to a state because it is judged that the state in question should use its monetary resources to buy food is one level of interference. It is a stronger level of interference if we refuse to sell arms to a state knowing that such a state will use the arms to control its population.

But if we go further and interfere militarily to protect a population, there are a number of issues to decide. First, what are the grounds for such interference? Typically the issue today is the protection of the human rights of a population. I have already looked at the pretext problem and the moral

hazard problems with this. Now the question has to be: what exactly are human rights? This is a hotly contested question. But at the very least, they have to be pre-institutional; they cannot rely for their existence on the policies or practices of an institution. But does this fall prey to Bentham's famous criticisms that the very concept of a "pre-institutional right" is nonsense and the claim that "pre-institutional rights are sacrosanct" is nonsense on stilts? Not necessarily, but to establish pre-institutional rights will require some kind of methodology that is able to take one from claims such as "Joe has a need for Z" and "Sally has a desire for Q" to "Joe has a right to Z" and "Sally has a right to Q." Statements about needs and desires are far easier to establish than those about rights. The set of rights is indeed derivative from the set of needs and desires, but again, what elements from the former are regarded as "rights"? There are many models for this methodology, but no universal agreement. Indeed, many have regarded the current talk of human rights as eventually leading to a devaluing of the currency of human rights. (Griffin 2008)

Norman rightly points out that this does not mean that we should abandon talk of human rights. Indeed, it probably would be highly unrealistic to even think that we could do so. But even if we could come to some kind of agreement as to the set of human rights, that will still not settle the issue of what exactly to do in case of such violations. Suppose that there is agreement that living in a democracy is a human right. Governments that suppress "free and fair elections" could be said to violate the human rights of their citizens. The problem will be in the details. If the electoral system is a first past the post system, such as in Canada, a free and fair election, according to the system, can easily have a small minority of the population electing a majority government. That is, an election in which less than half the voter population can elect a government that occupies more than half of the seats in the House of Commons. Many hold that while this is a semblance of democracy, it is not a true democracy. Moreover, the current Canadian government is proposing substantial modifications to the electoral system, modifications that have been heavily criticized by groups within and outside of Canada as being anti-democratic in nature. But nobody is proposing that Canada should be invaded for violating the democratic rights of its citizens.

Setting the problem of grounding human rights aside, suppose that we can agree at least on the human right to not be killed. This can be justifiably overridden according to Just War theory. It is often said that overriding X's right not to be killed can be justified by the result that it will promote more rights (to others) in the long run. This is a standard "utilitarianism of rights." But there are two issues with this notion of a utilitarianism of rights.

It is highly contestable that rights can be traded, especially if rights are individually held. If X's right to life is violated in the name of preserving a number of other individuals' rights to life, the result is that one person's right has been violated and a several persons have had their rights

promoted. “There is no overall collective entity whose rights are maximized.” (Norman 2006, 203) Even if one embraces group rights, it remains the case that killing some to preserve other’s lives embraces the attempt to justify irretrievable loss. Perhaps this can be done, but it strikes me that this should be a last resort idea and other options should be explored.

It is contestable the military methods work. Mill was certainly sceptical of using the military to impose ideas on people. If a society does not promote such rights, and is actively engaged in violating such rights, then the invading military will have to be the primary forces for the promotion of such rights. However, a military invasion:

...is bound to be followed by a period of military occupation. If the occupying forces are the principal authority maintaining order, and if there is no tradition of civil institutions embodying respect for rights, a spiral of decay is all too likely. (Norman 2006, 203)

Norman follows Mill in that this is not a general comment on the nature of military operations, just that they are poor for promoting human rights. But there are many arguments to be made that military means are not terribly effective at all. Indeed, many have argued that military victory is ultimately a vacuous notion. (Howard 1999; Mandel, 2006; and Feist, 2013)

MILITARY INTERVENTION: NOT EVEN FOR GENOCIDE?

Despite the risks and the general problems, one always has to face the hardest case, the standard being genocide. Walzer, who is largely against intervention, says that one must invade in cases of “enslavement or massacre.” (Walzer 2006, 90) I will only consider the issue of genocide.

The term “genocide” entered the English language in 1944 via the work *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* by Raphael Lemkin. It rapidly gained wide use but was also subjected to vigorous debate concerning its precise meaning. Some of the topics debated are whether or not genocide requires a pre-existent plan and whether the destruction of the group is predicated on an existential denial of the group’s right to exist or aims at a partial destruction of the group in question. (Schabas 2006)

The problem with the standard definitions of “genocide,” such as that in the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, is that they tend to be after the fact definitions. However, as Scheffer notes, the first article in the Convention demands that “...the contracting parties ‘undertake to prevent and to punish’ the crime of genocide” and that this cannot be done:

...unless governments, and the international or regional organizations through which they sometimes prefer to act, respond

on the basis of political, not legal, judgments about what is actually occurring in the field. (Scheffer 2006, 231)

This will of course carry risk; the assertion that a given genocide is in the making could simply be wrong. The violence observed may be of a lesser nature. Nonetheless, Scheffer asserts, if governments are not free to make these accusations in advance and take action to stop it, if they must always wait for legal conditions to be satisfied, then "...the academic discourse and political rhetoric about preventing and stopping genocide will continue to be detached from reality." (Scheffer 2006, 231)

Scheffer is certainly correct that allowing states to openly accuse governments of plotting or permitting the conditions of a potential genocide will reduce the risk of such tragedies, but is simply "calling out" such governments sufficient? Scheffer admits that this early warning is but one tool in the general toolkit of genocide prevention. If talk of genocide in a given state remains solely within the legal discourse, it demands that the accusatory countries must take hard action, like sanctions or military intervention, actions that are expensive in various ways. This creates a strong reluctance to use the term and implicate one's country. By creating the political term "precursors of genocide" the pressure to take action upon use the term is not present. Scheffer writes:

The recognition of precursors of genocide may put just enough pressure about possible genocide in the public domain to encourage governments and relevant international and regional organizations to respond faster and more effectively, with the almost paralyzing pressure that builds with the bald use of the term "genocide." (Scheffer 2006, 232)

This is not a perfect solution but one could say that the toolkit of genocide prevention would no doubt be stronger with the political term of "precursors of genocide" than without it, the main reason being that the use of the term shifts governments' energies from "searching for the crime of genocide" to "taking action to prevent genocide." It is often said, amongst genocide scholars, that the task is to alleviate tensions before violence begins. "The key to genocide prevention is early action." (Goldsmith 2010, 254) The earlier that actions can be taken, the less likely any kind of military action will be required. Scheffer has insisted, in response to criticism, that the political use of "precursors of genocide" is by no means a magic bullet and that he never intended it to be so. (Scheffer 2007, 91) Moreover, the opening up of the description of genocide is not to collapse, Scheffer says, the distinction between prevention and intervention. For instance, the loosening of the language is not to say that major western powers, such as the United States, should stand on high alert, ready to intervene the moment a precursor of genocide is identified. (Scheffer 2007, 94) The key is that by liberating the concept of genocide from a strictly legal application, which

demands a response, the political use of a term such as “precursors of genocide” could be a lower-level interference that could negate the need for a full intervention.

CONCLUSIONS

So what is the justifiable distance concerning intervention? If interference happens, as it always does, and is done so on the level of criticism, oversight and warnings, and that states refuse to sell arms and other means that can be employed in the military, then much will be done to eliminate any need for armed intervention. But this will mean that states will not be able to allow their own industries to sell in unmonitored ways to other states. Ultimately, the supposed need for military intervention is based on the questionable assumption that human catastrophes simply “break out.” The standard criticism of the UN concerning the genocide in Rwanda was that it clearly was in the making for some time and yet states did nothing to stop it.

It is hard to imagine a case in which a government that has been monitored and called out by the international community as having genocidal tendencies, that has had arms embargoes and trade sanctions imposed upon it, would have the resources to commit large-scale atrocities. Nonetheless, if inaction by the international community has led to a situation in which the capacity has been developed by a government to commit atrocities, action would have to be taken. But even in this case, the motivation, as I see it, would be one of mercy and not amenable to justification. For it would be, once again, the negligence of the international community playing the role of transmuting a situation from one that has non-violent solutions into one that perhaps necessitates a military intervention.

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ETHICS, POLITICS, AND PUBLIC LIFE: AN ARISTOTELIAN ACCOUNT

Rajesh C. Shukla

A substantive differentiation of ethics and politics is a common characteristic of the leading moral and political discourse of our times. There are numerous reasons for this separation, some more persuasive than the others. It has been argued, for instance, that the proximity of the moral and the political fails to appreciate the secular achievements of the modern state that has emerged in opposition to the religious and moral authority of the Church in Western Europe (Locke 1950, 27). In addition, such proximity appears to compromise the core liberal values of individual freedom and autonomy, and runs counter to the legitimate contentions of a liberal democracy (Kymlicka 2002, 295-296). In its worst form, the intimacy of the ethical and the political can be said to open the floodgates for collectivism and authoritarianism in political life, legitimizing moral and political repression of all sorts. These are all serious accusations. However for our current purposes, we can categorize them under two heads: 1) that the interconnection of the ethical and the political is theoretically problematic and must be rejected on conceptual grounds and 2) that such interconnections are often open to abuse and cannot provide us with a meaningful political and social option. I raise issues with both of these claims, arguing that there is no conceptual gap between the ethical and the political, and that their intimacy flows directly from the nature of human associations. Accepting that the conceptual closeness of the ethical and the political in the public arena can be sometimes misused under guile, I argue that it should be possible to stop such misuse with a comprehensive civic effort, and that fear should not be allowed to settle an argument. I shall draw upon the Aristotelian theory of virtue and citizenship to support my contentions in this context.

This paper is divided into four sections. In the first section, I argue in favor of the unity of aims in ethics and politics, showing that both these disciplines seek to advance the same goal, i.e., the good life for citizens, and that they share a common purpose from their beginning. Next, I contend that virtue is essential not only to the personal but also to the political life of citizens. Aristotle has shown that the political ends of peace, prosperity, security, and good life for citizens cannot be met satisfactorily without a cultivation of virtues among citizens (Aristotle 2001, 1253a 32-39). In the third section, I examine the role of virtue in public life. I argue that contemporary public life is marked by an absence of virtue and that this absence has some negative consequences, such as atomization of the individual and commercialization of civic relations (MacIntyre 2011, 12-13; Knight 2011, 28). In the final section, I shall state my conclusions.

ON THE UNITY OF AIMS IN ETHICS AND POLITICS

In the opening passage of the *Politics*, Aristotle argues that the “state is a community of some kind” and that “every community is established with a view to some good; for mankind always act in order to obtain that which they think good” (Aristotle 2001, 1252a 1-3). In the same passage he also maintains that, since the state is the highest political association, it must aim at the highest good (Aristotle 2001, 1252a 3-5). Similarly in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle argues that all human actions and enquiries aim at some good, and then sets out on a conceptual investigation to find out what could constitute that good (Aristotle 2004, 1094a; 1095a 17-25). Central to both texts, the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*, is the Aristotelian belief that human life forms an organic unity such that its different aspects (i.e., ethical and political) and attributes (i.e., personal and social), must come together to facilitate the realization of a good life for citizens. J. M. Cooper remarks:

For Aristotle, ethics and politics, as philosophical studies, are not just related externally to one another, so to speak. It is not as if we must first study, in the *Ethics*, personal ethics and individual happiness as something self-contained (even if perhaps with implications for political involvement), before going on next in sequence to study, in the *Politics*, the principle of a correct social and political order for people living a good human life, as individuals – the two added together constituting a complete “philosophy of human affairs” (Cooper 2013, 71-72).

Cooper is not only pointing out a fundamental feature of Aristotle’s ethical and political thought but also his differences with contemporary modern thought. Unlike modern conceptions of ethics and politics, Aristotle does not believe in their radical separation, thinking that they must conjure together to provide us with a “complete philosophy of human affairs”.

A complete philosophy of human affairs, for Aristotle, must explain the origin and purpose of our ethical and political associations in a given context without being totally abstract or removed from practice (Knight 2011, 21-22). Indeed one of the main criticisms of Aristotle against Plato’s conception of the state is that the Platonic state fails to conform to an individual’s lived experiences in the *polis*. Aristotle takes it as obvious that the Platonic communism of family and property is unrealistic and impractical. For instance, the communism of family that Plato so staunchly espouses for the guardian class in the *Republic* will undermine natural affection and not be able to keep the parental ancestry of children completely anonymous, as the children born out of free coupling among guardians will still resemble their parents in some ways (Aristotle 2001, 1261b 35-40; 1262a 14-22). Likewise, the Platonic communism of property can easily undercut the virtues of generosity or magnanimity in the guardian

class (Aristotle 2001, 1263b 10-14). The practice of these virtues requires private property and ownership, and cannot be effective under the scheme of collective possession.

In his own account, Aristotle treats an individual's desire for family and property as natural, arguing that satisfying both are essential for the welfare of citizens and must be met in the *polis*. He traces the origin of all personal and political associations in an individual's desire to live with others, inserting that this desire to live with others is natural, and that it gives manifestation to human *telos* on a social level. An individual is naturally drawn towards others for companionship and social unity, and his desire to be with others leads to the formation of family in the first place (Aristotle 2001, 1252b 12-15). Thus, for Aristotle, the institution of family satisfies not only a biological urge of an individual but also her moral longing. In other words, family is the first concrete manifestation of human sociability and *telos*. Aristotle also adds that, even though family is vital to an individual's satisfactions, his life is not complete in the family and that many needs cannot be met within the institution of the family. This recognition of a multiplicity of needs propels different individuals and families to come together to form a village (Aristotle 2001, 1252b 14-17). The advent of a village enhances the nature of an individual's satisfactions, and opens the doors for economic and moral co-operation on a larger scale, but this co-operation, too, suffers from several inadequacies. As a result, different villages come together to form a bigger association – the *polis*. The *polis* is a complete association. It provides all the desired satisfactions, facilitating the necessary conditions of a good life for all citizens: "When several villages are united in a single complete community, large enough to be nearly or quite self-sufficing, the state comes into existence, originating in the bare needs of life, and continuing in existence for the sake of a good life" (Aristotle 2001, 1252b 28-30).

Implicit in the Aristotelian conception of the origin of the state and the good life is the idea that the state is a natural association, and that human beings are political by nature (Aristotle 2001, 1253a 1-3). Aristotle establishes the natural character of the state in terms of the historical evolution and moral progression of associations involved in the making of a state, including family and villages. He reasons that, since these associations are natural – the family being the most primary unit of all social engagement – the state, which is their logical and teleological completion, must be natural as well. His argument appears to be based on part and whole correspondence; specifically, since all parts constituting the state are natural, the state too must be natural: "And therefore, if the earlier forms of society [family] are natural, so is the state, for it is the end of them, and the nature of a thing is its end" (Aristotle 2001, 1252b 30-33).

However, one may question the part-whole analogy between individual and state, and consequently, raise doubts about the Aristotelian inference as well. It can be argued that parts can have some non-transferable properties and that the whole can never quite be an authentic replica of

parts. That is to say, each new entity or association has its own characteristics and that it is a mistake to transpose the characteristics of one into the other. Indeed, the social contract tradition in political theory views the state as a mechanical contrivance, put in place by human beings to resolve their conflicts and facilitate better modes of co-operation among them. For instance, Thomas Hobbes argues that the state is a product of contract and its main purpose is to establish peace and security in the Commonwealth (Hobbes 2008, 116). Moreover, John Rawls has shown that the principles of justice are chosen behind the veil of ignorance and that the individuals in the “original position” have no idea of their social status, psychological propensities, orientations, and tastes (Rawls 1999, 11). In other words, there is a characteristic anonymity and ignorance prior to the establishment of the principles of justice and the origin of the state in the social contract tradition. In contrast to the social contract tradition, which views the state as a contractual device and seeks to devise the principles of justice in a hypothetical situation, Aristotle grounds such principles in the natural propensity of human beings to live with others in a social context (Aristotle 2001, 1252b 30-33). On his view, it becomes almost impossible to be a person without recognizing certain social commitments, and hence such commitments are grounded, not in a social contract but in the human agency itself (Aristotle 2001, 1252b 28-30).

Against the contractual origin of the state, Aristotle purports that the state is natural and offers an interesting interpretation of the part-whole analogy between the individual and the state in the *Politics* 1253a, 25-30. In that section, he contends that the defining mark of a thing is its “working and power,” and that a thing cannot be said to be the same once deprived of its defining capacities and mark. For instance, if an individual’s body is destroyed, then there would be no foot or arm except in some “equivocal sense”. In a similar fashion, if we look at the relation of an individual and state, we realize that the individual, too, loses his working and power when separated from the state: “The proof that the state is the creation of the nature and prior to the individual is that the individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing; and therefore he is like a part in relation to the whole” (Aristotle 2001, 1253a 25-28). It is obvious now that Aristotle is not saying that an individual cannot exist without the state in a biological sense, but that such an existence is impossible in a meaningful social sense. What makes a human being human and differentiates him from other less capable beings is his ability to converse and co-operate with others in the social domain (Aristotle 2001, 1253a 9-17). If he deprives himself of his natural gifts and powers, his virtues and civic engagements will evaporate and he will turn into a dangerous entity: “Wherefore, if he have not virtue, he is the most unholy and the most savage of animals, and the most full of lust and gluttony. But justice is the bond of men in states, for the administration of justice, which is the determination of what is just, is the principle of order in political society” (Aristotle 2001, 1253a, 35-39).

It is no surprise then that, unlike the contractual theories of justice that put excessive weight on the institutional and political aspect of justice and fairness, Aristotle predicates justice on an individual's virtue and character (Aristotle 2004, 1129b 30-36). He insists that, in matters of justice and fairness, what matters most is not simply the knowledge of what is just and what is unjust, but an individual's ability to be drawn towards the just and resisting his propensity for the unjust (Aristotle 2004, 1137a 1-19). If this is so, then an individual's virtue and character and his interest in civic affairs and responsibilities comes to occupy a prominent place in the practice of justice in the social arena. For justice consists in taking what is due to a person and not desiring more than one's share of unqualified goods (Aristotle 2004, 1134a 20-33). I will show in the next section that Aristotle situates ethics at the heart of politics, arguing that a successful realization of worthy political ends necessitates virtue and that it is a mistake to segregate moral ends from political processes.

VIRTUE AND THE MAXIMIZATION OF POLITICAL ENDS

Aristotle explicitly holds that there are different kinds of political communities and constitutions, and that they differ from one another significantly not only in terms of their social organization but also in terms of their constitutional framework. He classifies governments into three broad types – kingship, aristocracy and constitutional government – arguing that, when corrupted, these governments take on the forms of tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy (Aristotle 2001, 1289a 26-29). He studies these governments meticulously in the *Politics*, specifying the conditions that lead to their rise and the causes that undermine these governments. Moreover, in his analysis, Aristotle does not seem much interested in an unattainable ideal state. As a matter of fact, he chides his predecessors, including Plato and Socrates, for moving away from the facts in a pure pursuit of perfection: "The discourses of Socrates are never commonplace; they always exhibit grace and originality of thought; but perfection in everything can hardly be expected" (Aristotle 2001, 1265a 10-130). Aristotle wants to remain closer to the facts in his investigation of governments and their political ends, thinking that the construction of an ideal political arrangement must avoid "impossibilities" if it has to have a practical appeal.

Clearly it will not be possible to enumerate all the impossibilities to be avoided in politics; this is because 1) politics pertains to the art of possible and impossible in public affairs and 2) political decisions are often situational and constitution specific. For instance, in a kingly rule, the power remains centered in the hands of the king and he can do whatever deems appropriate in his judgment. The dispensation of law and justice in a successful kingship can easily occur under the auspices of kingly power and majesty without any legitimate challenge to his authority (Aristotle 2001, 1285b 1-19). In an aristocracy, the manifestation of law and justice takes a much different form and has an entirely different connotation; and so it

would be impractical to sketch a conception of law and justice that holds good in a kingship and aristocracy at the same time (Aristotle 2001, 1288a 7-30). The difference of government manifests itself in official institutions and their public policies.

Aristotle uses the above plurality in conceptions of government, law, and justice to critique 1) the Platonic notion of a unified state, and also 2) the democratic exposition of an ideal state in terms of the absolute equality of all citizens. In the *Republic*, Plato develops the notion of a unified state on functional as well as moral grounds (Plato 1997, 374b). The functional justification comes from the difference in activities that people do and that are crucial to their lives and political associations. Citizens of a *polis* have different professional interests and orientations, making them depend on one another for various kinds of desired goods and satisfactions. Moreover, a repeated performance of an activity makes one get better in doing that; similarly, a regular abstaining from an activity minimizes the chances of doing it or at least doing it well. That is why a shoemaker excels in making shoes whereas a teacher thrives in an academic setting. Both functions are important and what matters most is not who does what, but the fact that each person does what he or she is best suited to do. In other words, Plato believes that functional specialization will enhance productivity in society, fostering the interdependence of citizens and the unity of state at the same time.

The moral justification of a unified state comes from a parallel drawn between individuals and the *polis*. On Plato's view, an individual has three core elements to her personality. These are: reason, spirit, and appetite (Plato 1999, 440e). The success of a moral life necessitates an ideal arrangement of these elements such that the most dominant element determines the professional vocation of a person, maintaining harmony in all elements. Corresponding to these three elements are three social classes in a *polis*, which are categorized as persons of gold, silver, and bronze. Justice resides in the internal arrangement of the soul (Plato 1999, 440d-e). Accordingly, Plato concludes that the unity of the human soul or person will lead to the realization of justice in the *polis*, whereas their disunity will curtail the possibility of a just social order (Plato 1999, 443d-e).

There may be nothing wrong *per se* with a generic functional specialization of work or a moral classification of the human soul into three parts. On the contrary, one might even assume that there is some truth to Platonic anthropology and ontology. A simple empirical observation would show that some human beings are more gregarious, some more thoughtful, and others exhibit more valor. However, a difficulty arises when these personality traits are pitched against one another to support abstract theoretical claims regarding collective ideals and projects (Plato 1999, 423e). Theoretical construction dissects the presence of the above elements in an individual's life, promoting one at the expense of the other. Moreover, since it is practically impossible to achieve an internal equilibrium of the soul or a complete functional specialization in a society, justice can never be

totally achieved in a Platonic sense. To say that an ideal state would facilitate the internal and external conditions necessary for the attainment of justice in the public domain would be extravagant, irresponsible, and authoritarian. History has shown that the worst crimes are committed when a state tries to regulate the thoughts and feelings of its citizens. Aristotle is critical of the Platonic justice that stifles family and household activities in the guardian class, and enforces an arbitrary functional division on a personal and social level of citizenship (Aristotle 2001, 1262b 1-25). Against Plato, he defines justice in terms of proportion, and evaluates the merits of a state in terms of the good life of citizens: “For everyone agrees that justice in distribution must be in accordance with some kind of merit, but not everyone means the same by merit; democrats think that it is being a free citizen, oligarchs that it is wealth or noble birth, and aristocrats that it is virtue. So just is a sort of proportion” (Aristotle 2004, 1131a 30-34).

Given that merit and proportion constitute the defining marks of Aristotelian justice and of the good life, it may be useful to examine the philosophical suppositions that establish their primacy over other conceptions. Thinking that the realization of a good life requires multiple virtues, justice being one of them, Aristotle argues that there should be a clear understanding of the principles pertaining to the distribution of goods and an individual’s legitimate share of them. He considers three options in this context, proposing that the members of a state can either have “(1) all things or (2) nothing in common, or (3) some things in common and some not” (Aristotle 2001, 1260b 37-39). It is obvious that the first option is idealistic, the second factually indefensible, but the third most plausible. Plato takes the idealistic view in the *Republic* when he argues for a communism of family and property for the guardian class. He hopes that the absolute equality of the guardians will minimize the possibility of dissension and ensure the unity of the state. The property laws of Solon, Locrians, and Leucas, too, emphasized an idealistic conception of equality but crashed under the weight of political practices. It is never easy to enforce the equality of property, as it runs counter to human instinct and virtue. In addition, the equalization of property, even if achieved in a hypothetical world, would not be secure unless the desires of all citizens were equalized – but such an equalization would involve the most intrusive violations of human life and personality. Aristotle rejects the first two alternatives on empirical grounds, as neither of them appears to account for a citizen’s life in the *polis* (Aristotle 2001, 1260b; 1261a).

Aristotle approves of the third view concerning the distribution of goods, and considers justice essential for a proper grasping of this view. Since citizens have some things in common, they would want to have a rational principle that can help them in the allocation of goods desired by two or more individuals. The goods could be internal or external, a virtue or a commodity, but their distribution must be proportionate, respecting the laws of proportion in a given *polis*. When there are no explicit laws, then the principle of equity must determine the share of proportion. Normally,

one would assume that everyone should take what is one's share of a particular good, but that does not always happen in reality, and the desire to possess more than what is one's legitimate share is the chief cause of injustice. An unjust person wants more than her share of what is good and less than her share of what is bad (Aristotle 2004, 30-33). In other words, she would want more of money, property, and virtue, but less of pain and deprivation. Justice works as a safeguard against this propensity of greed. In this sense, it is a complete virtue. It anticipates what is right and what is wrong at the level of an individual's desire, and helps her do the right and avoid the wrong.

Thus, unlike the current conceptions of justice, Aristotelian justice has an institutional as well as a personal aspect, and both aspects are critical to the attainment of a good life in the *polis*. Contemporary institutional conceptions of justice lay out the principles of justice in the public sphere, but lack meaningful safeguards against injustice. For instance, on the contemporary institutional view of justice, it is legally wrong to take more than one's legitimate share, and anyone who does that violates a law and is accountable for her actions in a court of law (Rawls 1999, 207-208). A violation of law involves punishment. Yet fear of punishment cannot be the best argument in the facilitation of justice. Aristotle realizes that. He argues that an individual must develop good habits and character to act in just ways (Aristotle 2004, 1103b 1-3). With a developed character and well-formed habits, citizens can resist the tendency to act unjustly and can work for the maximization of their personal as well as the social good, ensuring the realization of a good life for themselves and others too. In the next section, I will show that the above Aristotelian conception of justice and good life has an advantage over competing views and that it deserves our attention and consideration. In particular, I will show that Aristotle constructs his conception of public good on the secure foundations of virtue, and that by doing so, he minimizes the possibility of injustice in the public arena – at least on a theoretical level.

ETHICS, POLITICS, AND PUBLIC LIFE: AN ARISTOTELIAN ACCOUNT

Having shown the conceptual convergence of ethics and politics in previous sections, we may now work out their role in public life. Public life, as Aristotle conceives of it, manifests ethics and politics in their highest aspiration and is the most vital sign of social order in a given community. If a social order is marked with internal tension and strife, it has harmful consequences for public life, impeding public deliberation. It would be indeed impossible to maintain the highest standards of justice and civic friendship in a turbulent environment where the necessary conditions of life are threatened. Accordingly, Aristotle concludes that virtue is an essential constituent of a meaningful life, and that politicians must encourage citizens to acquire it.

In addition, public life also requires a variety of goods including virtue, character, and the economic and social prosperity of the citizens. According to Alasdair MacIntyre, the goods that are essential for an Aristotelian conception of public life can be placed into two categories: internal goods and external goods (Knight 2011, 26). External goods, as the name suggests, are external to a person and a practice, and can be obtained or lost in quick succession. Money, power, and other material possessions constitute classic examples of external goods. An individual can possess them for as long as she wants, but they can disappear in the blink of an eye – due to marginal events. Despite their contingent nature, external goods are necessary constituents of a good public life and their importance should not be minimized. Moreover, the lack of such goods can make an individual's life difficult, resulting in day-to-day embarrassment and trouble. Internal goods, on the other hand, are stable and long-lasting because they pertain to the soul – and are beyond fickle fortune and luck. Once an individual attains them, they remain with her for a considerable period of time and are never easily lost. MacIntyre contends that virtue and character, as Aristotle understands them, constitute internal goods in the above sense. With virtue and character, an individual comes to realize her full ethical and political potential, and develops an appreciation for not only her own personal goods but also the public good. Virtue helps her recognize that, even though different citizens have different interests, they all share in a common purpose and are bound by an abiding social interest: "...one citizen differs from another, but the salvation of the community is the common business of them all" (Aristotle 2001, 1276b 28-29). One wonders, though, how this common salvation of the community is going to be attained and what merit, if any, it has in contemporary political contexts that are marked by an animated sense of economic individualism.

The welfare of the community cannot be achieved unless citizens are rightly educated and exposed to proper social values from an early age. Aristotle consistently emphasizes that the purpose of education is to sharpen the intellectual abilities of a person such that she can understand the nature of a thing and its properties once she is exposed to it (Aristotle 2004, 1103b 1-9). In other words, rational understanding, for Aristotle, has a comprehensive connotation. To know something is to know it well, such that it can be applied in practical contexts. A mathematician should not just be able to comprehend the concept of abstract numbers but also be able to calculate what is greater or lesser in a practical situation. Similarly, a politician should not merely know what is good for the citizens of her state but also have a propensity to figure out how that good can be pursued in a concrete way (Aristotle 2001, 1280b 5-11). In other words, education is concerned with the development of virtue and character as much as it is concerned with the sharpening of mind. Abstract thinking and pure rational awareness cannot be contextualized or utilized in the service of public good without the cultivation of virtue and character: "Virtue of character is concerned with pleasures and pains: it is because of pleasure that we do bad

actions, and pain that we abstain from doing noble ones. It is for this reason that we need to have been brought up in a particular way from our early days, as Plato says, so we might find enjoyment or pain in the right things; for the right education is just this" (Aristotle 2004, 1104b 10-15).

By claiming that the cultivation of virtue among citizens is probably the best way to ensure the realization of public good, Aristotle has laid out clearly the task of political leaders and institutions (Knight 2011, 32). They ought to focus, not on the maximization of their narrow interests, but on the promotion of the welfare of whole society. This change in political focus requires a fundamental shift in all civic considerations. A politician, at least an honest one, who is committed to the welfare of her citizens, needs to grapple with the mental constitution of human beings and know how an individual can be made more amenable to the correct principles of virtue, engaging in right actions and resisting wrong temptations. Such a politician must be a person of practical wisdom. Only a person of practical wisdom can engage in the delicate task of shaping citizenship, respecting the moral and political agency of all citizens and the limits of her political obligations at the same time: "The politician, then, must consider the soul, and consider it with a view to understanding virtue, just to the extent that is required by the enquiry, because attaining a higher degree of precision is perhaps too much trouble for his current purpose" (Aristotle 2004, 1102a 23-27).

Next, attention must be paid to the laws of the city. The purpose of the laws is to foster civic bonds and promote principles of good citizenship so that citizens can develop political qualities in the spirit of their constitution. Different constitutions champion different values, and their laws are bound to reflect them (Aristotle 2001, 1279a25-41). Irrespective of the internal differences in values, laws – in their pure and ideal form at least – must espouse virtue. In other words, for Aristotle, the laws of a city have an ideal as well as an actual connotation. His classification of governments and their corresponding perversions shows that laws can be manipulated under certain circumstances, but this manipulation cannot override their original purpose – i.e., the facilitation of good life for the citizens – which is central to the Aristotelian conception of public life. However, one may ask, if the idea of good life resides at the core of laws, then why do we have bad laws and constitutional perversions of governments? Aristotle appears to respond to this question rather empirically. He recognizes the difference between ideal and actual, insisting that both deserve our consideration for very different reasons.

Aristotle's emphasis on virtue and character as the essential constituents of a good public life has come under scrutiny for a host of reasons. Critics argue that, by prescribing virtues as the ends of political and personal life, Aristotle undermines the principles of liberty and free choice (Kymlicka 2002, 298-299). The principle of free choice necessitates that an individual can do what she thinks fit on the basis of her rational considerations and judgment without submitting to any externally laid out

life plans. Aristotle is said to be guilty of prescribing virtue and character for a good life but also for citizenship. I have addressed this criticism in another work, but suffice to say that the Aristotelian insistence on virtue is directed at ensuring a meaningful realization of an individual's free choice, and does not militate against such a choice (Shukla 2014, 17-18). In order to make a right choice, an individual must have the required capacities, and virtues help her to develop these capacities. We become just by doing just actions, and temperate by doing temperate actions; for Aristotle, both justice and temperance are virtues (Aristotle 2004, 1103b 1-3).

Another criticism of the Aristotelian intimacy of ethics and politics in public life comes from some noted commentators who are sympathetic to Aristotelian theory, but dispute its practical applicability in the contemporary world, arguing that the current economic system is so contaminated that it cannot support the Aristotelian idea. MacIntyre remarks: "The practice of the virtues, conceived as Aristotle and Aquinas conceived them, is difficult to reconcile with functioning well in the present economic order, whether it is a time of hardship or a time of prosperity" (MacIntyre 2011, 18). MacIntyre is saying that the Aristotelian conception of virtue is inherently incompatible with the present economic system such that no reconciliation is possible. Moreover, it is explicit in MacIntyre's remark that the difficulty concerning reconciliation is not merely economic, and that economic prosperity will not resolve our difficulty. But what is the problem then?

To understand MacIntyre's contention we need to bear in mind the philosophical commitments of contemporary capitalism, which tends to evaluate the meaning and value of each good in terms of rendered economic services, without making room for additional goods that do not easily fall into the realm of economic metric and assessment. MacIntyre associates this notion of encompassing capitalism with the economic perversions of our times, claiming that it leads to the fragmentation of human life and institutions and shows very little consideration of the good life of all citizens (MacIntyre 2011, 12-13). Prioritization of economic value over everything else results in a thorough-going negation of all internal goods at the expense of external goods, and wrecks the public life from within, turning it into different compartments. The problem is that, with such compartmentalization, questions like "'what it would be for my life *as a whole* to be a flourishing life?' and 'what is my good *qua* human being and not just *qua* role-player in this or that type of situation'" disappears from view, so that such questions no longer get asked or become very difficult to ask" (MacIntyre 2011, 12).

The questions regarding flourishing human life, MacIntyre further contends, are replaced by questions about psychological states pertaining to feelings and emotions (MacIntyre 2011, 12). There is some empowerment to be found in the psychological account of emotional and moral states. How an individual feels about something is a matter of her direct experience, and cannot be analyzed by others on a core level. Any external

involvement in the realm of feeling is considered intrusive – and rightly so, if we accept the operational account of psychological evaluation. But Aristotle does not do that. Against a psychological account of human life and morality, he contends that human life has a *telos* and that there is a noticeable material and moral progression from the individual to the family, from the family to the village, and from the village to the *polis*. Virtue manifests this moral progression in public life, and has an ethical, not psychological, reference and purpose.

Next, the contemporary economic order breeds inequality and is detrimental to the Aristotelian conception of the *polis* and the good life. Even a cursory look at global capitalism shows a tremendous inequality of wealth and opportunity. Some people are extremely rich, others extremely poor, and some in the middle. However, extreme inequalities of wealth and opportunity are detrimental to a political society and can cause internal strife. Moreover, such inequalities can provoke hostility and indifference among citizens, causing disruptions and even revolution in the *polis*: “Aristotle pointed out long ago that a rational polity is one that cannot tolerate too great inequalities, because where there are such, citizens cannot deliberate together rationally. They are too divided by their sectional interests, so that they lose sight of their common good” (MacIntyre 2011, 13). Their common good requires them to adhere to the principles of justice and fairness in the civic arena, but their private interest pushes them in the opposite direction. This tussle of interest widens the gulf between the rich and the poor, and undermines political society from within; this must be avoided. Unfortunately the capitalist economic system has produced a yawning gap between rich and poor without a meaningful sense of civic virtue and shared prosperity. This is not a socialistic idea. A shared prosperity, as Aristotle understands it, does not occur at the expense of an individual’s prosperity or economic welfare, but takes into consideration the good of all citizens, protecting them all against the contingencies of life and securing the conditions of a good life as much as possible (Aristotle 2001, 1279a 25-33). A successful pursuit of such shared prosperity is probably the most pressing political problem of our times, and crucial to a meaningful conception of public life.

Despite MacIntyre’s forceful critique of contemporary capitalism, I tend to think that capitalism in essence is not incompatible with Aristotelianism and that it should be possible to refine the capitalist economic system, making it more humane such that the citizens of rich and prosperous countries are not unnecessarily exposed to poverty, and that the citizens of developing countries, too, can get a better shot at life. The task, then, is to show that, if the capitalist economic system can be reformed and if it can acquire a more humane face, it can function as an enduring economic philosophy grounded in human welfare and development. Furthermore, all suggestions regarding reforming capitalism must take profit as the most fundamental motivation in economic affairs. In other words, personal incentives cannot be totally removed from the concept of

the public good without making it impractical. I wish to forward two arguments along the same lines.

At the heart of market economic system resides the idea of the sale and purchase of goods and services, making profit in the process. The best way to enhance profit margins is to get the goods produced at the cheapest cost and sell it at the highest possible price. Philosophically, it is implied that, as long as there is a place or person that can produce a particular commodity at a lower price, the businesses should go there, and as long as there are people who can pay more, the prices should go up, raising the profit margin. The capitalist aspiration to produce at the cheapest cost has resulted in a race to the bottom; and the profit-maximizing tendency of corporate leaders has paved the way for unbridled greed and market failures in recent times. But market failures alone may not be enough to soften the economic drive of capitalism; additional arguments are required. It does not take long, though, to show philosophically that drive for low cost production is bound to lead to unemployment in developed countries for the simple reason that everything can be produced at a lower cost in a developing country. Now, if the citizens of developed countries are kept unemployed for a long period of time, their buying capacity will diminish significantly, and economic activity in their country will take a hit, undermining small businesses and probably even big corporations. In other words, an enduring capitalism requires strong buying power and economically prosperous citizenship, neither of which can be sustained by a ‘race to the bottom’ thinking.

Furthermore, the current market economy does not adequately account for the social cost of production – and the omission is telling. A reckless desire for economic gain has forced many to suffer enormous loss; millions of people have fallen into the poverty trap, and have died due to the high costs of medicine or lack of safe drinking water, etc. This not to say that each and every global problem is directly related to contemporary capitalism – some would argue that it is, though – but suggests that our economic philosophy, in many ways, sets the tone of our social and cultural interactions. A little bit of social consciousness in economic affairs may not only improve the conditions of poor and needy people, but also help millions of people who fall into the cracks of ruthless competition, not to be seen again. Such social helps may not be available in neo-liberal and Darwinian economic thought, but are central to the functioning of a state and the welfare of its citizens. The future of a state and its citizens, Aristotle reminds us, are intertwined together and cannot be separated. If a state is inhabited by struggling people who lack enough resources to meet the basic necessities of life, it will fall apart rather easily under social and political strains. And even if it withstands the pressure of economic deprivation, it will fall short in meeting its moral potential pertaining to the facilitation of good life. To correct these anomalies, one must adopt a more considerate view of ethics and politics, recognizing their internal coherence and meaningful role in public life.

CONCLUSION

It is very common these days to hear about the declining ethical standards in our political and public life. Political leaders, more often than not, tend to engage in an unprincipled electoral politics, focusing on winning and re-winning of elections rather than public service. And elections, too, have become very expensive, requiring massive donations from special interest groups and corporations. This financial contribution comes with an expectation that the interests of the donors will be promoted and that a refusal to do so on the part of politicians will deprive them of future donations that may be necessary for their re-election campaigns. But the above problem, as acute as it is, is a symptom of a bigger problem of declining ethical standards in liberal democratic countries that has arisen due to the conceptual separation of ethics and politics in the first place. I have argued against this separation.

Following Aristotle, I have argued that the purpose of a state is the facilitation of good life and that this purpose cannot be realized without an adequate ethical formation of citizens. With an ethical formation, an individual can exercise her choice in a right way, contributing to her own interests and also to the welfare of her community. To be sure, neither Aristotle nor I apprehend an individual's ethical formation in an overly moralizing sense; on the contrary, the goal of ethical formation is to help an individual develop the intellectual and practical qualities (virtues) necessary for the realization of a good life. With the development of such qualities, an individual becomes capable of making right decisions and good choices in a given context, enhancing her prospects of living a good life. Accordingly, I conclude that ethics and politics are intimately connected on an ontological level and that our public life ought to reflect it.

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FONDER LE VIVRE-ENSEMBLE À TRAVERS L'ÉDUCATION : L'APPORT DU COURS D'ÉTHIQUE ET DE CULTURE RELIGIEUSE

Martin Samson

Le concept de crise – qu'elle soit financière, sociale ou politique – semble faire partie d'un discours connoté reproduit à travers les tribunes médiatiques, au sein de la société. Si cette crise se présente comme une réalité de laquelle nul ne peut déroger, peut-on affirmer que toutes les institutions démocratiques subissent cette crise? Quelle serait la crise que subit l'éducation en tant qu'institution? L'histoire nous démontre bien que l'éducation, traitée par maints philosophes, des grecs à nos contemporains, semble constamment remise en question, sans pour autant être en état de crise.

La critique contemporaine de l'éducation semble s'orienter autour de deux axes : le premier marqué par l'Après-guerre, l'essor de la génération des *baby-boomers* et de l'entrée dans la société de consommation comme en témoignent Olivier Reboul (1971), Robert Dottrens (1971), et Hannah Arendt (1972). Le deuxième axe est caractérisé par l'affirmation du néolibéralisme en tant qu'idéologie dominante et par la mondialisation des marchés de la fin du XX^e siècle et du début du XXI^e siècle comme l'abordent Christian Laval (2003), Thomas De Koninck (2007), et François Rastier (2013).

Le premier axe procède à une critique de l'éducation portant sur l'autorité de l'institution démocratique qu'est l'éducation dans la société, sur l'autorité et le pouvoir des enseignants en tant que « responsables de la formation des jeunes », et sur les relations d'autorité entre adultes et enfants-adolescents. Ces analyses de l'autorité se traduisent ultimement en analyse de la dichotomie entre le « vieux régime » d'éducation, duquel il tire sa forme autoritaire, et la nouvelle psychopédagogie alliée à la montée du socioconstructivisme en éducation (Perret-Clermont 2000; Doise & Mugny 1981), qui font la promotion d'une éducation plus libre. La critique de l'autorité se relie à celle de la qualité de l'éducation issue de la plus grande liberté accordée aux élèves. Historiquement, ces critiques arrivent au moment même où fait surface le besoin radical de transformer le système d'éducation traditionnel, mentionné précédemment, en un système d'éducation de masse, capable d'accueillir toute la génération des *baby-boomers* et de la faire passer du primaire, au secondaire, au postsecondaire professionnel et aux études supérieures. Or, ce système a pour but non seulement d'offrir une éducation à cette génération, mais aussi d'en qualifier les membres pour qu'ils puissent s'intégrer sur le marché du travail et contribuer à l'essor du bien-être tant individuel que collectif – la naissance de la société de consommation.

Le deuxième axe de critique de l'éducation découlera de cet économisme, de la vision managériale de l'éducation. Ainsi, les critiques concernent les effets de la mondialisation des marchés et du calcul utilitariste néolibéral sur le système d'éducation, ce qui en redéfinit graduellement les de l'éducation, la pratique de l'enseignement et la structure. Dans un contexte où les dynamiques néolibérales de marchandisation influencent la société au sens large, toute l'éducation québécoise porte les conséquences de ces dynamiques. Ainsi, nous croyons non seulement que l'importance accordée à la culture, à la religion et à l'éthique dans le *Programme de formation de l'école québécoise* a beaucoup évolué depuis les dernières décennies, mais que dans la pratique, et pour des raisons économiques, politiques et sociales, ces éléments sont en déclin tout en demeurant cruciaux pour l'éducation et pour la création du concept de soi des élèves.

Face à cette réalité qui, comme nous le verrons, se solde par une violence structurelle et symbolique faite à l'être humain, le système scolaire ne peut se contenter d'être un simple vecteur de connaissances comme telle, mais se voit conférer responsabilité sociétale primordiale : être garant d'une éducation qui, à travers la connaissance, la culture et le questionnement philosophique, habilite l'élève à se positionner de façon morale et éthique dans le monde, face à l'altérité et la similitude, afin qu'il puisse contribuer au vivre-ensemble.

Afin d'analyser la place accordée à la connaissance, la culture et la philosophie, et leur contribution au vivre-ensemble dans le *Programme de formation de l'école québécoise*, nous procéderons à une analyse en deux points. En premier lieu, nous analyserons l'opposition entre deux *telos* de l'éducation, en commençant par l'école néolibérale à travers son instrumentalisation idéologique, les compressions et l'orientation du contenu éducatif à travers l'utilitarisme, et, en poursuivant, par la visée humaniste, et l'importance de la culture de l'altérité et de l'éthique. En deuxième lieu, nous analyserons le cours d'éthique et de culture religieuse (ECR) – qui fait maintenant partie du contenu de formation – et sa visée éthique de l'éducation qui favorise à la fois le développement personnel de l'élève et son positionnement dans le monde, sa contribution au vivre-ensemble.

L'ANALYSE TÉLÉOLOGIQUE DE L'ÉDUCATION ET SON FONDEMENT ANTHROPOLOGIQUE

Comme le dit Marc Michel (1999, 2): « les pédagogies se mesurent à leur anthropologie ». Ainsi, la conception que la société se fait de l'être humain influence grandement la définition de l'éducation qui forme l'individu en retours. La nécessité de bien définir l'éducation naît donc de cette relation de réciprocité. Cela nous amène donc à analyser deux définitions de l'éducation qui découlent de conceptions anthropologiques diamétralement opposées. Nous aborderons d'abord la visée de l'école néolibérale dont le

telos est la création de la main-d'œuvre (capital humain) à travers la définition économique des rapports humains et de la société, laquelle influence autant la forme que le contenu de l'éducation, pour ensuite analyser la visée humaniste de l'éducation dont le *telos* est la formation à l'altérité de l'élève à travers la culture et l'éthique.

Le *telos* de l'école néolibérale : la création du « capital humain », le calcul utilitariste, et les politiques d'austérité

L'accroissement de l'influence des politiques néolibérales en éducation agit en la redéfinissant tant dans sa forme que dans son contenu, et ce, parce qu'elle redéfinit a priori l'être humain de manière économique, en tant que *homo economicus* (Boaz 1997; Orrell & Sedlacek 2012) : être rationnel qui se meut par ses intérêts propres – conception qui tire ses origines à la fois de la tradition libertarienne et de la tradition économique classique réactualisée en tant que théorie « néoclassique » – ce qui engendre une individualisation radicalisée, créant ainsi une crise de sens qui se solde par une violence envers l'humanité de l'être humain. À ce sujet, De Koninck (2010, 8) relate très bien que « la vie offerte est rejetée », en évoquant ici la question du suicide et de la difficulté pour les jeunes et « [I]es moins jeunes aussi » de trouver un sens à la vie dans un contexte d'isolement et d'anonymat social engendré par un individualisme radicalisé. Et si la vie n'est pas totalement rejetée, comme le dit l'auteur, il s'avère néanmoins très compliqué de lui trouver un sens. Cette tâche existentielle est d'autant plus complexe que l'enfant et l'adolescent subissent, en plein période de création de soi, de multiples pressions et violences personnelles internes et externes. L'anxiété, les troubles d'alimentation, la dépression et la violence physique, le « taxage » et l'intimidation, sont des réalités quotidiennes avec lesquelles l'enfant et l'adolescent doivent composer, et qui, en plus de leurs composantes psychologiques, témoignent d'un malaise social qui vient réaffirmer l'importance de l'examen de soi philosophique et du développement de relations interpersonnelles éthiques.

Sachant que le système scolaire joue un rôle très important dans l'éducation générale de l'élève, il est impératif de questionner les moyens dont le système dispose pour favoriser le positionnement de l'élève dans le monde grâce une éducation qui, à travers la connaissance, la culture et le questionnement philosophique, habilite l'élève à se positionner de façon morale et éthique dans le monde, dans une dialectique altérité-similitude, afin qu'il puisse contribuer au vivre-ensemble. Cette question est d'autant plus importante que, sous prétexte de compressions budgétaires, et faute de moyens ou de volonté, le système d'éducation peut, de manière intentionnelle ou non, mettre de côté l'élève dont il est responsable et qui dépend du système comme tel.

C'est donc ici que prend forme le deuxième axe de la critique contemporaine de l'éducation; celui qui porte sur la redéfinition téléologique tributaire de l'« économisme » et d'une vision « managériale »

de l'éducation (Rastier 2013). Cette définition s'enracine dans la conception utilitariste de l'éducation du XVI^e siècle (Laval 2003) qui, dès lors, critique le fossé entre les savoirs humanistes enseignés, que l'on caractérise d'aristocratiques et de théoriques, et la nécessité d'une application pratique des savoirs dans la « vraie vie » de l'élève. Faisant référence à l'aspect trop théorique de l'enseignement, Herbert Spencer écrira à la fin du XIX^e siècle que « ce qui est le plus négligé dans nos écoles est justement ce dont nous avons le plus besoin dans la vie » (Spencer [1861] 1974, 81). Ainsi, la conception utilitariste de l'éducation oriente le choix des contenus enseignés sur le principe d'utilité qui doit être adapté à la vie pratique de l'élève. À première vue, ce principe n'enraye pas une visée humaniste de l'éducation, car cette dernière renferme une forme d'utilité, celle du vivre-ensemble atteignable à travers l'éducation à l'altérité et la culture. C'est plutôt dans la définition de l'utilité comme telle que la visée de l'éducation se modifiera.

Par quelles données peut-on définir l'utilité qui orientera à la fois la forme et le contenu de l'éducation? La conception utilitariste de l'éducation part du principe que « savoir, c'est pouvoir » (*Scientia potentia est*), principe qui définit le savoir comme étant un « stock qui s'accumule, comme un capital dont la fonction est d'accroître la capacité humaine de maîtrise de la nature afin de la mieux faire servir le bien-être » (Laval 2003, 26). Cette conception définit l'accroissement du bien-être de l'élève comme visée et résultat escompté des cours enseignés et de leur contenu. Le bien-être défini si vaguement ne réfute pas la visée humaniste de l'éducation. Le principe d'accroissement du bien-être devient problématique et met en péril la visée humaniste lorsque le bien-être devient tributaire de la richesse.

Or, dans l'optique néolibérale, les libertés individuelles (Nozick 1974; Epstein 1998) mènent au bien-être et se rattachent à l'aspect économique de l'action humaine et de l'interaction sociale. L'éducation, à travers sa dimension étatique se voit tributaire des mêmes pressions idéologiques du capital symbolique économiste et de la terminologie managériale. Ainsi, non seulement les notions nécessaires à l'apprentissage, mais aussi la structure de l'école et la gestion des relations interhumaines acquièrent une forte connotation économique, professionnelle et liée aux affaires. L'utilitarisme néolibéral définit l'optique des matières enseignées et le contenu notionnel de celles-ci, optique d'utilité définie par sa contribution au bien-être matériel futur de l'élève en tant que « capital humain » producteur et consommateur, reléguant ainsi les connaissances externes à la sphère « économique » au banc des connaissances de seconde classe souvent laissées-pour-comtes et dévaluées, ou les intégrant au sein du programme dans une optique économiste, donc comme un moyen permettant d'atteindre le bien-être économique.

La définition téléologique de l'éducation dictée par l'école néolibérale entraîne aussi le phénomène d'austérité économique. Sans vouloir faire l'historiographie complète du néolibéralisme, nous voudrions souligner l'importance de la perte de confiance en l'État providence (Bourdieu 1998; Harvey 2005), qui se solde ainsi par une montée du

conservatisme et de la « vague néo-libérale qui a profondément pénétré depuis les années 1980 les représentations et les politiques dans les pays occidentaux » (Laval 2003, 10). Au Québec, mais aussi dans des pays occidentaux comme la France, la Belgique, et les États-Unis, les compressions ont touché à la fois les employés et l'administration du système de l'éducation sans oublier, bien sûr, les services aux élèves.

Le domaine de l'éducation a subi de nombreuses compressions budgétaires, comme le rapportent les auteurs Lessard, Henripin, & Larochelle (2007, 116). Le financement de l'enseignement primaire et secondaire est passé « de 4,8% du PIB en 1994-1995 à 3,9% en 2001-2002 », ce qui a entraîné des compressions substantielles et a nécessité un rationnement dans la gestion des écoles. En 2011, le gouvernement Charest a imposé des réductions de 180 millions de dollars (Gervais 2011) au budget de l'éducation et tout récemment, en 2013, le gouvernement de Pauline Marois a ajouté 65 millions de dollars supplémentaires aux réductions de 150 millions déjà annoncées des fonds destinés aux commissions scolaires (Gervais 2013).

Ces compressions se répercutent à tous les niveaux. Elles créent un climat de rationnement dans le système scolaire, réduisant ainsi les budgets spéciaux destinés aux élèves nécessitant des services particuliers, et les sommes consacrées aux activités culturelles, sportives et parascolaires qui contribuent grandement à l'élaboration d'un sentiment d'appartenance et au vivre-ensemble au sein du microcosme qu'est l'école. Pour combler le manque à gagner et offrir les mêmes services, ou du moins, pour atténuer l'effet des compressions, à travers l'augmentation des taxes scolaires, les écoles et les commissions scolaires demandent aux parents une plus grande contribution financière.

Un autre symptôme des compressions est le choix que doivent faire les établissements scolaires quant aux services et aux programmes offerts qui comme précédemment mentionné est un issu d'un calcul utilitariste néolibéral. En réalisant des choix que l'État entérine implicitement en augmentant l'ampleur de l'autonomie conférée aux établissements, ils spécialisent les « services offerts » aux élèves afin de se distinguer des autres établissements scolaires, favorisant ainsi le développement d'une « logique de concurrence » (Berthelot 2006, 79) et une compétition entre les programmes offerts. Si l'école ne se spécialise pas, ou n'offre pas de programmes spéciaux, elle perd sa compétitivité et des « clientèles » dites « fortes ».

L'ampleur des compressions nous amène à nous questionner sur l'importance sociale qu'accorde l'État à l'éducation primaire, secondaire, mais aussi postsecondaire; et à la responsabilité et au rôle que l'État joue et devrait jouer dans l'éducation. Il s'agit d'un choix moral car il dicte les normes sociales à venir et sépare ce qui est bon, nécessaire et désirable dans l'éducation de ce qui est mauvais, inutile et indésirable. Quoi qu'en dise l'État, ces choix ont un fort impact sur l'élève et son épanouissement, tout comme sur le système scolaire et l'école en tant que milieu de travail.

Dans le cas du Québec, durant les années 1980, le gouvernement Lévesque a imposé aux enseignants et autres employés du secteur public et parapublic une réduction salariale de 20% afin de contrebalancer l'augmentation des taux d'intérêts et l'instabilité économique (Berthelot 2006, 191). Le rétablissement des salaires s'est fait à coup de faibles augmentations réparties sur de nombreuses années. En 1996, les enseignants ont à nouveau subi des « coupures et révisions des conditions de travail » (Lessard, Henripin & Larochelle 2007, 128); il en sera également ainsi en 2005, sous le gouvernement Charest, dont le projet de loi 142 a imposé le retour au travail de 500 000 employés du secteur public, dont les enseignants, un gel des salaires et l'interdiction de manifester dans le but d'« assurer la continuité des services publics et de pourvoir aux conditions de travail des salariés des organismes du secteur public dans le cadre des limites qu'impose la situation des finances publiques » (Projet de loi 142, article 34, 2005).

Il va sans dire qu'un enseignant qui n'est pas satisfait de son milieu de travail, que ce soit pour des raisons de sécurité, de valorisation ou de stress professionnel, ne sera pas disposé à donner le meilleur enseignement et à assumer ses responsabilités (Houlfort & Sauvé 2010). En outre, une des nombreuses tâches de l'enseignant est de favoriser l'apprentissage de l'altérité à travers l'héritage culturel et l'exercice éthique afin que l'élève puisse devenir autonome et en mesure de contribuer au vivre-ensemble, objectif atteignable que si l'on traite l'élève avec considération, comme fin et non comme moyen, et ce, tout au long de son cheminement. Cependant, comment l'enseignant peut-il favoriser cet épanouissement s'il n'est pas, lui-même, traité de manière à s'épanouir au travail, si on le considère comme un moyen et non comme une fin? Nous sommes aux prises avec un non-sens, là où les paroles ne concordent pas avec les actes, où on tente d'apprendre à autrui à s'épanouir dans un monde tout en étant incapable de s'épanouir soi-même.

En somme, les compressions en éducation forcent le rationnement les services éducatifs et jouent un rôle dans la violence que vivent l'enfant et l'adolescent dans leur cheminement personnel, scolaire et social. Ce rationnement implique un calcul utilitariste néolibéral de l'offre de services afin d'équilibrer les budgets érodés au fil des ans. Le système doit aussi offrir ses services afin de répondre à une demande socioéconomique. Cette demande fait en sorte que le choix utilitariste néolibéral s'applique aussi aux contenus d'apprentissage. Conséquemment, la société qui nécessite une main d'œuvre qualifiée ne peut être engendrée que par un système adapté « aux conditions sociales et subjectives de la mobilisation économique générale » (Laval 2003, 23). Cependant, le Québec est plutôt entré dans le bal de la réforme scolaire en invoquant la nécessité de répondre aux changements socioculturels (MELS 2000) sans pour autant mentionner les impératifs socioéconomiques et de main-d'œuvre.

On ne peut nier l'évolution de la réalité de l'enfant et de l'adolescent. La société se complexifie, et la société vit des mutations

incessantes. Cependant, nous croyons qu'au-delà de cette réalité changeante, il y a en effet un choix idéologique derrière chaque réforme de l'éducation, une conception de l'adulte idéal, un calcul socioéconomique qui aboutit à un changement de la visée de l'éducation comme telle.

La société tout entière doit se repositionner sur l'importance qu'elle accorde à l'élève, à l'enfant, à l'adolescent et au jeune adulte en plein saut dans le monde et en pleine acquisition de son pouvoir d'action dans le monde. L'État doit revisiter ses impératifs budgétaires et doit également se repositionner face au rôle et à l'importance de l'enseignant. En d'autres termes, nous croyons fortement que l'éducation a perdu sa vocation première d'éduquer et que conséquemment elle a perdu de vue cette visée humaniste, celle-là même dont elle tire ses origines, au profit de processus bureaucratiques, managériaux et marchands constitués de nouveaux impératifs économiques tels que l'efficacité, la compétence et la spécialisation dans le but de former un « capital humain » (Laval 2003, 44), une main-d'œuvre adaptable à la réalité économique de demain.

Le *telos* d'une éducation humaniste : l'éducation à l'altérité à travers la culture et l'éthique

Thomas De Koninck (2004) réalise un exercice quasi-généalogique de l'humanisme de l'éducation et fait état de l'importance de l'étymologie du terme éducation. En reprenant du dictionnaire de Littré la définition de l'éducation, il met au jour la nouveauté du terme et son remplacement du terme « nourriture » (De Koninck 2004, 7) qui, jadis, était utilisé. En effet, la conception ancienne de l'éducation en tant que « nourriture de l'âme » demeure pertinente de nos jours, et encore plus face aux pressions de l'école néolibérale. Cette conception de l'éducation confère à la culture une grande importance. Éduquer se résume à nourrir l'individu. La culture elle, ce bagage qui permet à l'humanité de survivre « à l'individu, capitalisant d'une génération à l'autre, les savoirs et les techniques » (Michel, 1999, p. 3) et donc à transmettre les valeurs et les vécus historiques, est elle aussi, dans sa substance, nourriture. La culture en tant que « nourriture » est donc transmise à travers l'éducation au sens large, qui elle aussi est « nourriture ».

L'éducation dite humaniste, issue du concept de perfectibilité de l'être humain, a donc comme *telos* de nourrir l'élève et de lui permettre de se projeter dans le monde afin de se positionner, devenir autonome et ultimement éthique et solidaire, qu'il puisse s'épanouir et s'accomplir. Or l'école est largement responsable de l'éducation, donc de la projection de l'élève dans le monde. Cependant l'apprentissage culturel n'est pas le propre des cours d'histoire ou de langues, ni même des cours d'art; « la culture générale s'affirme dans tous les cours, sans hiérarchie entre eux » (Rastier 2013, 36). Tous les cours font, à leur manière, partie du corpus notionnel de l'humanité, de cet héritage culturel général qu'il faut enseigner à travers les âges.

Cependant, afin que leur valeur culturelle soit mise de l'avant, les cours doivent être enseignés à la fois pour leur valeur intrinsèque et dans une optique de propulsion dans l'inconnu : pousser l'élève à se mesurer à ce qu'il ne connaît pas en favorisant la curiosité et l'émerveillement. Il est ainsi important pour l'éducation de tenter de pousser l'élève à comprendre l'altérité à même son monde, alors qu'à l'adolescence, l'élève est déchiré entre l'appartenance au même et l'explosion dans la différence.

Changer l'impératif derrière la matière enseignée, c'est changer en quoi cette matière peut contribuer au développement de l'élève. Par l'exemple de l'enseignement des langues, Rastier (2013) souligne très bien le lien entre l'impératif donné à un cours et la contribution subséquente de ce cours au développement de l'élève. Ainsi le résultat de l'apprentissage d'une langue diffère beaucoup lorsqu'on enseigne la « langue de service », dont l'objectif est la compétence communicationnelle, donc l'échange social et économique et nécessaire au travail et à la consommation afin d'atteindre le bien-être, et lorsqu'on enseigne la « langue de culture » qui elle, vise l'aptitude linguistique et communicationnelle à travers, non seulement son aspect instrumental et communicationnel, mais aussi une panoplie de connaissances connexes (arts, valeurs, sentiments) qui « doivent être sans cesse entretenues, recontextualisées, coordonnées entre elles et accrues pour pouvoir accompagner la personne dans son développement » (Rastier 2013, notes 26-27).

Or, ajoute l'auteur, la culture enseigne une multiplicité de points de vue et de garanties, ce qui fait en sorte qu' « ainsi transmise, elle permet aux identités diverses et changeantes des élèves de s'exprimer » et, du même coup, « encourage leur diversité » (Rastier 2013, 57). C'est donc à travers l'acquisition de connaissances diverses et la constante remise en contexte de celles-ci, donc une mise en contexte culturelle, que l'individu grandit et acquiert ses capacités de jugement critique, qu'il se positionne dans le monde, qu'il s'épanouit et devient autonome.

De surcroît, encourager l'élève à vivre dans la diversité des connaissances et dans la diversité des points de vue à même le concept de culture, mais aussi dans une réalité sociale et scolaire dans laquelle une multiplicité de cultures se côtoient quotidiennement, l'amènera à vivre dans un état de constante mise en relation avec l'altérité. Cette prise de conscience de l'altérité exige l'élaboration d'une plateforme d'échange afin que chacun puisse grandir de la multiplicité et créer un terrain commun favorisant ainsi la « visée de la vie bonne avec et pour autrui dans des institutions justes » (Ricœur 1990, 202). C'est donc ici qu'est constaté le lien entre l'éducation et l'éthique, éléments qui, par la synergie de leurs impératifs, mèneront au vivre-ensemble.

FONDER LE VIVRE-ENSEMBLE DANS LA SOCIÉTÉ QUÉBÉCOISE : L'APPORT DE L'ÉDUCATION

Nous avons écrit que la culture se trouvait dans tous les cours, et abstraction faite de toute hiérarchie. Cependant, il est nécessaire de conceptualiser un cours qui pourrait servir de centre névralgique à l'apprentissage culturel et social, de tribune d'échange encadré dans un climat de respect et de contribution. Ce cours existe déjà dans le *Programme de formation de l'école québécoise*, et s'intitule le cours d'éthique et de culture religieuse (ECR). Afin de comprendre sa portée, il faut d'abord comprendre d'où il vient en retraçant l'évolution de l'éducation au Québec.

L'évolution de la religion et de la laïcisation du *Programme de formation de l'école québécoise*

La commission Parent de 1963-1964 et le rapport du même nom qui en a découlé ont propulsé le Québec dans une ère de « modernisation », laquelle fut marquée par une « idéologie de rattrapage » (Lenoir 2005) implantée par les politiques du gouvernement libéral de Jean Lesage. L'éducation au Québec a été grandement influencée autant dans sa forme et son système (accessibilité et gratuité, implantation des polyvalentes, formation collégiale et création des Cégeps en 1967), que dans son contenu de formation (abolition graduelle du cours classique). C'est durant cette période que la laïcisation du système scolaire a été entreprise. Afin d'entrer dans la modernité, le Québec devait modifier certaines de ses valeurs. Il a donc dû accepter des valeurs dites humanistes et modernes: « le pluralisme culturel, le matérialisme, des valeurs individuelles et démocratiques, la rationalité scientifique, la laïcité » (Gagnon 1963, 191-194).

Plusieurs réformes ont découlé du rapport Parent, mais c'est à la suite des États généraux sur l'éducation de 1996 qu'est ressortie la volonté de mener à bien la déconfessionnalisation du système scolaire québécois. Ainsi, l'amendement « aux dispositions confessionnelles des paragraphes 1 à 4 de l'article 93 de la Constitution canadienne, paragraphes qui seront modifiés, en 1997, pour mettre en place les commissions scolaires linguistiques » (MELS 1999, 26), s'inscrit directement dans la visée d'une éducation laïque dont l'idée germa depuis les années 1960.

Dans le contexte de laïcisation du système scolaire et de la montée du multiculturalisme canadien au sein de la société québécoise, le rapport Proulx de 1999 intitulé *Laïcité et religions : Perspective nouvelle pour l'école québécoise* (MELS 1999) a eu pour effet d'édifier la neutralité de l'État face à la religion, voire l'égalité religieuse. Malgré ce rapport, on a conservé l'enseignement religieux même s'il n'était dorénavant plus relié à une éducation confessionnelle comme telle, et il en est de même du cours de morale. Un contenu notionnel très épuré sur les autres religions a tout de même été intégré à certains des cours afin de répondre aux besoins

grandissants liés à la diversité ethnoculturelle du Québec : on est ainsi passé à l'enseignement de la culture religieuse.

C'est donc en 2008 que le cours d'éthique et de culture religieuse (ECR) est venu remplacer les cours de morale et de culture religieuse catholique et protestante issus de la tradition confessionnelle. Dans le contexte social des accommodements raisonnables, qui ont touché les cordes sensibles de l'identité québécoise, et de la commission Bouchard-Taylor de 2007-2008, certains ont vu dans ce cours une solution possible au problème de l'incompréhension, une forme de discours interculturel embryonnaire.

À ses débuts, le cours d'éthique et de culture religieuse n'a pas fait l'unanimité au sein de la population : il ne la fait toujours pas. Il a suscité la controverse à l'égard de la liberté de religion et de la laïcité de l'État. Il a aussi éveillé des sentiments xénophobes et la crainte de voir s'effacer l'identité québécoise. On a même vu une étude de l'*Institut de recherche sur le Québec* dont les conclusions font du cours « l'aboutissement d'un long processus initié dès 1999 par les « experts » en pédagogie et les intellectuels multiculturalistes qui se sont emparés de l'école pour mettre en œuvre leur projet idéologique commun » (Quérin 2009, 25), donc un cours dont le but ultime est la manipulation de l'opinion des jeunes en faveur du multiculturalisme. Inutile de dire que cette étude fut fortement critiquée par les milieux intellectuels et les concepteurs du cours en question. Néanmoins la controverse généralisée autour du cours n'a fait que contribuer à faire glisser le débat social sur la diversité culturelle vers le morcellement de la société et le conflit « nous-eux ».

C'est ainsi que nous réitérons l'importance de l'éducation et de sa vocation qui est de projeter l'élève dans un monde qui lui est inconnu, mais qui lui est sien; nous rappelons qu'à travers l'enseignement culturel, l'élève se positionnera graduellement dans son monde en développant sa dimension éthique, ce qui lui permettra aussi, face à l'altérité, de se positionner afin de contribuer au vivre-ensemble. Alors pourquoi ne pas favoriser une plateforme sur laquelle on peut analyser cette différence, analyser l'inconnu et en débattre? Nous croyons que le cours d'éthique et de culture religieuse est cette tribune potentielle que l'élève doit utiliser pour se positionner dans son monde, face à la différence, pour pousser son raisonnement afin de grandir par lui-même, mais aussi avec les autres. Nous savons que dans notre réalité sociale actuelle, « prendre le temps » s'avère une tâche herculéenne. C'est justement pour cette raison que, dans une optique d'efficacité, contrainte à laquelle nous sommes aussi confrontés, le cours d'ECR peut servir de pivot aux autres.

Le cours d'éthique et de culture religieuse : une éducation à long terme

D'abord et avant tout, le programme d'ECR est offert tout au long du primaire et du secondaire sauf durant la troisième année du secondaire. Au primaire, on dispose de 7 heures par semaine (Loi sur l'instruction publique,

article 22, 2013) pour enseigner une langue seconde, les arts (plastiques, danse, musique) et l'éthique et la culture religieuse. Le temps alloué à ce cours est donc parfois sacrifié au profit d'autres matières et est donc le résultat d'un calcul d'utilité ou de « commodité ». Au secondaire, le temps consacré au cours d'ECR oscille entre 50 et 100 heures dépendamment des programmes, ce qui signifie 80 périodes de 75 minutes sur 180 jours d'école. Ces données témoignent déjà de l'ambivalence de l'État face à l'importance accordée au cours.

Néanmoins, le cours d'éthique et de culture religieuse comporte deux finalités : la reconnaissance de l'autre et la poursuite du bien commun (MELS 2006, 280); il s'oriente autour de trois compétences : réfléchir sur des questions éthiques, manifester une compréhension du phénomène religieux et pratiquer le dialogue (MELS 2006, 281). Nous voudrions préciser que la première compétence se rattache à un volet de développement de soi, et la deuxième, au volet du rapport à l'altérité. La troisième compétence, elle, semble se rattacher aux deux compétences de par sa nature communicationnelle.

Les fondements et l'importance du cours d'éthique et de culture religieuse

Le premier volet que nous relevons correspond à la première compétence : réfléchir sur des questions éthiques. L'élève est invité, dès le primaire, à procéder à un examen critique de ses valeurs et de son quotidien, à se questionner et à justifier ce qu'il aime et à le différencier de ce qu'il n'aime pas. Tout au long de son éducation, grâce au cours d'ECR, l'élève grandit à travers son développement philosophique, éthique et moral. Le principe ne nous est pas étranger : il rejoint la visée du cours de formation personnelle et sociale (FPS) qui est de « favoriser chez l'individu son meilleur épanouissement à l'intérieur d'une société en perpétuel devenir et sa participation responsable et créatrice à cette évolution » (MELS 1984, 13). Un bémol s'impose : compte tenu du temps accordé au cours d'ECR, il va de soi que l'aspect de développement personnel ne sera pas le seul enseigné et qu'il sera en compétition avec les autres contenus d'apprentissage. De plus, le développement personnel est un domaine général de formation, qui est aussi abordé en biologie (sexualité et reproduction) et en éducation physique et à la santé. Ces deux cours ne touchent cependant pas au développement moral et philosophique de l'élève.

Or, ce volet du cours a le potentiel de contribuer au bien-être de l'élève, un bien-être qui concorde très bien avec la visée humaniste de l'éducation mentionnée au point précédent. En effet, nous croyons que les violences infligées aux élèves, mentionnées par De Koninck, sont un mal de société qui doit décroître. Cette violence peut être enrayer par une meilleure compréhension de soi, permise par le contenu et l'encadrement développemental qu'offre le cours d'éthique et de culture religieuse. Sans être un remède miracle, ce cours peut sans aucun doute favoriser l'échange

et la création du soi et, du même coup, édifier une plateforme permettant de discuter des sujets sensibles que sont le suicide, le taxage et les autres dynamiques reliées à la violence.

Le deuxième volet du cours d'ECR est la mise en relation du développement personnel de l'élève avec le fait culturel et religieux. Ce deuxième volet occupe une plus grande place que le premier dans le contenu de formation, et la deuxième compétence, manifester une compréhension du phénomène religieux, s'imbrique parfaitement dans les deux finalités du cours soit : la reconnaissance de l'autre et la poursuite du bien commun. A priori, comme plusieurs élèves proviennent de milieux socioéconomiques, culturels et religieux différents, c'est ici que le cours sert de cadre dans lequel le discours sur la différence et la ressemblance s'installe. La religion est ainsi traitée au même titre que les inégalités socioéconomiques et les différences personnelles, à un titre qui se veut culturel avant d'être cultuel. Le but visé, si nous le comprenons adéquatement, est d'initier tous les élèves à l'héritage religieux chrétien catholique de la société québécoise, et à ses ressemblances aux autres sociétés chrétiennes, mais aussi de leur faire connaître les autres religions du Livre et les religions orientales qui, elles aussi, ont une en tant que valeur fondatrices de sociétés, et en tant qu'héritage culturel faisant partie de l'identité des nouveaux arrivants.

De plus, ce volet du cours a, lui aussi, le potentiel de contribuer au bien-être de l'élève de par l'accent mis sur la compréhension d'autrui. Dans ce cas, la connaissance de l'autre, de ses valeurs, de ses coutumes, de ses buts, etc., permet à l'élève de réaliser en quoi l'autre, tout en étant altérité, lui est semblable et, que de ce mouvement de considération réciproque, peut naître le respect qui viendra contrer certains éléments de la violence interpersonnelle que vivent l'enfant et l'adolescent.

Le cours d'éthique et de culture religieuse est cette plateforme potentielle qui permet l'acquisition des connaissances et la compréhension de l'altérité incitant ainsi au dialogue, ce qui, pour satisfaire les pédagogues et didacticiens, résume bien la troisième compétence. Ce dialogue est interculturel et interreligieux, mais avant même la différence marquante de la culture, il est a priori interpersonnel. Il nécessite une connaissance de soi, qui elle, nécessite un examen de soi, qui peut et doit être engendré par le premier volet du développement personnel, la création du sentiment de soi. Le dialogue prend toute sa forme lorsque le soi de l'élève est mis en relation avec le soi d'autrui. C'est ici que le dialogue véritable est entamé et que la conversation sur le vivre-ensemble débute. Aux propos d'Arendt faisant de l'éducation « l'institution qui s'intercale entre le monde et le domaine privé que constitue le foyer pour permettre la transition entre la famille et le monde », nous ajoutons que l'éducation est le meilleur moyen de créer un lien entre soi et autrui puisqu'elle permet justement la projection de l'élève dans son monde. Et comme elle est publique et que l'école rassemble donc la communauté, l'éducation permet à l'élève de côtoyer et d'apprendre à vivre avec des gens qui lui sont différents.

Au Québec, la question du vivre ensemble est encore chaude et semble toujours sur le point d'exploser. Nous le voyons présentement avec la question de la « charte des valeurs québécoises ». C'est pour cette raison que nous avons la conviction qu'une des pistes de solution est de commencer à fonder le vivre-ensemble, non seulement dans le discours politique ou social, mais bien à l'école, là où les préjugés sont présents dans les esprits depuis moins longtemps que chez les parents et où l'ouverture au monde débute.

Le cours d'ECR se voit conférer, ainsi que l'éducation en soi, un rôle primordial dans une société : la création d'un soi positionné dans le monde. Nous convenons que ce processus est une tâche existentielle dont la réalisation nécessite une vie entière. Cependant, l'école, ainsi que la famille et l'individu, sont le socle sur lequel se bâtit cette capacité de positionnement. Dans un système scolaire influencé par les dynamiques socioéconomiques et politiques liées au néolibéralisme, l'éducation semble souffrir de l'orientation économiste et marchande et du calcul utilitariste qui créent le programme et en érigent la structure. L'école ne semble pas orientée sur la vocation ci-haut mentionnée.

Nous sommes très conscients que le cours d'éthique et de culture religieuse ne peut pas atteindre son plein potentiel du fait qu'il n'est pas considéré comme étant nécessaire, ni utile et donc, qu'on ne lui confère que très peu de temps dans les planifications d'horaire. Nous trouvons cependant désolant qu'une société qui se veut accueillante, inclusive et laïque, n'aborde pas la question de la solidarité sociale, celle qui commence avec ses voisins, son quartier et les membres de sa communauté. Il semble plus facile de blâmer le marasme social sur la venue d'étrangers que de se questionner sur soi. Derechef, dans la conjoncture économique et l'idéologie néolibérale qui définit notre politique, il est aussi facile d'utiliser l'équilibre budgétaire comme une fin en soi et ainsi de justifier réaménagements, rationnements et compressions dans les domaines publics.

C'est ainsi que la question du vivre-ensemble doit se poser d'une autre manière. Le problème du vivre-ensemble est-il relié aux différences ethnoculturelles, ou doit-on plutôt parler d'un sentiment qui dépasse la différence d'origine et de religion et qui, finalement, s'inscrit dans une crise de la solidarité sociale et du sentiment d'appartenance non pas à sa patrie, ni sa nation, mais de l'appartenance à la communauté humaine qui, faute d'importance accordée à la culture, ne survit pas à l'individu comme tel? Serions-nous présentement dans un processus, plus que bien enclenché, de perte de cette humanité et d'acculturation primordiale qui se solderait en une dissolution du tissu social et du sentiment de similitude et conséquemment par une contribution à l'isolement et l'anonymat poussé par l'individualisme radical proféré par le néolibéralisme? Comment une société peut-elle vouloir intégrer des nouveaux arrivants lorsqu'elle semble incapable de rassembler a priori ses semblables autour d'un projet social commun?

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HUMANISME ET PLURALITÉ: UNE PRATIQUE DU JUGEMENT POUR LES DÉBATS PUBLICS

Sophie Cloutier

INTRODUCTION

« Car le monde n'est pas humain pour avoir été fait par des hommes, et il ne devient pas humain parce que la voix humaine y résonne, mais seulement lorsqu'il est devenu objet de dialogue. »
(Arendt 1974, 34)

Dès ces premiers moments en Grèce antique, la philosophie occidentale s'est constituée en opposition à la mythologie et à la religion. Platon soutenait en effet que le discours de la raison devait permettre de libérer les êtres humains des illusions de la caverne pour les mener vers le chemin de la vérité. La modernité a poursuivi et radicalisé ce mouvement de valorisation de la raison. Descartes instaurait cet idéal de la modernité en fondant sa science nouvelle sur la certitude de la raison, rejetant du coup toutes les formes de croyances et le recours aux autres dans le processus de la connaissance. La modernité s'est ainsi développée dans cette dichotomie entre la raison et la foi, donnant évidemment la priorité à la raison. Le siècle des Lumières misait sur la raison afin de sortir de l'obscurantisme religieux. Certains penseurs du vingtième siècle sont cependant venus remettre en question cette priorité de la raison; nous pouvons penser entre autres aux recherches en psychanalyse (Freud, Lacan), aux penseurs de la postmodernité (Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida) et, dans une certaine mesure, au féminisme (Gilligan, 1982; Tronto, 1993). Ces critiques de la modernité n'ont pas épargné les théories du multiculturalisme puisqu'elles remettent en question une certaine forme d'hégémonie de la rationalité occidentale¹.

À ces relations entre la philosophie et la religion est venu s'ajouter un troisième terme, à savoir la culture. Il faut noter que la modernité a été marquée par des grandes explorations géographiques. L'impérialisme et le colonialisme ont ainsi contribué à la rencontre de l'Occident avec l'Autre, celui qui vivait de manière complètement différente et dont on a parfois douté de l'appartenance à l'humanité. Les philosophes ont tenté de comprendre la signification de ce pluralisme culturel – et parfois de l'évacuer par l'universalisme de la raison; c'était, dans une certaine mesure, le pari de Descartes et de Kant. Herder est cependant venu critiquer l'idée kantienne d'universalité de la raison en avançant que le développement de la raison était lié à la culture². Les termes de ce débat entre Kant et Herder ne sont pas sans rappeler ceux du débat entre les libéraux et les communautariens³. En effet, les communautariens remettent en question la conception libérale du « moi désengagé », c'est-à-dire d'un sujet conçu comme autonome face à sa communauté et sa culture, donc libre de choisir

sa propre conception du bien (Sandel, 1998). Ils ont, au contraire, tenté de montrer que la formation de notre identité et de notre conception du bien est tributaire de notre attachement communautaire (Sandel, 1998; Taylor, 1994). Comme nous pouvons le constater, les relations et tensions entre religion, philosophie et culture sont bien présentes dans le paysage de la philosophie politique contemporaine. Mais elles le sont aussi dans l'espace public. En effet, si nous prenons seulement l'exemple du Québec avec ses débats sur les accommodements raisonnables et le projet de loi 60 pour une Charte de la laïcité et des valeurs québécoises, nous voyons que la société est marquée par un questionnement sur son pluralisme culturel et religieux. L'histoire nous apprend cependant que les discussions sur la religion sont toujours délicates, pour ne pas dire sanglantes, puisqu'elles touchent aux croyances fondamentales – qui défient bien souvent la froide rationalité.

En soulevant les passions, les questions touchant la diversité culturelle et religieuse radicalisent les positions. La philosophie invoque généralement sa première alliée, c'est-à-dire la raison – ou des concepts dérivés comme les « accommodements raisonnables » – pour régler les conflits liés à la diversité religieuse et culturelle. Mais nous pouvons à juste titre nous demander si la raison est notre seule et meilleure alliée pour le dialogue entre les cultures et les religions. Beaucoup plus que la raison, il nous semble que ces situations mobilisent et sollicitent la faculté de juger. Et malheureusement, nous pourrions bien être dans une crise du jugement – crise qui semble particulièrement aigüe si on se fie à ce qui s'écrit dans les médias sociaux où une inquiétante haine s'exprime. Bien sûr, la nouveauté de ces situations et le manque d'outils théoriques rendent la pratique du jugement difficile. Et dans les temps de crise, les positions ont tendance à se radicaliser entre deux attitudes extrêmes : le relativisme moral ou le dogmatisme. Les uns prônent le « à chacun son goût » et le « tout est permis » et les autres croient détenir la vérité, quelle soit rationnelle ou religieuse. La perte des repères traditionnels et la diversité des croyances et des conceptions du monde soulèvent la difficile question : sur quelles bases fonder notre jugement? Faut-il s'interdire de juger sous prétexte que tous n'ont pas les mêmes valeurs ou faut-il imposer aux autres cultures notre rationalité et nos normes? Étant donné la mobilité des gens et la rapidité des moyens de communication, la diversité semble inévitable et l'idée d'homogénéité culturelle une vaine, voire dangereuse, entreprise. Mais le relativisme n'est pas notre seule issue.

La réflexion arendtienne sur la faculté de juger nous semble une voie à explorer afin de sortir de ces difficultés. Le jugement, tel qu'esquisse par Hannah Arendt, échappe à la critique de receler une conception culturelle latente puisqu'il s'exerce en l'absence de normes établies d'avance; il n'a aucune prétention à la vérité. Il tient sa validité de sa forme intersubjective et échappe du coup au piège du relativisme. Nous dégagerons d'abord les sources du parti pris d'Arendt pour la pluralité au profit de la vérité dans l'*humanitas* de Lessing. Nous verrons que cet humanisme est ancré dans l'amitié entre les êtres humains, par-delà leurs

appartenances, et qu'il mobilise la faculté de juger. Dans un deuxième temps, nous schématiserons la réflexion arendtienne sur le jugement politique en focalisant sur sa lecture de Kant et sa reprise du jugement esthétique en jugement politique. Nous aborderons plus particulièrement la question du désintéressement, de la validité exemplaire, et du *sensus communis*, afin de dégager une compréhension du jugement dans sa forme dynamique, à même d'appréhender la diversité et la nouveauté de notre monde. Il se dégagera de cette lecture d'Arendt une forme d'humanisme, manifeste dans l'amitié civique et fondé dans la faculté de juger, qui nous semble inspirante pour nos sociétés multiculturelles. Et d'une manière plus générale, nous voulons montrer une voie pour sortir de l'alternative entre la vérité ou le relativisme.

LA VERITE OU LE MONDE COMMUN

Dans « De l'humanité dans de ‘sombres temps’ »⁴, Arendt fait l'éloge de Lessing et de son humanisme, une attitude qui concernait son rapport à la vérité. L'indépendance de pensée de Lessing, son *Selbstdenken*, était telle qu'il ne se sentait jamais contraint par la vérité. Son rapport à la vérité est mis en scène dans sa pièce *Nathan le Sage*, plus particulièrement dans la parabole de l'anneau que Nathan raconte au sultan Saladin, lors de leur première rencontre. Saladin, qui est musulman, demande en effet à Nathan quelle est la vraie foi; il veut vérifier le bien-fondé de la rumeur voulant que Nathan, un juif, soit sage. En guise de réponse, Nathan lui raconte la parabole de l'anneau qui avait le pouvoir secret de rendre agréable à Dieu et aux hommes. L'homme qui possédait cet anneau décida de le conserver éternellement dans sa famille en le léguant à son fils préféré, qui à son tour devrait le léguer à son fils préféré et ainsi de suite. En léguant l'anneau, le père passait aussi ses pouvoirs de chef de famille. L'anneau vint aux mains d'un père de trois fils. Il aimait également ces trois enfants et ne pouvait décider à qui des trois iraient l'anneau. Il fit donc faire deux autres anneaux identiques à l'original et promit secrètement l'anneau à chacun de ses fils. Après la mort du père, les trois fils arrivent avec leur anneau et réclament de diriger la famille. Dans l'impossibilité de reconnaître le véritable anneau, les trois fils se querellent, s'accusent de mentir et finissent par se citer en justice. Le juge ne sachant que faire de cette énigme et ne pouvant entendre la vérité de la bouche du père déjà mort, conseille ainsi les trois fils :

Prenez la situation absolument comme elle est. Si chacun de vous tient de son père son anneau, alors que chacun, en toute certitude, considère son anneau comme le vrai... Peut-être que votre père n'a-t-il pas voulu tolérer plus longtemps dans sa maison la tyrannie d'un seul anneau?... Et il est sûr qu'il vous a tous trois également aimés, puisqu'il s'est refusé à en opprimer deux pour ne favoriser qu'un seul... Allons! Que chacun, de tout son zèle, imite son amour incorruptible et franc de tout préjugé! Que chacun de vous s'efforce

à l'envie de manifester dans son anneau le pouvoir de la pierre! Qu'il seconde ce pouvoir par sa douceur, sa tolérance cordiale, ses bienfaits, sa soumission profonde à Dieu! (Lessing 1954, 163).

Évidemment, chacun des trois fils veut croire qu'il possède le vrai anneau et que les deux autres sont dans l'erreur. Cependant, le juge avance que la vérité sur l'anneau n'est pas aussi importante que l'amour exemplaire du père, ce qui importe c'est de se rendre agréable à Dieu et aux hommes. Le sultan est bouleversé par la sagesse de cette histoire et, comme le juge, décide de ne pas trancher entre les anneaux représentant les trois grandes religions.

Ce qui frappe dans cette histoire ce n'est pas seulement l'impertinence de la vérité, mais surtout la joie qui accompagne la disparition de l'anneau véritable. Lessing préfère la pluralité des opinions à la tyrannie de la vérité, puisque cette pluralité est au fondement du dialogue entre les hommes. Comme le remarque Arendt, «[s]i l'anneau authentique avait existé, cela aurait impliqué la fin du dialogue, et donc de l'amitié, et donc de l'humanité» (Arendt 1974, 36). Cette parabole illustre aussi la compréhension arendtienne du domaine politique où la vérité ne peut gouverner qu'au péril du monde commun. Arendt se retrouve dans cette caractérisation de la vérité unique comme essentiellement tyannique; son analyse du totalitarisme était basée sur l'idée que la vérité élimine toute possibilité de dialogue et donc, toute vie politique – ce qu'elle caractérisait comme l'horreur de l'Un. Ce qui fascine le plus Arendt dans cette histoire c'est le plaisir que prend Lessing à la contingence, chose très rare chez les philosophes. Lessing a très bien vu que « si nous possédions la vérité, nous ne pourrions être libres » (Arendt 1974, 37) et sans cette liberté il n'y aurait plus d'humanité possible.

À l'interrogation qui clôturait le *Vouloir*, à savoir que l'analyse du jugement « devrait au moins révéler ce qui est en jeu dans nos plaisirs et nos déplaisirs » (Arendt 1983, 247), nous pouvons répondre avec Lessing que c'est l'humanité même des hommes qui est en jeu. Arendt avance en effet que dans le partage des jugements, les hommes humanisent leur monde. Comme elle le rappelle, ce refus de la vérité au profit de la défense de la pluralité « n'a que très peu à voir avec la tolérance au sens courant (en fait, Lessing lui-même n'était pas particulièrement tolérant), mais beaucoup par contre avec le don de l'amitié, l'ouverture au monde, et, finalement, le véritable amour des hommes » (Arendt 1974, 36). La tolérance peut en effet avoir le caractère de l'indifférence, une sorte de méconnaissance volontaire des différences⁵. La lecture arendtienne de la tolérance montre qu'elle a quelque chose de contraire au jugement : elle égalise là où le goût discrimine. Il ne s'agit évidemment pas de faire un plaidoyer pour l'intolérance, mais plutôt pour l'exercice du jugement qui passe nécessairement par un dépouillement des préjugés. Ce qui est en jeu dans nos plaisirs et nos déplaisirs, c'est-à-dire dans notre faculté de juger, c'est la possibilité de l'amitié. Chez Kant, la même parenté d'idées se retrouve sous

la forme de la sociabilité des hommes, le goût n'intéresse qu'en société et il permet de créer un espace public. Nous y reviendrons dans la seconde section.

L'humanisme de Lessing apparaît encore plus clairement lorsque comparé avec Kant. Ce dernier avait axé son travail critique sur les limites de l'entendement humain, il avait montré que l'homme ne peut pas posséder la vérité absolue au niveau théorique. Cependant, il n'était pas prêt à maintenir cette relativité et cette contingence dans le domaine des affaires humaines. Il posa un absolu pour le domaine de l'action humaine : le devoir de l'impératif catégorique. Arendt est très critique de la moralité kantienne puisqu'elle y décèle un caractère inhumain, comme elle le précise :

Cependant, cette inhumanité ne tient pas tant à l'exigence de l'impératif catégorique qui dépasserait les possibilités d'une nature humaine trop faible, mais simplement à ce qu'il est posé absolument, et, dans cette absolute, fonde le domaine interhumain qui consiste essentiellement en rapports et en relations sur quelque chose qui contredit sa relativité principielle. L'inhumanité, liée au concept d'une vérité unique, émerge avec une particulière clarté dans l'œuvre de Kant précisément parce qu'il a tenté de fonder la vérité sur une raison pratique; comme si lui, qui a de façon si inexorable montré les limites de la connaissance de l'homme, n'avait pu supporter de penser que, dans l'action aussi, l'homme ne peut se conduire comme un dieu. (Arendt 1974, 37)

Si l'homme ne peut se conduire comme un dieu dans le domaine de l'action, c'est parce qu'il est entouré de ses semblables, il n'est donc pas un être souverain. La pluralité constitutive du monde fait en sorte que nos actions entrent dans un réseau illimité d'interrelations humaines et du coup, leur sens nous échappe. Arendt remarque que la philosophie politique, depuis Platon, s'est instaurée dans un geste de refus de la contingence et de la pluralité⁶. Lessing, au contraire, aimait l'humanité comme elle était, avec sa part d'imperfection liée à sa liberté et à la contingence qui en découle. Il aurait sacrifié la vérité au profit de l'humanité, c'est ce qu'Arendt qualifie de véritable amour des hommes et c'est là que réside son *humanitas*. Selon Arendt, la grandeur de Lessing tient essentiellement dans cette joie que la vérité unique n'existe pas et que le débat entre les hommes puisse avoir lieu tant qu'il y aura des hommes. Cette joie contraste avec le désespoir habituel des philosophes face à la contingence et c'est en ce sens que Lessing est une figure exemplaire : il n'aurait jamais accepté de perdre le plaisir de juger au profit de la vérité, puisque ce plaisir pouvait se traduire dans l'amitié. Arendt reprend ce conflit lessingien entre l'humanité et la vérité pour le transposer en termes plus modernes, à savoir le conflit entre l'idéologie et l'humanité. Elle prend l'exemple de l'idéologie raciale nazie qui se voulait scientifique et se posait comme la vérité absolue, la finalité ultime de la nature. Son expérience de pensée consiste à supposer que l'existence d'une

race inférieure puisse être prouvée, la question est alors de savoir si cette « vérité scientifique » serait suffisante pour justifier l'élimination de cette race? Une des façons de refuser un tel génocide serait d'invoquer le « Tu ne tueras point », mais cette justification repose sur les normes morales du christianisme, donc sur les normes d'une foi particulière. Arendt pense qu'il n'est pas nécessaire d'invoquer des normes particulières. En effet, un jugement libre de toutes normes pourrait se faire à l'aune du monde commun et de sa pluralité constitutive, au nom de l'amitié, comme elle l'explique :

Mais dans les termes d'une pensée qui ne serait gouverné par aucune règle restrictive, ni légale, ni morale, ni religieuse – et la pensée de Lessing était ainsi libre, qui « changeait avec la vie » –, la question devrait être posée comme suit : *Une telle doctrine, quelque convaincantes qu'en soient les preuves, justifierait-elle le sacrifice d'une seule amitié entre deux hommes?* (Arendt 1974, 39)

Ainsi, sacrifier une amitié au profit de la vérité reviendrait à sacrifier un espace entre les hommes, un monde commun et une parcelle d'humanité. C'est précisément pour cette destruction du monde commun qu'Arendt approuvait la condamnation à mort du criminel nazi Adolf Eichmann, parce qu'il avait « soutenu et exécuté une politique qui consistait à refuser de partager la terre avec le peuple juif et les peuples d'un certain nombre d'autres nations [...] nous estimons que personne, qu'aucun être humain, ne peut avoir envie de partager cette planète avec vous ». (Arendt, 1966, 448)

Arendt dépeint Lessing comme une figure exemplaire de l'humanisme qui illumine les « sombres temps »⁷ avec son acceptation joyeuse de la pluralité. Le jugement de Lessing illuminait les sombres temps parce qu'il se traduisait en amitié⁸, c'est-à-dire qu'il ouvrait un espace entre les hommes, un monde commun où la lumière pouvait se diffuser. La partialité de Lessing n'avait rien à voir avec un subjectivisme ou une forme d'idiosyncrasie. Il avait un parti pris pour les hommes dans leur relation avec le monde, il faisait preuve d'amour du monde, cet *Amor mundi* si chère à Arendt⁹. La force de l'amitié chez Lessing a une validité exemplaire et particulièrement dans notre contexte moderne où le multiculturalisme estposé comme un problème. Arendt rappelle que :

Aucun aperçu sur la nature de l'islam, du judaïsme, ou du christianisme, n'aurait pu l'empêcher de nouer une amitié, ni empêcher le dialogue de l'amitié avec un mahométan convaincu, un juif pieux ou un chrétien croyant. Toute doctrine qui rend principalement impossible l'amitié entre deux êtres humains, sa conscience si sûre, mais totalement libre, l'aurait à elle seule démasquée « objectivement » comme une erreur. Il aurait à l'instant pris le parti des hommes, sans trop se soucier des

arguments, érudits ou non, de l'un et l'autre camp. Telle était l'humanité de Lessing. (Arendt 1974, 40)

Malgré les sombres temps dans lesquels Lessing vivait, il ne s'est jamais contenté d'un substitut à la lumière publique. Lessing ne cherchait pas la proximité avec les autres dans la chaleur de la fraternité, puisque cette proximité aurait beaucoup trop éliminé les différences pour son caractère polémique. Sa conviction que le monde s'humanise dans un parler incessant l'empêchait de rechercher le consensus et le statu quo qui auraient mis un terme au dialogue. Arendt conclut que le refus lessingien de la vérité doit être compris comme un souci du monde commun et de sa pluralité constitutive. La vérité n'est pas inhumaine parce qu'elle risque de créer des conflits entre les hommes, les conflits peuvent inspirer le dialogue entre les hommes. La vérité est inhumaine parce qu'elle risque de faire disparaître la pluralité. En effet, comme l'explique Arendt :

[...] c'est parce qu'elle [la vérité] pourrait avoir pour conséquence que tous les hommes s'accordent soudain sur une opinion unique, en sorte que la pluralité deviendrait une – comme si devaient vivre sur terre non pas les hommes dans leur pluralité infinie, mais l'homme au singulier, une espèce et ses représentants. Cela arriverait-il que le monde, qui ne se forme que dans l'intervalle entre les hommes dans leur pluralité, disparaîtrait de la terre. (Arendt 1974, 41)

Une défense de l'humanité des êtres humains passe ainsi par une sauvegarde de la pluralité et un « prendre soin » du monde commun. Nous n'avons peut-être pas de vérité unique, mais Arendt avance que nous avons le jugement pour nous orienter dans ce monde pluriel. Sans absolu, nous ne sommes pas abandonnés dans un monde étranger et relatif, le jugement nous permet de nous repérer et de faire de ce monde une patrie pour les hommes, c'est-à-dire un monde sensé. L'exemple de Lessing nous inspire l'espoir d'un humanisme cosmo-politique¹⁰, c'est-à-dire une forme d'humanisme basé sur l'amitié, sur le souci du monde commun, l'*Amor mundi*. D'autant plus que l'amitié est un phénomène humain qui se retrouve dans toutes les cultures. L'amitié est ainsi profondément marquée par la pluralité puisqu'il y a autant de façons différentes d'être amis qu'il y a d'amis; chaque amitié est différente, mais leur point commun est l'ouverture d'un espace préfigurant l'espace politique. Le caractère discriminant de l'amitié, le « il faut choisir ses amis », renvoie à la faculté de juger, sur laquelle il convient maintenant de s'attarder.

PAR-DELÀ LE RELATIVISME : L'INTERSUBJECTIVITÉ DU JUGEMENT

Arendt va puiser dans la *Critique de la faculté de juger* de Kant les bases de sa réflexion sur le jugement politique. Dans sa troisième *Critique*, Kant tentait de sortir les jugements de goût de l'alternative entre le relativisme et le dogmatisme en démontrant l'autonomie de la faculté de juger. La thèse que propose Arendt c'est que cette œuvre contient la philosophie politique que Kant n'a pas écrite. Cette thèse ne va évidemment pas de soi. Les commentateurs de Kant se tournent généralement vers la deuxième *Critique* quand il est question de politique¹¹. Cependant, Arendt considère que le jugement est notre faculté politique par excellence puisqu'il inclut la pluralité dans son exercice même et il s'intéresse au particulier en tant que particulier. Le jugement esthétique réfléchissant ne nécessite pas de normes prédéterminées puisqu'il produit à chaque fois son propre général, d'où son autonomie par rapport à la raison. Arendt justifie sa démarche en expliquant que, dans la *Critique de la faculté de juger*, Kant voulait répondre à une question qu'il avait dû laisser en suspens puisque son entreprise critique l'occupait trop. Cette question était celle de la sociabilité des hommes. Arendt voit dans l'idée kantienne que « la compagnie est indispensable au penseur » une clé pour comprendre l'*Analytique du beau* et c'est ce qui l'amène à dire qu'elle a un rapport plus étroit avec le politique que toutes ses autres œuvres (Arendt 1991, 27). Le jugement esthétique serait d'emblée politique.

Cette teneur politique tient au fait que la troisième *Critique* ne parle pas de l'homme comme être intellible ou comme être connaissant. Kant n'emploie pas non plus le mot « vérité », mise à part une fois dans un contexte particulier. Contrairement aux deux *Critiques* précédentes, il parle des hommes au pluriel, tels qu'ils sont vraiment et tels qu'ils vivent en société. Les lois morales valent pour tous les êtres intelligibles, tandis que la validité des jugements esthétiques se limite aux êtres humains habitant cette terre. La différence de point de vue est capitale pour Arendt : Kant s'intéresse au vivre-ensemble des hommes, donc à leur dimension politique et non plus seulement à leur appartenance au monde intellible. Arendt devient très critique des lectures politiques de la deuxième *Critique* puisque la question kantienne « Que dois-je faire? » ne concerne pas l'action avec les autres, mais seulement l'homme dans sa singularité. Le critère déterminant ce que je dois faire est celui du moi pensant, à savoir le principe de non-contradiction. L'impératif catégorique affirme qu'il ne faut pas agir de telle manière qu'on finirait par se mépriser. En ce sens, la deuxième *Critique* n'implique pas la pluralité, mais seulement la relation du moi avec lui-même. Seule la conscience pourra déterminer si la loi morale a été respectée¹².

Au contraire, la *Critique de la faculté de juger* a pour point de départ le monde et les sens. Elle se concentre sur les capacités qu'ont les hommes afin d'habiter ce monde, autant d'attributs qui font, selon Arendt,

le point de départ et la condition *sine qua non* de toute philosophie politique. Selon Kant, le goût est une affaire sociale, « un homme abandonné sur une île déserte ne chercherait à embellir ni sa hutte, ni lui-même » (Kant 1995, 282). Du moment où il se préoccupe de ce qui apparaît dans le monde et ce qui concerne les hommes au pluriel, il doit trouver des critères différents de ceux élaborés dans sa philosophie morale. La raison s'occupe du général, elle cherche des critères universels; elle n'est pas à même d'apprécier la particularité. Selon Arendt, la raison n'est pas une faculté politique puisque son entreprise de recherche de vérité et d'universalité la détourne du monde commun qui est, lui, marqué par la contingence et la pluralité. De son côté, le jugement traite du particulier qui comme tel contient toujours quelque chose de contingent par rapport l'universel. Seule la faculté de juger peut apprécier la nouveauté et la contingence du monde parce qu'elle s'énonce en l'absence de normes prédéterminées. En effet, comme l'explique Arendt :

[...] la première partie de la *Critique de la faculté de juger* porte sur les objets du jugement proprement dits : soit par exemple un objet qu'on peut qualifier de « beau » sans qu'il soit pour autant subsumable sous la catégorie générale de « beau » en tant que tel; car nous ne disposons pas de règle d'application (si l'on dit « Quelle belle rose! », on ne parvient pas à ce jugement en énonçant d'abord « Toutes les roses sont belles, cette fleur est une rose, donc cette rose est belle. » Ni, inversement, « le beau, ce sont les roses, cette fleur est une rose, donc elle est belle »). (Arendt 1991, 31)

En l'absence de normes prédéterminées, le jugement esthétique n'est pas pour autant relatif puisqu'il acquiert une dimension intersubjective. Arendt est très intéressée par cette autonomie du jugement puisqu'elle a remarqué, suite à l'expérience totalitaire, que les normes ne sont pas suffisantes pour assurer la conduite publique. Le totalitarisme avait fait un renversement des valeurs et avait imposé le « Tu tueras » en norme politique. Certains individus, qui avaient l'habitude de penser par eux-mêmes et de juger les événements, refusèrent de collaborer et évitèrent de commettre le mal. Les autres, tel Eichmann, restèrent indifférents devant ce qu'ils faisaient, incapables de juger leurs propres actes et les nouvelles normes de leur pays. Ils se laissèrent prendre dans la banalité du mal¹³.

Arendt voit dans le jugement réfléchissant la réponse à cette banalité du mal. Elle trouve dans la *Critique de la faculté de juger* la faculté qui correspond et répond à sa conception politique : un rassemblement d'égaux où personne ne commande et personne n'obéit, où les gens se persuadent mutuellement. Si le jugement réfléchissant n'est pas contraignant c'est parce qu'il n'a pas la prétention à la vérité des jugements de connaissance. Comme l'écrit Kant à plusieurs reprises, la faculté de juger ne crée aucune connaissance¹⁴. Le jugement esthétique n'est ni une connaissance, ni un simple donné empirique. Afin de démontrer

l'autonomie du jugement, Kant distingue le jugement réfléchissant du jugement déterminant. Paul Ricœur rappelle que cette distinction marquait un renversement de la conception traditionnelle du jugement qui « consiste à substituer à l'idée d'attribution (ou de prédicat) l'idée de subsumption, c'est-à-dire d'un acte par lequel un cas est « placé sous » une règle. » (Ricœur 1995, 144) De ce fait, Kant pouvait établir qu'il existe deux manières de subsumer un particulier sous un universel : le jugement déterminant et le jugement réfléchissant.

Le premier consiste à subsumer un particulier sous une règle universelle déjà donnée. Dans cette application de l'universel à un cas particulier, l'esprit se soumet à des règles et cherche des causes. Tandis que le jugement réfléchissant représente une pure réflexion qui n'est contrainte par aucune règle extérieure, d'où son autonomie. Le jugement réfléchissant produit dans son exercice même la règle qui s'appliquera au particulier – cette rose est belle. Il n'est donc ni purement objectif, ni purement subjectif. Sans être lié à aucune connaissance, il prétend à une certaine validité générale. En ce sens, le jugement réfléchissant n'est pas un enfermement du sujet sur lui-même, mais plutôt une ouverture à l'être de la chose. Il faut transcender ses conditions idiosyncrasiques pour juger, comme l'explique Arendt en paraphrasant Kant :

« En matière de goût, il nous faut renoncer à nous-mêmes en faveur des autres » ou dans le but de leur plaisir. Enfin et c'est la formule la plus radicale : « Dans le goût, on triomphe de l'égoïsme », nous avons de la « prévenance », au sens originel du mot. Il nous faut, par l'amour des autres, triompher de nos conditions subjectives particulières. En d'autres termes, l'élément non subjectif des sens non objectifs est l'intersubjectivité. (On doit être seul pour penser; on a besoin de compagnie pour apprécier un repas.) (Arendt 1991, 104)

La première condition pour triompher de nos conditions subjectives, c'est le désintéressement. Kant explique que le jugement ne s'occupe pas de l'existence de la chose en tant que telle, mais fait référence à la représentation que le sujet a de cette chose, c'est-à-dire à son sentiment. S'il prend en compte l'existence de la chose, il sera dit partial et ne constituera pas un pur jugement de goût. Il se distingue ainsi de deux autres types de satisfaction qui, elles, sont liées à un intérêt, à savoir l'agréable et le bien. L'agréable réfère à ce qui plaît aux sens dans la sensation, à la jouissance de la subjectivité. Kant constate que dans la jouissance on se dispense volontiers de tout jugement (Kant 1995, 185). Ce plaisir intime est difficilement communicable et on peut lui réservier la maxime « Des goûts, on ne dispute pas ». La satisfaction liée au bien est intéressée puisqu'elle se réfère à l'objet par l'intermédiaire d'un concept ou de l'idée d'un but pratique ou moral. Ce type de satisfaction implique donc la raison. Seul le beau procure une « satisfaction désintéressée et libre; car aucun intérêt, ni

celui des sens ni celui de la raison, ne constraint à donner notre assentiment » (Kant 1995, 188).

Arendt considère qu'il faut juger les événements politiques de la même manière que les belles choses. Elle traduit le désintérêt par la notion plus politique d'impartialité. Elle fait remonter ce concept d'impartialité à Homère qui décida de raconter les actions des gagnants comme celles des perdants, de chanter la gloire d'Hector aussi bien que celle d'Achille, afin d'empêcher que leurs actions ne tombent dans l'oubli. Elle superpose deux sens différents à la notion antique d'impartialité :

Non seulement elle s'affranchit de la partialité et du chauvinisme qui, jusqu'à nos jours, caractérisent quasiment toute historiographie nationale, mais elle se désintéresse aussi de l'alternative de la victoire et de la défaite, dont les modernes ont cru qu'elle exprime le jugement « objectif » de l'histoire elle-même, et ne lui permet pas de marquer ce qui est jugé digne de louange immortalisante. (Arendt 1972, 70)

L'historien antique devait choisir quelles actions il allait raconter, il devait juger, au sens de discerner, distinguer. Il ne jugeait pas sur la base de considérations partisanes et instrumentales, ni sur la victoire. Il racontait ce qui plaisait dans les événements : la grandeur de l'action et de la parole. Selon Arendt, cette impartialité est liée à l'expérience grecque de la *polis*, c'est-à-dire d'une compréhension de la politique basée sur la discussion entre les citoyens. Dans ces échanges continuels, les Grecs apprenaient à échanger leur point de vue personnel avec celui des autres. Comme l'exprime Arendt, ils apprenaient « à envisager le même monde à partir de la perspective d'un autre Grec, à voir la même chose sous des aspects très différents et fréquemment opposés » (Arendt 1972, 71). Ainsi, dans le jugement, il faut viser une sortie de ce qui nous est propre vers une ouverture à ce que nous avons en commun. On atteint cette impartialité en prenant en considération le point de vue des autres, d'où la maxime kantienne de la mentalité élargie pour le jugement : « penser en se mettant à la place de tout autre » (Kant 1995, 279).

Étant donné que la satisfaction du jugement de goût est désintéressée, elle peut contenir un principe de satisfaction pour tous, une validité générale. En effet, on n'attribue pas le prédictat « beau » à ce qui ne plaît qu'à nous. En étant libéré des intérêts sur l'agréable et le bien, le juge peut supposer en tout autre le même principe de satisfaction. Le jugement de goût correspond au plaisir pris au libre jeu entre l'imagination et l'entendement, sans l'intervention d'un concept. Comme il ne s'agit pas de produire une connaissance, les facultés représentatives ne saisissent pas l'objet en termes de contenu, mais l'appréhendent pour sa simple présence. Devant le beau, nous éprouvons une satisfaction qui est ressentie comme nécessaire, notre jugement devient l'*exemple* d'une règle qui n'est pas déjà donnée, mais qui acquiert sa validité à travers l'assentiment des autres à

notre jugement, donc une *validité exemplaire*. Et si nous croyons que les autres devraient partager notre jugement, c'est parce qu'il est désintéressé et que nous presupposons que tous possèdent la même manière de sentir, d'où le terme de sens commun, de sentir en commun. Le jugement de goût devient ainsi communicable et cette communicabilité s'enracine dans le principe transcendental de la publicité. Ce principe nous fournit un critère pour juger : ce qui ne supporte pas la lumière publique et qui va contre le sens commun est probablement de mauvais goût. En effet, les jugements que nous n'osierions pas énoncer en public risquent d'être déplacés, comme le résume Arendt :

On n'est pas follement désireux de manifester sa joie lors de la mort de son père, ou ses sentiments de haine ou d'envie; on n'a, en revanche, aucun scrupule à faire savoir qu'on aime le travail scientifique et on ne cache pas son chagrin à la mort d'un excellent époux. Le critère est bien la communicabilité, et la norme qui arrête la décision est le sens commun. (Arendt 1991, 106)

Évidemment, le jugement réfléchissant n'a pas une « valeur universelle logique » puisqu'il n'est pas fondé sur un concept, mais Kant lui attribue une « validité universelle subjective » (Kant 1995, 196). On ne peut pas postuler l'adhésion des autres à notre jugement, comme on pourrait le faire pour les jugements de connaissance, mais on peut leur *prêter* cette adhésion. Ce qui fait la validité du jugement réfléchissant n'est pas son accord avec un concept, mais bien l'accord que les autres pourraient avoir avec notre jugement. Il se dégage du jugement de goût une validité intersubjective qui lui donne toute sa teneur politique. Cette validité a pour fondement le sentiment commun. Kant utilise l'expression latine de *sensus communis*, afin d'éviter toute connotation péjorative qui l'associerait au vulgaire. Le *sensus communis* réfère au fait que notre pouvoir de juger tient compte, dans son processus réflexif, du mode de représentation des autres sujets. Le jugement inclut la pluralité dans son exercice même. Selon Arendt, la mentalité élargie ne consiste pas tant à se représenter les jugements réels des autres, comme si on faisait un décompte des voix, mais leurs jugements possibles. Il faut penser en se mettant à la place de tout autre, c'est-à-dire comparer son jugement avec celui des autres afin d'arriver à une position générale, détachée de nos conditions subjectives. Pour ce faire, il n'est pas besoin d'un sentiment d'empathie, seulement de l'exercice de l'imagination. Par l'imagination, nous rendons présents une pluralité de points de vue; comme le dit si bien Arendt, il faut « entraîner son imagination à aller en visite » (Arendt 1991, 71).

Il y aurait encore beaucoup à dire sur la lecture arendtienne du jugement esthétique en jugement politique. L'entreprise inachevée d'Arendt devrait pourtant nous interpeller en ce qu'elle recèle une clé pour affronter les situations où les positions se polarisent. Nous voyons une grande promesse dans cette conception du jugement comme d'un *sensus communis*.

Du fait qu'elle n'est basée sur aucun concept, elle échappe à toutes formes de critiques de culturalismes latents ou d'ethnocentrisme. Elle évite aussi la question des critères de vérité, question insoluble dans un contexte de pluralisme culturel et religieux. Contrairement à la raison qui cherche l'universalité, le jugement nous invite à l'intersubjectivité. Dans toute sa simplicité, le principe de publicité nous semble à la fois essentiel et efficace. Il n'est pas contraignant puisqu'il ne promeut aucun contenu positif, sans tomber pour autant dans un relativisme. Tout en étant propre à chacun, le jugement se rapporte aux autres par le biais du sens commun. Dans son processus réflexif, l'esprit doit se représenter une pluralité de points de vue et le jugement s'adresse à une communauté de spectateurs. Pour le dire de manière synthétique, l'exercice du jugement crée et enrichit le monde commun, il nous constitue en communauté. En voulant sortir les jugements de goût de l'alternative entre relativisme et dogmatisme, Kant, et Arendt à sa suite, nous léguent une pratique du jugement qui s'applique aux situations de débats publics.

En guise de conclusion, nous voulons réitérer l'importance primordiale qu'accorde Arendt à la pluralité. Elle n'y voit pas un problème qu'il importe de régler une fois pour toute par l'imposition de normes ou l'assimilation des différences. Au contraire, la pluralité représente la condition humaine fondamentale de l'égalité dans la distinction. Arendt tire de l'expérience totalitaire la conclusion que le vivre-ensemble ne peut être régi par des normes universelles qu'au prix de la liberté et de l'humanité. Avec Lessing, nous avons en effet vu que cette défense de la pluralité, voire cette acceptation joyeuse de la pluralité, visait une défense de l'humanité même de l'homme. Arendt louait l'*humanitas* de Lessing qui se manifestait dans la possibilité de l'amitié par-delà les différences religieuses ou culturelles. Aucune vérité n'aurait pu justifier le sacrifice d'une amitié entre deux personnes. Avec Kant, la pluralité s'est présentée comme une condition essentielle au jugement sous la forme de la mentalité élargie. L'exercice du jugement qui fait preuve d'impartialité, c'est-à-dire qui sort de ses conditions subjectives pour visiter le point de vue des autres, acquière une validité exemplaire. Cette validité n'a pas la force contraignante de la vérité, mais elle n'est pas relative pour autant puisqu'elle provient de l'accord des autres à notre jugement.

L'importance de la pluralité nous fournit aussi un « critère » pour le jugement ; un critère que nous pouvons énoncer comme un parti pris pour le monde, comme le souci du monde ou l'*Amor mundi*. Arendt avait coutume de dire qu'en politique, le souci du monde devait primer sur le souci de soi-même. L'impartialité, qui constitue un des moments essentiels du jugement, réfère justement au fait qu'on ne juge pas sur la base de nos intérêts personnels, mais à l'aune du monde commun et dans le but de sauvegarder sa pluralité constitutive. Ce souci du monde, de ce que nous partageons en commun, pourrait se révéler un principe rassembleur pour nos sociétés individualisées. Arendt aimait citer cette phrase de Machiavel : « J'aime ma patrie plus que mon âme », qu'elle rendait aussi par : « J'aime le monde et

son futur plus que ma vie ou ma personne » (Arendt 1991, 80). Ce qui revient à dire avec Myriam Revault d'Allonne (2002), j'aime la liberté plus que moi-même. Ce qui doit primer en politique, c'est le monde commun, le lieu de la révélation de la pluralité et la raison d'être du politique. En ce sens, le souci du monde commun devra l'emporter sur l'amour de la communauté ou de sa religion particulière, ce qui est peut-être la seule manière de vivre-ensemble dans un contexte de pluralisme culturel et religieux. Ce souci du monde a par ailleurs l'avantage de procurer une perspective sur sa communauté ouvrant la possibilité d'un point de vue critique, une forme d'auto-compréhension qui aurait fait le détour par l'altérité, comme le suggère aussi Daniel Innerarity (2009) avec son éthique de l'hospitalité.

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NOTES

¹ Nous référons à Bhikhu Parekh (2000) qui a montré, notamment dans son ouvrage *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, différentes critiques menées contre l'hégémonie de la rationalité occidentale et son discours des droits et libertés individuelles.

² Nous référons à la lecture de Bhikhu Parekh (2000).

³ Ce débat a été initié par la parution de l'ouvrage de John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, paru en 1971. Une des premières grandes critiques de cet ouvrage fut celle de Michael Sandel dans *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, publié pour la première fois en 1982.

⁴ Ce texte est la traduction du discours qu'Arendt prononça lors de la réception du prix Lessing, décerné par la ville de Hambourg, en 1959. Il figure dans le recueil d'essais *Vies politiques* (1974).

⁵ Neil Bissoondath (1994) fait une distinction entre « accepter » et « tolérer » afin de montrer que l'acceptation requiert une véritable compréhension des autres et doit reconnaître que les différences les plus manifestes, comme la couleur de la peau ou l'accent, ne sont que superficielles. L'acceptation serait la rencontre entre des singularités; une rencontre allant au-delà de l'apparence vers la connaissance d'une humanité partagée. Au contraire, la tolérance serait liée à l'ignorance, c'est-à-dire à une méconnaissance volontaire des différences conduisant finalement à une indifférence à l'égard de la singularité des autres. Elle est néanmoins une attitude attrayante puisqu'elle ne demande pas beaucoup d'effort et semble bénigne puisqu'elle réfère à un « vivre et laisser-vivre ». En somme, son argumentation consiste à dire que la tolérance n'encourage pas les valeurs d'entraide et de solidarité.

⁶ Ce refus de la contingence et cette destruction de la pluralité est au cœur de l'analyse du mal totalitaire qu'Arendt mène dans sa première grande

œuvre *Les origines du totalitarisme*. Elle approfondit ces idées sous la forme de sa critique de la modernité et de la philosophie politique dans *Condition de l'homme moderne*.

⁷ Arendt emprunte l'expression à Bertold Brecht, dans son poème « À ceux qui viendront après nous ».

⁸ Le thème de l'amitié est très présent dans l'œuvre d'Arendt. Elle est très influencée par l'amitié politique d'Aristote, la *philia politike*. Cette conception de l'amitié, fondée dans le dialogue entre les citoyens, contraste avec la compréhension moderne de l'amitié vécue dans la sphère privée, dans l'intimité.

⁹ Nous référons à la biographie d'Arendt écrite par Élisabeth Young-Bruehl (1982) pour un approfondissement de l'*Amor mundi*. Le titre de la version originale anglaise, *Hannah Arendt : For Love of the World*, rend mieux l'importance de cette notion que sa traduction française, simplement intitulée *Hannah Arendt*.

¹⁰ Nous suivons ici la lecture d'Étienne Tassin (2003) de l'expression. Il comprend en effet la « cosmo-politique » comme une politique du monde commun, un souci du monde, dont le sens profond reconnaîtrait la conflictualité non-guerrière au cœur même de l'instauration du monde.

¹¹ L'entreprise de Rawls avec sa théorie de la justice en est un bel exemple.

¹² Dana Villa, dans *Arendt and Heidegger* (1996), approfondit cet aspect sous l'angle du principe de non-contradiction et en comparant son utilisation chez Socrate et Kant. Arendt fera en effet de Socrate l'exemple type pour comprendre la pensée dans *La vie de l'esprit*.

¹³ Nous référons évidemment à l'analyse qu'Arendt fait de Eichmann dans son rapport du procès *Eichmann à Jérusalem*, mais aussi à *La vie de l'esprit*. En effet, Arendt revient à la fin de sa vie, dans sa dernière grande œuvre, sur le cas Eichmann afin de comprendre l'implication des facultés mentales (la pensée, le vouloir et le juger) dans la question du mal politique.

¹⁴ On peut noter par exemple cet extrait : « [...] la critique d'un pouvoir (la faculté de juger) ne servant qu'à établir un lien et ne pouvant donc à vrai dire, par lui-même, créer aucune connaissance ni fournir une quelconque contribution à la doctrine. » (Kant 1995, 137)

RÉFÉRENCE CHRÉTIENNE, CULTURE ET HISTORICITÉ MODERNES

Louis Perron

« Nous ne pouvons pas ne pas nous dire ‘chrétiens’ »
(Croce 2010).

Une interrogation de vaste portée, aux multiples ramifications, se fait entendre de manière de plus en plus vive en Occident : qu'en est-il du religieux au sein des sociétés occidentales sécularisées, caractérisées comme « post-chrétiennes » (Poulat 1994) et « post-séculières? » (Habermas 2002; 2008). Il y est question, en particulier, pour des raisons historiques évidentes, de l'héritage et du devenir, voire de la survie du christianisme (Michon 2002; Barbarin et Ferry 2009). Comme le demandait naguère Jean Delumeau, « le christianisme va-t-il mourir ? » (Delumeau 1977; Lemieux 2014). L'une des dimensions les plus aiguës de ce questionnement a trait à la dimension *publique* du christianisme : qu'en est-il du rapport public au religieux chrétien, et plus précisément, du christianisme comme fait religieux objectif? Interroger sur le statut public du religieux, c'est poser la question du rapport de la culture actuelle à la référence chrétienne en contexte de « sortie » du religieux. Quel peut être le sens de l'expression « référence chrétienne » alors que cette référence n'est plus déterminée à partir du caractère chrétien de la société? Quelle peut être la pertinence culturelle du christianisme au sein des sociétés occidentales désormais entrées dans « l'âge séculier » (Taylor 2011)?

Cette interrogation est portée par une inquiétude sourde. Plusieurs s'inquiètent du rapport de l'Occident à son passé chrétien. Plus précisément, la question qui taraude les esprits concerne la transmission de l'héritage du christianisme comme culture de l'Occident historique. On craint la déculturation, c'est-à-dire l'éloignement des religions par rapport à la culture et le repli identitaire (Roy 2008), la détraditionnalisation (Gauchet 2004, 243; Boeve 2011), l'exculturation (Hervieu-Léger 2003). On souligne l'écart croissant, les effets de rupture et de distanciation entre le passé chrétien, menacé d'oublié irrémédiable, et l'aujourd'hui sécularisé. On s'inscrit ainsi dans le registre de la perte, de la disparition, dans la crainte d'un christianisme devenu illisible, totalement absent, disparu à jamais, en rupture totale avec la culture. On parviendrait à l'insignifiance culturelle du christianisme qui n'aurait désormais plus rien d'une référence, à une « sortie culturelle » des sociétés modernes hors-religion. On évoque la possibilité d'un effacement total, d'un épuisement sans reste, d'une extranéité sans recours. On ne peut certes nier cette possibilité. Il y a bel et bien aujourd'hui un enjeu de mémoire par rapport au passé chrétien de l'Occident, lié à la possibilité de l'inscription de la référence chrétienne dans l'aujourd'hui culturel (Meunier et Thériault 2007; Pouliot et Fortin 2013). C'est bien

pourquoi un nécessaire devoir de mémoire s'impose, dans la mesure où un oubli total serait sans doute fatal.

Le problème est très précisément celui de l'identité historique et de sa transmission : comment maintenir un rapport vivant au passé, une appropriation féconde, une incorporation du passé dans le présent, une actualisation sensée des origines (Gauchet 2004 243 suiv.)? C'est une question et un enjeu de vaste portée : la mémoire de l'Occident au fur et à mesure qu'il apparaît s'éloigner, renoncer à sa provenance chrétienne. C'est la question posée par Gauchet, dans le cadre d'une interrogation sur le questionnement philosophico-théologique sur Dieu (Gauchet 2013). Nous sommes devant un dilemme de la plus haute portée : que faire de ce passé religieux de l'Occident, dont nous pensons nous être extraits ? Faut-il céder à la tentation « de l'amnésie radicale », d'une humanité se tenant « au dehors » du passé, ou faut-il plutôt maintenir un lien vivant avec ce passé? Pour Gauchet, le choix est clair : c'est en affrontant courageusement son passé que notre culture peut se façonner un avenir. Il n'y a pour elle compréhension d'elle-même qu'à partir d'une reprise, que moyennant une réappropriation de son passé religieux.

Faut-il pour autant en conclure que la page est définitivement tournée? (Rémond et alii 2002) Est-il possible d'aborder la question de manière positive, et non en termes de déclin, de soustraction, de perte? D'ouvrir une perspective propre à susciter une espérance sans nostalgie? À partir d'une telle posture, une réflexion prospective devient possible. S'il y a possibilité de s'interroger sur la mémoire, c'est qu'elle nous habite encore de quelque manière, que le souvenir ne s'en est pas encore perdu totalement : « Notre univers culturel est profondément marqué par l'héritage chrétien. Il s'en est pourtant distancié sans retour mais également sans oubli possibles. » (Fosson 2013, 33; Fosson 2012, 263). Dans la perspective ainsi ouverte, la question consiste à s'interroger sur ce qui succède à l'état actuel des choses, sur ce qui vient après la structuration sociale du religieux, sur ce qui prend la relève du christianisme confessant. Si l'on peut parler d'un devoir de mémoire, c'est parce que ce devoir est en même temps un devoir de prospection et d'anticipation. C'est bien en définitive de l'avenir du christianisme dont il s'agit, d' « une mémoire pour l'avenir » (Duquoc 2000).

Nous aimerais ici mettre en lumière ce qui nous apparaît comme l'un des traits marquants de cette relève. Nous assistons en effet à un événement majeur et inédit dans la destinée du christianisme occidental, à savoir la mise en place d'un christianisme sécularisé, objectivé, irréductible autant à un simple christianisme d'héritage culturel qu'à la confession de foi. Il s'agit d'une sédimentation du christianisme par incorporation à la culture occidentale, de l'affirmation d'un christianisme extériorisé et autonome, public et non confessant. Cette sédimentation doit être entendue comme une dimension essentielle à la fois du devenir du christianisme lui-même et de celui de la culture occidentale. En suivant une suggestion de Jean Ladrière, nous interpréterons cette sédimentation du christianisme

comme ce qui constitue la structure même de l'historicité moderne, dans un sens post-hégélien. Il faudra auparavant préciser ce qu'il en est, dans les sociétés occidentales sécularisées, du rapport contemporain à la référence chrétienne pour ensuite identifier les différents niveaux de sédimentation culturelle de cette référence.

LE RAPPORT À LA RÉFÉRENCE CHRÉTIENNE

Comment penser le rapport de notre culture à la référence chrétienne, au sens d'un rapport de profondeur, de radicalité, se portant bien au-delà de l'héritage culturel tel qu'on l'entend habituellement?¹

Pour que la question de la référence chrétienne se pose comme question sociale, il a fallu que la chrétienté se dissolve. C'est là peut-être une évidence, mais néanmoins capitale. Comme l'écrit le philosophe québécois Georges Leroux: « La signification de l'expression ‘référence chrétienne’ émerge aujourd’hui avec un relief insistant dans le contexte d'une société qui se voit contrainte de se définir comme post-chrétienne. Si cette référence doit pouvoir être identifiée, c'est à compter d'un état de choses au sein duquel le caractère chrétien de la société n'est plus ce qui détermine le sens de cette référence dans la culture. » (Leroux 2000, 165). Leroux constate avec finesse qu'avec la disparition de la chrétienté, le sens de la référence chrétienne se fragilise et doit être élucidé à partir d'un autre lieu d'interprétation dont l'identification n'est pas immédiatement donnée:

Ce caractère s'est effacé, la référence est engagé dans un processus où elle pourrait ne devenir qu'une trace à déchiffrer dans une société entièrement déchristianisée. Ce dépassement des structures persistantes de la chrétienté rend d'autant plus difficile l'identification de la référence chrétienne que celle-ci semble s'être irrémédiablement détachée du cadre qui la soutenait non seulement dans la société traditionnelle, mais également dans la société industrielle qui pouvait encore prétendre placer le christianisme au nombre de ses référents. (Leroux 2000, 165-166).

Leroux estime, à raison, qu'il serait exagéré de conclure au complet effacement de la référence chrétienne. C'est qu'en effet l'effacement va de pair avec un processus de « sédimentation du christianisme dans la culture qui en est la conséquence inéluctable. La sécularisation constitue à cet égard un fait irréversible, et c'est donc au sein de ce qui est séculier que la tâche de penser ce qui reste de la référence chrétienne doit être accompli » (Leroux 2000, 166). S'il en est ainsi, c'est que le christianisme a profondément transformé la culture occidentale. La sécularisation, en coupant la référence chrétienne de ses origines fondatrices, la manifeste désormais, à même la distanciation ainsi créée, comme un ensemble sédimenté. La tâche que ce processus impose est le dégagement de ces sédimentations, de ce dépôt compris comme culture historique de

l'Occident chrétien. Il s'agit de dégager un horizon de compréhension apte à « faire comprendre le destin de ce qui, s'étant produit comme chrétien, en a gardé un part inaliénable de signification » (Leroux 2000, 166).

Cette tâche n'est possible qu'à deux conditions : 1) une prise de distance par rapport au contenu dogmatique du christianisme (Leroux 2007) et 2) une reconnaissance de l'influence historique du christianisme.

1) Il importe de porter sur le christianisme un regard historique et non confessant. Ce regard appelle certes un travail « théologique » mais hors confession (*Le Christ sans confession – Philosophie contemporaine et christianisme* 2013). La référence chrétienne se détache en effet de son noyau constitutif premier, elle se détache en quelque sorte d'elle-même. Elle acquiert une autonomie, qui lui confère un régime nouveau d'opérativité dont le cadre interprétatif demeure à définir.

2) Notre univers culturel est profondément marqué par l'héritage chrétien à la fois distancié sans retour possible et sans oubli possible. Le christianisme a contribué à cette émancipation qu'il a promue et soutenue. Leroux rappelle que le christianisme, comme savoir à la fois moral, spirituel et religieux,

imprègne entièrement la culture de l'Occident chrétien, dont il constitue l'héritage sécularisé le plus profond. Max Weber et, après lui, Marcel Gauchet ... ont montré qu'aucune sécularisation ne pouvait conduire à un délestage complet du savoir religieux et spirituel dans l'espace social, et que même une sécularisation achevée, si elle devait s'accomplir, ne pourrait se passer de l'interprétation de son histoire. (Leroux 2007, 73-74).

Leroux cite Gauchet, l'un des penseurs les plus fins à ce sujet. Le penseur de « la sortie de la religion » rappelle en effet que le christianisme est la matrice de la modernité et qu'à ce titre, il constitue une partie séminale de notre culture et de l'identité historique de nos sociétés (Gauchet 2004, 13, 219, 248). La culture occidentale a une dette envers son passé chrétien: « Nous sommes faits de ce dont nous sommes sortis et nous continuons de l'être en nous éloignant. » (Gauchet 2004, 15). La sortie du religieux se poursuit avec des réactivations, des réemplois du religieux. Un noyau se dégage des constructions auxquelles il servait de support (Gauchet 2004, 12, 19). Le religieux chrétien se réinvestit de manière non immédiatement religieuse et produit du religieux autrement.

Plusieurs penseurs consonnent avec ce constat, qui confine à l'évidence. On en voudra pour preuve quelques analyses récentes. Jean-Luc Nancy parle de « provenance » pour exprimer l'influence toujours prégnante du christianisme dont provient précisément notre culture (Nancy 2005; Schrijvers 2010, 48). D'autres reprennent l'idée du christianisme comme matrice de la modernité (Lenoir 2007, 197 suiv.), ou encore

rappellent la contribution chrétienne à la constitution historique de l'identité occidentale (Rémond 1999) et estiment que les valeurs judéo-chrétiennes sont toujours nôtres (Comte-Sponville 2006, 42), qu'enfin il y a continuité fondamentale entre l'ère religieuse et post-religieuse (Touraine 2013, 518 suiv.). Jean-Marc Ferry, pour sa part, parle de parenté et de filiation entre le passé et le présent, même si le langage n'est pas le même, d'une intériorisation du christianisme par redéploiement et reformulation séculiers (Ferry 2013, 147, 160). Blumenberg, alors même qu'il défendait la spécificité irréductible de la modernité face au christianisme, affirmait déjà pourtant que la modernité ne peut se comprendre sans le christianisme (Ledure 2010, 88). On peut parler à cet égard d'une pré-compréhension, d'un *a priori* herméneutique (Vattimo 2011). On pourrait, pour décrire ce phénomène de translation, parler d'une universalisation du christianisme qui « se donne en partage » (Guibal 2006), liée à une certaine « kénose » ou encore d'une généralisation publique du religieux chrétien. L'effacement de celui-ci s'accompagne d'un transfert, d'une « passerelle », signe de la redéfinition du rôle du religieux, de sa résistance, de sa capacité de se transformer, de circuler sous des guises nouvelles. Comment penser ce processus de recomposition, de mutation par voie de sédimentation culturelle?

LES DIFFÉRENTS NIVEAUX DE SÉDIMENTATION CULTURELLE DU CHRISTIANISME

La sédimentation en profondeur du christianisme, sa percolation au sein de la culture de l'Occident permet de parler de l'avènement d'un christianisme culturel au sens de l'émergence d' « un christianisme sans la foi » (Coq 2012, 9). Le christianisme culturel est un fait qui s'affirme à mesure que progresse la sécularisation; ce sont deux phénomènes concomitants: « La notion de christianisme culturel vise à mettre en évidence des formes de présence mutuelle, de relations entre la christianisme et cette culture qui n'est plus celle d'une société globalement chrétienne.» (Coq 2012, 9) Ce qui caractérise ce christianisme est qu'il s'agit d' « un christianisme sans la foi ». Il se démarque radicalement de deux autres formes de christianisme culturel : celle de la chrétienté où le christianisme était le principe intégrateur de la culture commune et celle qui désigne les vestiges de cette culture dans les artefacts historiques et dont la connaissance est essentielle à l'intelligence du passé. Le christianisme culturel vise les marques chrétiennes inscrites dans notre présent comme présence structurante et intégrées au processus de sécularisation. Il constitue le vecteur de la culture actuelle à la manière d'une présence active du passé dans le présent, dont les effets se font sentir dans la construction du présent. La mémoire chrétienne façonne notre mémoire collective commune et en fait partie. Il s'agit d'une présence mutuelle du christianisme et de la culture, qui n'est plus celle d'une société chrétienne mais d'une culture chrétienne d'un genre nouveau. Ces traces chrétiennes font partie du processus de sécularisation;

elle sont convoyées, charriées par la dynamique de la sécularisation. Elles structurent la temporalité collective, elles s'intègrent à l'organisation sécularisée du temps collectif (Coq 2012, 15). Ce religieux amalgamé à la mémoire collective (Coq 2012, 19) est irréductible au patrimoine religieux compris comme simple artéfact. Ces marques chrétiennes sont autre chose que des survivances du passé sur le point de s'effacer.

Nous reconnaissons dans ce niveau souterrain de sédimentation culturelle la référence chrétienne dont parle Leroux. L'approche de Coq est précieuse car elle permet une approche différenciée du phénomène historique qu'est la culture chrétienne. Elle fait voir un « christianisme invisible » (Lenoir 261) d'autant plus efficace qu'il demeure caché. Cette efficacité historique signale le passage d'un « christianisme du sujet», d'un « christianisme de l'intérieur» à un « christianisme de l'extérieur» comme l'un des traits marquants du rapport contemporain de la culture au christianisme (Schlegel 2012).

En soulignant l'inscription culturelle de la temporalité chrétienne sous la forme d'une temporalité sécularisée, Coq fournit une piste précieuse pour approfondir la nature et la signification de ce christianisme objectivé. Cette piste ouvre en effet sur la question du rapport à l'histoire et conduit ainsi à poser la question de la philosophie de l'histoire. Notre question devient une interrogation sur l'histoire, sur l'historicité, et donc une interprétation de l'histoire. C'est précisément une telle approche que nous trouvons chez Ladrière.

LA STRUCTURE CHRÉTIENNE DE L'HISTORICITÉ MODERNE

Jean Ladrière a construit toute sa réflexion à partir du fait massif de la sortie de la culture chrétienne qu'est la modernité. La culture chrétienne, au sens immédiat, premier du terme, fait signe directement vers la foi, qui est sa source immédiate d'inspiration. En modernité, la foi n'est plus un principe d'intégration culturelle immédiat, objectif, visible; elle ne structure plus la collectivité ni l'ensemble du rapport au monde et a perdu sa fonction synthétisante et totalisante. Ladrière reconnaît en même temps que la culture contemporaine est d'essence chrétienne (Ladrière 1972, 147). C'est dans la culture médiévale que l'on retrace les racines de la modernité et une profonde continuité peut être reconnue entre moyen âge et modernité, sans pour autant que soient niées les ruptures et les différences entre les deux époques (Ladrière 2004, 153; Ladrière 1979, 149). Ladrière montre que la modernité vient du christianisme par voie d'autonomisation et de différenciation. Cela lui permet d'apprécier à la fois l'originalité, la spécificité et la nouveauté de la modernité tout en l'inscrivant dans une histoire beaucoup plus longue. Si le monde moderne est nouveau et profondément différent du monde chrétien, et cette nouveauté tient précisément à son caractère areligieux, pour lequel la dimension religieuse de l'existence n'est plus une évidence fondamentale (Ladrière 1994a, 46), il n'en demeure par moins qu'il provient du monde chrétien. En ce sens, le

christianisme apparaît, à même son retrait, comme l'âme même du monde (Ladrière 2004a, 153; Ladrière 2004b, 158, 177). La mise en liberté du monde est en effet le succès de l'incarnation (Ladrière 1989, 14). Par un phénomène d'irradiation à partir de la sphère religieuse, le christianisme détermine tous les grands axes de l'expérience modern, et la créativité qu'ils manifestent se relie « organiquement » à la foi chrétienne (Ladrière 1987, 207; Ladrière 1996).

Ladrière distingue quatre niveaux dans la manière dont la culture s'articule à la foi (Ladrière 1988). Cette analyse permet de développer et d'approfondir celle de Coq. Le premier niveau est celui des médiations immédiates de la foi : les sacrements, la parole de foi et ses formes interprétatives immédiates. Le second niveau est constitué par les instaurations culturelles dans lesquelles s'expriment historiquement la pensée et la sensibilité chrétiennes en tant que telles : la théologie, les diverses formes de l'éthique chrétienne, et l'art directement inspiré par la foi. Le troisième niveau est celui dans lequel on retrouve les formes culturelles inspirées ou influencées indirectement par la foi. La foi est alors un ferment (Ladrière 1992, 214). Ce domaine est plus difficile à identifier avec précision : il s'agit ici d'une influence qui se fait sentir à travers des mouvements culturels de fond, tels que la philosophie européenne, le rôle de la notion de création et son influence sur la pensée scientifique moderne, l'idée moderne des droits de la personne, et les conceptions modernes de l'art inspirées par une anthropologie chrétienne axée sur l'autonomie et la responsabilité. Le quatrième niveau est celui pour lequel l'influence historique du christianisme est fort ténue ou indirecte, au point d'être invisible. Pour faire voir le lien entre la provenance chrétienne et l'objectivation culturelle, une interprétation s'impose. Le rapport entre la culture et la foi n'en est plus un d'instauration immédiate, mais d'interprétation qui tente de relier les œuvres culturelles autonomes à la perspective chrétienne. La culture européenne se trouve ici concernée : ses formes culturelles se trouvent en grande partie dans cette situation caractéristique. Ce sont bien entendu les deux derniers niveaux qui nous intéressent ici. Ils permettent de faire voir en quoi l'ensemble de la culture occidentale peut être rattachée ultimement à une provenance chrétienne au sens où certaines composantes de la culture peuvent être interprétées comme reposant en définitive sur un fondement chrétien, sans être directement influencées par lui (Ladrière 2008).

Ladrière précise cette influence historique du christianisme sur la culture occidentale en recourant au concept de « codétermination ». La compréhension de l'historicité propre au christianisme, écrit-il, « a diffusé dans les autres domaines de la culture (occidentale) et à fini par codéterminer la manière dont nous comprenons notre culture et dont cette culture se comprend elle-même (Ladrière 1994b, 10). Cette codétermination procède par induction de la structure d'historicité chrétienne dans le champ de l'action et opère le passage de l'intrinsèque à l'extrinsèque :

... en tant qu'il s'insère dans l'histoire effective, extérieure, et entre en interaction avec les grandes composantes de la culture humaine, [le type d'historicité chrétienne] s'extrinsécise et devient l'armature de l'historicité occidentale. Non cependant sans transformations. C'est précisément à partir de ces transformations que nous pouvons commencer à comprendre les caractères propres de notre historicité présente... (Ladrière 1984).

Ce processus comporte trois moments ou « Aufhebung »:

- du monde antique juif et païen;
- de la « théoria »grecque, via l'idée de création;
- de la propre forme d'extériorité du christianisme: c'est l'intériorisation de la conscience par le protestantisme et la suppression de la forme institutionnelle.

Dans ces « trois péripéties essentielles » de l'histoire du christianisme occidental, s'opèrent, selon le schème hégélien, à la fois une conservation et une suppression. Reprenant la leçon hégélienne, Ladrière voit dans l'avènement du protestantisme « la péripétrie essentielle qui ouvre la voie au processus par lequel va se constituer, à partir de l'historicité intrinsèque du christianisme, une historicité héritée, devenue extrinsèque, qui est l'armature même de la culture moderne. L'expression philosophique de cette péripétrie, c'est l'émergence de la philosophie de la subjectivité » (Ladrière 1984, 32). Kant est ici la figure clé, qui introduit la notion de transcendental et inaugure un cheminement qui va jusqu'à Husserl et à travers duquel le transcendental va se manifester comme un champ de constitution d'abord subjectif puis objectif. Et cette constitution va se construire en épousant la structure de temporalité induite par le christianisme : le champ transcendental devient la structure d'historicité propre à la rationalité moderne comme historicité proprement eschatologique. La culture occidentale moderne est habitée par l'historicité en toutes ses composantes. Elle appartient à la tradition historique du judéo-christianisme qui caractérise ce qu'il y a de plus essentiel dans notre type d'historicité : la perspective eschatologique. Selon Ladrière (1994 2004a, 2004b) le mode spécifique d'historicité de la modernité est de structure eschatologique. Ce devenir se fait voir à travers les objectivités construites qui caractérisent la modernité occidentale.

Un parallèle se précise entre le devenir moderne de la raison et celui du christianisme en modernité (Ladrière 1997). Dans un premier temps, la modernité a mis en exergue la raison comme subjectivité; mais l'évolution même de la dynamique de la raison a conduit à retrouver la dimension objective de la raison. Ce qui caractérise toutefois l'objectivité moderne de la raison est une objectivité de second degré, irréductible à l'acception traditionnelle de « raison dans les choses ». La rationalité moderne se présente comme une « rationalité du construit », comme un

ensemble de figures objectives qui se superposent à l'univers naturel pour constituer un univers artificiel *sui generis*. De la même manière, si le moment de la Réforme met en exergue la dimension proprement subjective du christianisme, il inaugure du même mouvement une objectivation du christianisme désormais irréductible aux objectivations du christianisme antique et médiéval. Le christianisme se construit désormais selon le même schéma triangulaire que celui de la raison : aux dimensions classiques de la subjectivité et de l'objectivité s'ajoute désormais une objectivité de second degré, qui est très précisément la structure d'historicité de la culture moderne. Cette objectivité seconde dessine une autre objectivité que celle, traditionnelle, de la foi. On observe un processus d'exteriorisation de la foi qui conduit de la culture chrétienne classique (objectivité 1) à une culture sécularisée procédant d'une inspiration chrétienne indirecte (objectivité 2).

UNE « RELÈVE » POST-HÉGÉLIENNE : UN SENS SÉCULIER POUR LE CHRISTIANISME

Les considérations qui précèdent permettent de penser l'efficience historique du christianisme en modernité sous la forme même de l'autonomisation du profane et de l'indépendance du domaine séculier. Cette modalité nouvelle de présence du christianisme à la culture de l'Occident marque une mutation sociale et culturelle de premier ordre, qui instaure un nouveau rapport collectif et public au religieux. Cette présence sédimentée, cristallisée, s'affirme sous la forme d'un devenir sécularisé du christianisme associé à un sens nouveau du christianisme, un sens séculier, laïc, non confessionnel, irréductible aux lectures traditionnelles propres à cette tradition religieuse. Elle déploie une réserve de sens inédite qu'on ne saurait sous-estimer, car elle inaugure une carrière nouvelle pour le christianisme dans un monde « post-chrétien ». En ce sens, le christianisme est tout sauf épuisé. Tout un devenir post-chrétien devient pensable par voie d'auto-dépassement, de métamorphose sécularisante.

Cet avènement introduit une rupture et signe la fin d'une époque : il y a bel et bien un effet d'« après », de « sortie de la religion ». Mais il marque également le début d'une nouvelle ère. En plus d'un sens kénygmatique (confessant) du christianisme, il faut désormais reconnaître un sens du christianisme susceptible d'être signifiant pour la culture non croyante. Une lecture publique extra-confessionnelle, extra-communautaire et universelle devient possible. On assiste à la « relève » du christianisme comme contenu public et non confessant de sens. La sécularisation laisse apparaître une sédimentation du christianisme dans la culture, un mode d'investissement culturel. Lorsque le christianisme se retire, il laisse émerger une cristallisation de sens qui est une sédimentation de second degré, qui acquiert une vie propre, autonome, qui continue à façonner l'ethos culturel de manière souterraine. Il crée un espace commun, qui n'est pas réductible à un laïcisme ou à un sécularisme étroit ni à une christianisme confessant ou communautaire. Le reflux de la foi, comme la mer à marée

basse laisse voir le fond que sa surface a recouvert, laisse émerger une cristallisation évangélique. La lecture non confessante du christianisme n'entend pas épouser la totalité du sens chrétien. S'il existe un usage séculier du christianisme, irréductible à sa lecture croyante, cet usage refuse de se comprendre comme l'accomplissement entier et définitif du christianisme. Il ne constitue en rien l'épuisement du christianisme et n'en vise aucunement l'abolition: il se contente de lui ajouter un niveau de sens. La « relève » séculière du christianisme n'est pas totalisante et échappe à toute intégration rationnelle réductionniste. Le christianisme demeure irréductible à la raison. Il s'agit donc d'une lecture « post-hégélienne » du destin du christianisme au sens où il s'agit d'un phénomène de transfert et de transformation, mais qui n'est pas l'expression de la réalisation complète et définitive du christianisme. Elle échappe au schéma hégélien de l'accomplissement historique du christianisme (Ladrière 2004b, 181, 247). On parlera d'une réalisation partielle, inachevée, et donc d'un certain achèvement marqué d'une nécessaire incomplétude. Si on peut parler d'épuisement, ce n'est que de manière partielle; ce n'est pas une dissolution, mais un développement, une maturation. Une certaine étape a été franchie, un certain christianisme s'est épuisé et représente un stade à dépasser. Mais ce dépassement n'est pas l'accomplissement du tout du christianisme, de tout le christianisme. Et ce dépassement conserve la mémoire objective du christianisme sous forme de sédimentation culturelle de premier degré. La présence sécularisée du christianisme déploie une sorte de transcendance chrétienne dans l'immanence qui n'efface pas le christianisme confessant comme fait et comme droit. Elle laisse intact le sens proprement croyant qui demeure et peut-être considéré comme valuable, voire nécessaire. La mission historique du christianisme n'est pas achevée et notre présent fait voir l'aurore d'une figure nouvelle (Valadier 1989, 114).

La position de Ladrière rejoint en somme les vues de Valadier, selon lesquelles, si le christianisme n'est pas étranger au monde moderne, il ne peut en revendiquer toute la paternité (Valadier 1989, 109). Elle est donc irréductible au « théorème de la sécularisation » (Schmitt, 1998 46), qui veut que la modernité se réduise à la simple sécularisation du christianisme tout comme aux positions respectives de Löwith (2002) et de Blumenberg (1998), puisqu'elle conçoit la modernité comme héritage chrétien, sous la forme d'une historicité eschatologique, tout en affirmant la consistance propre de la modernité et son irréductibilité au christianisme. La modernité ne se réduit pas à la sécularisation du christianisme : il y a une différence radicale entre la structure eschatologique du christianisme et celle, de nature strictement philosophique, de la modernité, et si un rapport peut s'établir entre les deux, il ne peut être que de nature purement formelle, en vertu d'un rapport d'analogie².

CONCLUSION

À l'évidence, nous vivons présentement en Occident une situation inédite qui force à reprendre à nouveaux frais toute la question du rapport de la modernité au religieux. Les schèmes reçus et les interprétations courantes ne suffisent plus : le cadre – moderne – dans lequel avait été défini ce rapport doit être repensé. Notre réflexion s'inscrit à l'intérieur d'une préoccupation de plus en plus prégnante tant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur du christianisme quant à l'avenir de celui-ci dans un monde sécularisé et qui se manifeste sous la forme d'un souci pour la conservation et l'actualisation de la mémoire culturelle chrétienne, pour la préservation de l'héritage du christianisme comme héritage commun. La problématique, rappelons-le, est celle de la « relève » du christianisme : quel est le sens de la foi chrétienne en dehors de la confession de foi? En montrant la conservation et la pérennité, sous forme sécularisée et autonomisée, de l'héritage chrétien en Occident, nous désignons un aspect essentiel de la donne nouvelle. Une appropriation publique non confessionnelle, non communautaire, et donc universelle, du christianisme devient possible. En se manifestant sous la forme d'une objectivité de second degré, comme la forme même de l'historicité de la modernité, le christianisme peut déployer les ressources d'un sens non confessant qui permet de conjurer le spectre d'un oubli total de son inspiration originelle.

C'est sans doute en raison de cette posture inédite qu'il est possible de désigner nos sociétés occidentales de post-séculières. L'émergence de ce christianisme de sédimentation culturelle ouvre un nouveau et vaste chantier, celui de la constitution d'une nouvelle herméneutique du christianisme. Mais une telle herméneutique doit d'emblée accepter un a priori interprétatif, que Mounier (Mounier 1950, 248, cité dans Coq 2008, 30) en son temps avait fort bien spécifié. Il qualifiait en effet la manière qu'a le christianisme d'agir sur la culture comme d'un mode bien particulier d'influence : « Quand nous cherchons à la saisir dans sa figure générale, des mots nous viennent à la bouche : latérale, indirecte, biaisée. » Il semblerait qu'à notre époque et dans l'avenir, il faille rechercher l'efficience historique du christianisme dans cette « médiation » qui au fond n'est pas nouvelle mais qui se donne désormais sous des formes insoupçonnées de radicalité.

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NOTES

¹ Nous empruntons à Meunier, Laniel et Demers (2010), s'appuyant eux-mêmes sur Hervieu-Léger (2003), la définition suivante : « Le *catholicisme culturel* désigne la permanence, ‘en tant que ressource identitaire, comme référence éthique ou encore au titre de réservoir de rites’ des structures symboliques (idéelles et concrètes) que les institutions religieuses ‘ont modelées [et qui] conserv [ai]ent , par-delà la déperdition des croyances officielles et l'affaiblissement des croyances et l'affaiblissement des observances, une remarquable puissance d'imprégnation culturelle’. » (Meunier, Laniel et Demers 2010, 81).

² Sur ces questions, voir Monod (2002; 2007); Foessel, Kervégan et Revault d'Allones (2007).

**WHEN CONFUCIAN ORTHODOXY
ENCOUNTERED THE PAPACY:
A CONTRAST IN POLITICAL THOUGHT BETWEEN
CONFUCIANISM AND CHRISTIANITY
IN THE LATE MING DYNASTY**

Yun Huang

INTRODUCTION

The first significant cultural encounter of Confucianism with Christianity began in 1583, when the Italian Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci was permitted to settle in mainland China. However, after a vigorous exchange between both sides for over a century, and more than 200,000 converts, this exchange came to a halt in 1721, when the Kangxi Emperor of the Qing Dynasty issued an order that banned Christian missions in China – principally a result of years of quarrel between Beijing and the Vatican about Chinese rites.

The strategy of the Jesuit China Missions, known as the policy of accommodation, was to completely de-westernize themselves, to make a Confucian adaptation of their style of life, patterns of thought, preaching and worship, to use existing Chinese concepts to explain Christianity, and “prove that the Christian doctrines were already laid down in the classical works of the Chinese people,” so as to convert the Chinese peacefully, gradually, and stably.¹ This was very unusual in the sixteenth century, if we consider the fact that from 1567 to 1583, missionaries and ecclesiastics in the Philippines – such as the Franciscans Pedro de Alfaro, Agustín de Tordesillas, and Martín Ignacio de Loyola; the bishop of Manila, the Dominican Domingo de Salazar; as well as Spanish Jesuits Juan Bautista Ribeira, Melchior Nunes Barreto, and Alonso Sanchez – proposed to “force the sovereign of China to grant to the missionaries the right to preach and to the natives the right to hear the truth.”²

Unfortunately, there had been several anti-Christianity cases even before the breaking out of the Chinese Rites Controversy: 1607-08, in Nanchang; 1608 in Nanjing; 1616-17 in Nanjing; 1621-22 again in Nanjing; 1634-35 in Fu'an County, Fujian province; and 1637-38 in Fujian Province. Four of them resulted in persecution. Apart from these legal actions, there were 8 anti-Christian books and pamphlets published by the year 1644 when the Ming Dynasty crashed down.³

Along with other allegations, the missionaries were accused of sedition. According to Zhang Guangtian (张广添), the Western custom that the emperor governs only one country while the pope is the commander of all nations is incompatible with the Confucian teaching that there can be only one lord in a country; thus the spread of Christianity may cause rebellion:

據彼云：“國中君主有二。一稱治世皇帝，一稱教化皇帝。治世者攝一國之政，教化者統萬國之權。治世則相繼傳位於子孫，而所治之國，屬教化君統，有輸納貢獻之款。教化者傳位，則舉國中之習天教之賢者而遜焉。”是一天而二日，一國而二主也。無論堯舜、禹湯、文武、周公、孔子之政教紀綱，一旦變易其經營，即如我皇上可亦為其所統御，而輸貢獻耶？嗟夫！何物妖夷，敢以彼國二主之夷風，亂我國一君之治統？⁴

Xu Dashou (许大受), son of a famous neo-Confucian scholar, Xu Fuyuan (许孚远), wrote that some paragraphs in Christian writings were disrespectful and offensive to the Chinese emperor:

又據其《駢述詞》云：“天子之議禮制度，無過人為，惟有彼國教化皇，是為真主。”又云：“生也不逢其主，語焉誰得其真？所慨中邦，尤嗟末代”等語。既蔑歷朝天子，且敢指斥乘輿，此其心何等無將？而為士大夫者或左袒之，又何其全不知利害耶？⁵

The popular explanation of the anti-Christian movement, put forth by Jacques Gernet, holds that the Church, independent and led by a foreign pope, was potentially destructive to the Chinese social and political order, which was formed by Confucian thought; because the Confucians, knowing nothing about the distinction between the things of God and the things of Caesar – as well as between the spiritual and the flesh, the sacred and the secular, religion and politics, church and state, and private and public sphere – took religion as a section of political affairs and evaluated it by their social-political utility, therefore had no idea of toleration and religious freedom.⁶ Yet in my opinion, this explanation is based on a simplified and distorted understanding of the complexities of both Confucianism and Christianity.

THE PATTERNS OF RELIGION-STATE RELATIONSHIPS

People usually think there are two kinds of religion-state relationships: either complete identification of religion and state, with no religious freedom, or strict separation, with total religious freedom. However, this opinion is both oversimplified and misleading. W. Cole Durham, Jr. discerns ten types of religion-state relationships: (1) absolute theocracy; (2) established churches; (3) religious status systems; (4) historically favored and endorsed churches; (5) preferred set of religions; (6) cooperationist regimes; (7) accommodationist regimes; (8) separationist regimes; (9) secular control regimes; (10) abolitionist states. Most of them have both political and religious institutions, except for absolute theocracy and abolitionist states, but only one type separates religion and state strictly, i.e.,

the separationist regimes.⁷

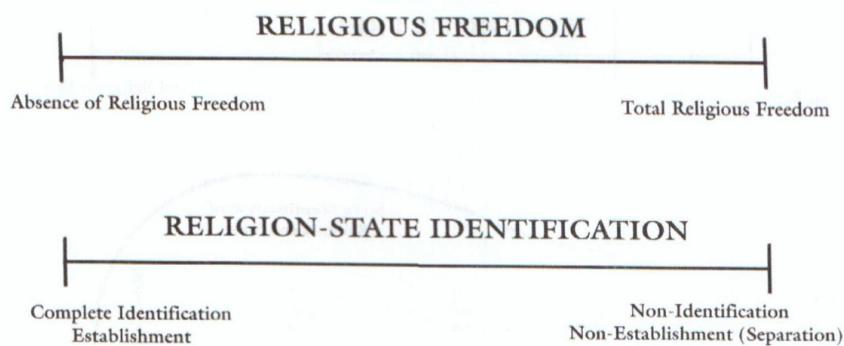


Figure 1. Popular opinion about religion-state relations and religious freedom⁸

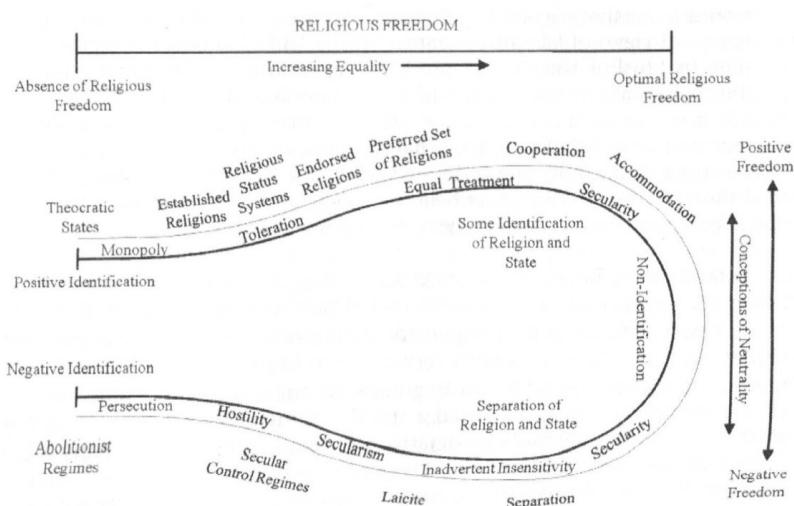


Figure 2. Religion-state relationships by W. Cole Durham⁹

Figure 2 seems over complicated. Besides, according to the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC), Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights "protects theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief", and the terms "belief" and "religion" are to be broadly construed so that "Article 18 is not limited in its application to traditional religions or to religions and beliefs with institutional characteristics or practices analogous to those of

traditional religions.”¹⁰ Durham’s classification follows a much narrower understanding of religion, and takes China as a secular control regime. However, both Confucians in traditional China and Marxists in contemporary China assert monopolistic positions. Therefore, I suggest that we follow the understanding of the UNHRC, and simplify figure 2 from the perspective of the relationships between political and religious authorities – that is, are they identical or different? If they are different, then what is their relation? Are they independent of each other, or is there a superior/subordinate relationship between them?

In this way, we get four patterns:

- (1) Identification: the two authorities are identical;
- (2) Church primacy: political authority is subordinate to religious authority;
- (3) Royal primacy: religious authority is subordinate to political authority;
- (4) Independence: the two authorities are independent (although they might not necessarily be strictly separate) of each other.

Table 1
Relationships between political and religious authorities

Identification	Non-identification		
	Church primacy	Royal Primacy	Independence
absolute theocracy	Pope Innocent III	Established churches	Separationist regimes
abolitionist states	Calvin	Preferred set of religions	Accommodationist regimes

Some types in Durham’s classification fit the new perspective easily, some do not. However, from this perspective, we can distinguish some regimes from theocracy, such as the western European countries during the pontificate of Pope Innocent III and Geneva under the ministry of Calvin, which Durham does not.

All the four patterns are elastic, applicable to various regimes. For example, both absolute theocracy and abolitionist states are identical; both Pope Innocent III and Calvin managed to maintain church primacy; emperors of both the Roman Empire and China held firm control over religions, they might set up established churches or not, prefer one religion or belief or not; both separationist and accommodationist regimes are independent. Besides, both the identification and the independence of religious and political institutions may be a matter of degree.

The degree of toleration grows in turn. There is no religious freedom in the first pattern, while citizens in the last pattern enjoy full religious freedom. The degrees of religious freedom in the second and third patterns lie between the two extremes. When the religious authority is the

supremacy of the two, the regime tends to be more intolerant than vice versa, for religious leaders usually take it as their obligation to maintain the uniformity and purity of faith, while political rulers in general are concerned more about social stability. However, when a rigorist becomes the dictatorial monarch, cruel measures against other religions and dissenters from the dominant religion are very likely to be adopted. In this case, the majority religion may also experience a considerable diminution of its liberty, for it may possibly become a captive of state apparatus.¹¹

THE EVOLUTION OF CHURCH-STATE RELATIONSHIPS IN EUROPE FROM THE MEDIEVAL TO EARLY MODERN AGES

All four patterns can be found in European Christian history from the Middle Ages to early modern times. During most of the Middle Ages, and from the east to the west of Europe, Christian emperors of the Roman Empire, Byzantine emperors, Frankish emperors, German emperors as well as French, English, Spanish, Norse, Danish, Polish, Bohemian, and Hungarian kings and other rulers, following the example of Constantine the Great, controlled Christianity so far as it was integrated with political order, and governed bishops even in matters of religious doctrine. The emperors, considering themselves as "Vicar of Jesus Christ", responsible to God for the spiritual health of their subjects, appointed church officials, convened ecumenical councils, enforced doctrine, and rooted out heresy in order to uphold ecclesiastical unity; while the Bishop of Rome, as "Vicar of Peter", was little more than the primate (first among equals) bishop. Prior to 1059, there were all together 25 popes, 21 of them directly appointed by emperors, and 5 dismissed by emperors.¹²

On the other hand, popes of the 11th to 13th centuries fought not only for the "freedom of the church" (which in fact meant the freedom of the clergy under the pope, from emperor, kings, and feudal lords), but also for the title of "Vicar of Christ". Pope Gregory VII proclaimed that it was the Roman bishop alone who might depose and reinstate bishops, make new laws, call general synods; the emperor was seen as first among kings, whose election as emperor was subject to confirmation by the pope, and, therefore, could be deposed for insubordination and the oath of fealty of their subjects dissolved by the pope.¹³ Apart from indirect control over secular rulers, the papacy also held direct sovereign rule in the Papal States.

The idea of separation of church and state appeared during the wars between the Catholics and Protestants, and it was later pursued particularly by the American Puritans and Evangelicals. They called for a "wall between church and state", which meant to prohibit all legal establishments of religion and all admixtures of religion and politics, so that both church and state would not suffer from the invasion of the other. John Leland, a Baptist preacher, proposed that "no religious test shall ever be requested as a qualification of any officer, in any department of this government; neither shall the legislature, under this constitution, ever establish any religion by

law, give any one sect a preference to another, or force any man in the commonwealth to part with his property for the support of religious worship, or the maintenance of ministers of the gospel”, and announced that “the notion of a Christian commonwealth should be exploded forever.”¹⁴

There were, however, millenarians who anticipated the Kingdom of God on earth, which would be a world of perfect peace; this would emerge after an imminent and final confrontation of good and evil, led by the returning Christ. Though pushed into the background by most of the larger churches, this movement turned into secular millenarianism in 19th and 20th centuries, and led to the totalitarian rule of the “Leader and Guide of the Revolution”.¹⁵

Table 2
Christian relationships with the state from the Medieval to early modern periods

Identification	Non-identification		
	Church primacy	Royal Primacy	Independence
Millenarianism	From Pope Gregory VII to Boniface VIII	Christian emperors of the Roman Imperial; Byzantine emperors; Frankish emperors; German emperors; secular rulers during the Reformation	
Papal States	Calvin		America

The distinction between sacred and secular, though originating in the early ages of Christianity, does not necessarily lead to the idea of separation of church and state, nor to the idea of religious freedom. The modern idea of toleration is made up of two decisive elements: the separation of religious and secular authority on the one hand, and the distinction between church authority and individual religious conscience on the other.¹⁶ So why is the distinction of religious and secular authority insufficient for religious freedom? Why does the distinction between church authority and individual religious conscience matter?

As John Rawls points out, “The history of the Church includes a story of its long historical ties to the state and its use of political power to establish its hegemony and to oppress other religions.”¹⁷ The co-existence of two different authorities and institutions does not necessarily mean toleration. During the pontificate of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) and his successors, insistence on the primacy of the papacy and the ultimate unitary spiritual goal of both state and church was so strong that the suggestion that the *populus christianus* had two heads (pope and emperor) would seem monstrous. The idea of papal primacy was widely accepted by papal canonists. The controversy with Philip IV of France evoked one of the most

extreme statements of hierocratic theory, claiming that the pope stood alone at the apex of the universal church, and that even worldly power and authority owed their institution to the church alone. Finally, the concept of papal infallibility emerged in the late 13th century. Peter Olivi asserted: 'It is impossible for God to give to anyone the full authority to decide about doubts concerning the faith and divine law with this condition, that He would permit him to err...' This doctrine became part of medieval tradition, and reached its maturity in the era of Counter Reformation.¹⁸ William of Ockham (1288–1348) believed that any single member of the church including the pope might fail, and thus rejected not merely the infallibility of the pope, but also that of the council.¹⁹ According to Quentin Skinner, Ockham was a major pioneer of Protestant theology and ecclesiology. However, he was excommunicated as heretical by Pope John XXII, and had to take refuge at the court of the Holy Roman Emperor Louis IV of Bavaria.²⁰

As Rawls points out, the Inquisition was not an accident in the society of the Middle Ages, but a necessity to preserve that shared religious belief.²¹ As Christianity believes in one God, one truth, and one church, the Roman Curia tried to suppress dissidents in order to maintain the unification of the Christian Church. It was because of the contest among the Popes, the Emperors, the kings, and other lords, that Protestantism, though condemned by the Roman Curia as heresy, survived and grew and blossomed, and splintered into various denominations. However, neither Luther nor Calvin was tolerant either. B.J. Kaplan describes the age of the religious wars (roughly from 1550 to 1650) as such: 'Black-clad Puritans established theocratic regimes, banning the pleasures of the flesh and hunting reputed witches. Catholic inquisitors ordered heretics burned at the stake, while their kings strove for absolute power. Mobs committed atrocities in God's name, and a series of religious wars pitted Protestant and Catholic armies against one another on a continental scale.'²² The idea of toleration became popular only when the different denominations came to know that none was able to wipe out the other completely. Hence the first principle of constitutions: that individual conscience must be free, neither the state nor the church, neither the pope nor the majority, should intervene.

ARGUMENTS FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The fact of pluralism and the subsequent religious wars and suppressions led to the necessity of toleration. However, people may wonder: Why should we tolerate seemingly wrong faiths? If toleration is merely a political expedient in order to end current crises, and toleration simply means endurance, then it may be no longer necessary once the situation changes. This question is very challenging. Among those who have tried to answer this challenge are many famous figures, such as: Abailard, Nicholas of Cusa, Erasmus, Sebastian Castellio, Jean Bodin, Spinoza, Pierre Bayle, John Locke, John Stuart Mill, and so on. But it seems to me that it is John Rawls

who offers the most systematic arguments for religious freedom.

Rawls realizes that the diversity of reasonable comprehensive doctrines is not a mere historical condition that may soon pass away, but a permanent feature of the public culture of democracy. This diversity can be overcome only by the oppressive use of state power.²³ Rawls attributes the fact of reasonable pluralism and the fact of oppression to the fact that “many of our most important political judgments involving the basic political values are made subject to conditions such that it is highly unlikely that conscientious and fully reasonable persons, even after free and open discussion, can exercise their powers of reason so that all arrive at the same conclusion.” Rawls calls this fact ‘the burdens of judgment’ yet, for present purposes, I replace this with an alternative notion: the finitude of human intellect. Therefore, a well-ordered democratic society is not a community where all citizens are united by a shared comprehensive doctrine, but a pluralistic society.²⁴

Given these facts, Rawls argues for the priority of the basic liberties, maintaining that these basic liberties could not have a priority unless each of them, especially equal liberty of conscience, were of fundamental importance and could not be compromised unless doing so is unavoidable.²⁵ Rawls acknowledges that none of the basic liberties is absolute, because they may conflict with one another, and therefore need to be limited. Therefore, a criterion of significance of a particular right or liberty is necessary in order to work out which liberties are to be counted as basic. Rawls proposes that “a liberty is more or less significant depending on whether it is more or less essentially involved in, or is more or less necessary institutional means to protect, the full and informed exercise of the moral powers in one (or both) of the two fundamental cases.” According to this criterion, there are two fundamental cases according to Rawls: equal political liberties and freedom of thought are fundamental for ensuring the opportunity for the free and informed application of the principles of justice by means of the full and effective exercise of citizens' sense of justice, while liberty of conscience and freedom of association are fundamental for ensuring the opportunity for the free and informed exercise of the capacity for a (complete) conception of the good and its companion powers of practical reason and judgment in forming, revising, and rationally pursuing such a conception over a complete life. Other liberties, such as the liberty and integrity (physical and psychological) of the person and the rights and liberties covered by the rule of law are also necessary for the two fundamental cases if these basic liberties are to be properly guaranteed.²⁶

As to the two fundamental cases, Rawls holds that “Justice as fairness agrees with the strand of the liberal tradition (represented by Constant and Berlin) that regards the equal political liberties (the liberties of the ancients) as having in general less intrinsic value than, say, freedom of thought and liberty of conscience (the liberties of the moderns).”²⁷ Rawls argues that the priority of equal liberty of conscience is connected with the fact that religious beliefs, or philosophical or moral convictions are regarded

as nonnegotiable for those who affirm them, as well as the fact of reasonable pluralism that religious, philosophical, and moral conflicts are often intractable.²⁸

As Joshua Cohen and Thomas Nagel have noticed, Rawlsian “theory of justice is in part a response to the problem of how political legitimacy can be achieved despite religious conflict, and how, among citizens of different religious confessions, political justification can proceed without reference to religious conviction. ...These concerns lie at the heart of Rawls’s account of political liberalism.”²⁹ It is exactly to answer the challenge of pluralism that Rawls restates his theory of justice.³⁰ In order to ensure the stability of a pluralistic society, Rawls not only limits his conception of justice to the ‘domain of the political,’ but also calls for ‘reasonable comprehensive doctrines’ that recognize the fact of reasonable pluralism and the fact of oppression – as well as the burdens of judgment and that of liberty of conscience – so that an ‘overlapping consensus’ (instead of a modus vivendi) among citizens who affirm reasonable but opposing religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines may be both realistic and stable.³¹ Rawls talks about how a mere modus vivendi was developed into an overlapping consensus: “It may seem more natural to believe, as centuries-long acceptance of intolerance appeared to confirm, that social unity and concord require agreement on a general and comprehensive religious, philosophical, or moral doctrine. Intolerance was seen as a condition of social order and stability. The weakening of that belief helps to clear the way for free institutions.”³²

THE NEO-CONFUCIAN CONCEPT OF DAO-TONG

Matteo Ricci and his comrades were members of the Society of Jesus, which, founded in 1540 and called the papal “elite troops”, was the most influential, intellectual Counter Reformation movement of the Catholic Church. The Jesuit China missionaries told their Chinese audience that the Pope held legal supremacy over all Christians and that Western emperors and kings willingly subordinated themselves to the Pope. In fact, it had never been the real situation of the European church; it was simply what the Society of Jesus thought it should be. However, it became the “imagined other” for some idealist Confucians.

The idealist Confucians, unlike the realist Confucians who took hierarchical order and political stability as their primary concern and thus tended to maintain the sovereignty of the emperor, devoted themselves to the rectification of politics, especially the restraint of the emperor’s arbitrary will. For that purpose, the idealist Confucians in the Song and Ming Dynasties developed the concept of *Dao-tong* (道统), which is usually translated as “Confucian Orthodoxy”, yet literally means the succession of the Dao. Just as the translation suggests, the neo-Confucians believed that the ultimate truth, *Dao*, discovered by Confucius and written down in classics owing to him, has been misunderstood for over a thousand years,

and only recently rediscovered by the two Chengs (二程) and Zhu Xi (朱熹), which they call the ‘correct learning’ (正学). Other interpretations of the Confucian classics are called ‘fraud learning’ (伪学). Non-Confucian doctrines such as Buddhism and Taoism are taken as strange doctrines (异端) or vicious teachings (邪教). The neo-Confucians take it as the obligation of both scholars and officials to espouse the correct learning and diminish fraudulent doctrines so as to keep the minds of the people straight and the custom of the mass unified (“崇正学，息伪说，正人心，一风俗”). In the same year that Matteo Ricci settled down in Beijing, 1601, an official of the Ministry of Rites, Feng Qi (冯琦), wrote a memo to the Emperor, advising that anyone who cited Buddhist works in the imperial examination should not be recruited. A famous writer Li Zhi (李贽), who, once an official, had his hair cut and became a monk, was put into prison and then committed suicide. This event made it a necessity for Ricci to accommodate Christianity and Confucianism.

Another concept accompanied with it is *zhi-tong* (治统), translated as ‘political orthodoxy’. Though the neo-Confucians do not make a clear demarcation between the sacred and the secular, they do have the idea of political legitimacy, and argue that a ruler cannot become the legal political authority simply because of the fact that he managed to take control of the land of China; he must have the endorsement of *, that is, the support of a Confucian leader.³³ Different from the Christian opinion that the two kingdoms can co-exist perpetually in this world and will re-unite only when Christ comes back at the end of time, the neo-Confucians, take the parallel of Confucian Orthodoxy and Political Orthodoxy as a degradation due to the moral defection of the kings. Liu Zongzhou (刘宗周) believes that as long as the kings follow the example of the ancient sage-kings in the “three dynasties”, the two orthodoxies will re-united.³⁴*

Though many realist Confucians saw the missionaries as seditious and some idealist Confucians such as Liu Zongzhou disliked them too, Huang Zongxi (黄宗羲, 1610-1695), a disciple of Liu, learned much from the Jesuits. He did not take the traditional “sage-king” model as an ideal pattern; instead, he thought the ancient kings in the “three dynasties” acknowledged the supreme authority of the school in judging right and wrong. Certain details of his assessment of the school suggest the influence of western universities. However, as Huang Zongxi never had access to the idea of toleration developed in Europe beginning in the 12th century and flourishing during 15th to 17th centuries, he proposed very strict measures of control on thought, conscience, and religion: confiscating Buddhist and Taoist temples, and turning them into Confucian schools; burning books that were useless on practical matters; and pre-publication censorship of books – which was exactly what the Sacred Congregation of

the Index of the Roman Catholic Church did, beginning in 1571.³⁵ Ironically, though Huang learned much from the Jesuits, he calls Christianity a ‘vicious doctrine’ (邪說),³⁶ which suggests that Huang’s attitude toward western learning (西學) is similar to what Zhang Zhidong (張之洞) was to hold 200 years later, i.e., accepting western science and technology while rejecting western ethical and political thoughts (中學為體, 西學為用).

As we have mentioned above, Confucianism is construed as a belief or religion. So it is obvious that the Confucian model of sage-king fits in the first pattern of religion-state relationships, Liu Zongzhou’s conception of *fits in the third pattern, and Huang Zongxi’s conception of the school fits in the second. However, despite the difference, all the three believe that humans can become perfect either individually or collectively by their own efforts, which presets monism and cognosciblism: monism to define perfection and virtue by a Confucian metaphysics; cognosciblism to ensure the possibility of appreciating the situations and degrees of perfection so that we can get to know whether one person or a society is perfect, as well as the way to perfection individually and collectively, and the possibility of a society ruled by a sage who will correctly evaluate the moral value of everybody in the society and let each one get exactly what he deserves, neither more nor less.*

As we have learned from Rawls, the priority of religious freedom lies in the fact of reasonable pluralism and that of the finitude of the human intellect. However, all three Confucian understandings of religion-state relationships are incompatible with both and, thus, tend to be intolerant.

Table 3
Confucian understanding concerning religion-state relationships

Identification	Non-identification		
	Church primacy	Royal Primacy	Independence
Sage-king	Huang Zongxi: supreme authority of the school in judging right and wrong	Liu Zongzhou: parallel of Confucian Orthodoxy and Political Orthodoxy	

As we have mentioned earlier, when the religious authority is supreme, the regime tends to be more intolerant. Therefore, it should not surprise us that Huang Zongxi, the so-called “pioneer of democratic thoughts in China” and the “Chinese Rousseau”, argues for the severest persecution measures in the history of Chinese political thought. This side of Huang Zongxi’s thought cannot be simply detached from his other views (such as his attack on dictatorial monarchs and defence of public reasoning), and discarded as

something incidental, as some scholars suggest.³⁷ On the contrary, it is rooted in the core of the logical structure of his political thinking. In my opinion, this is true for all political theories that are based on monism and cognosciblism – which include not only theories of other Confucian thinkers, but also totalitarianism. This explains why it is rather easy for modern Chinese intellectuals to embrace democracy while being quite indifferent to freedom, especially the religious freedom. The long Confucian tradition of monism + cognosciblism is the shortcut to “Maoism.”

CONCLUSION

Let us put the presuppositions of Christianity, Confucianism, and the idea of toleration together in one table:

Table 4
Contrast of religion-state relationships between Confucianism and Christianity

Christianity	Confucianism	Toleration
monism	Monism	Reasonable pluralism
Infallibility fallibilism	Cognosciblism	Finitude of human intellect

Confucianism and Christianity share much in common in their thinking about religion and state relations. Both Christianity and Confucianism are monistic. However, there are two different traditions in Christian epistemology – fallibilism and infallibility – while different Confucian schools all agree with cognosciblism. The idea of toleration, presenting the ideas of reasonable pluralism and the finitude of human intellect, is compatible with fallibilism and agnosticism, but contradicts infallibility and cognosciblism.

Though the discussion about the peaceful coexistence of different faiths began in as early as the 12th century, and the distinction between church authority and individual religious conscience appeared in the 16th century, it was in the 17th century, as the result of the internal division within Christian kingdoms and bitter religious conflicts throughout Europe, that this idea came to prevail, thus paving the way to the modern West.

When the Jesuit missions came into China, both Beijing and Rome were intolerant of unorthodox faiths. This was why the Jesuit missions suffered severe attacks from both sides: in Europe, for their adaptation to Chinese customs, while in China for their declaration of the independence of the Church and the supremacy of the pope on spiritual matters.

NOTES

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TU WEI-MING AND CHARLES TAYLOR ON EMBODIED MORAL REASONING¹

Andrew Tsz Wan Hung

INTRODUCTION

While the philosophies of Tu Wei-Ming (杜維明), a contemporary Confucian Chinese scholar, and Charles Taylor, a Canadian philosopher of the Catholic faith, come from very different traditions, they have similar criticisms of modern Western society. Both of them are discontent with the domination of instrumental reason and disembodied rationality. They also agree on the embodied understanding of the self and morality. While very little has been written concerning Tu's or Taylor's theory of embodiment,² the comparison between their theories of embodied moral reasoning has never been examined. This paper will first illustrate their criticisms of secular modernity. Second, it will examine and compare the theory of embodied reason by Taylor and embodied knowing by Tu. Finally, it will show that, while there are some similarities between their theories, the differences between them can be mutually enriching.

DISCONTENT WITH SECULAR MODERNITY

Tu's criticism of the marketization of everything

Tu Wei-Ming, in a lecture given in Zhejiang University at 2008,³ argued that the Chinese community faces the challenge of globalization, a trend of modernization and homogenization by Western culture. After the May Fourth Movement,⁴ Tu argued, many Chinese have blindly idolized Western culture because of its economic and technological development. It is true that certain elements of Western culture are also valuable for the Chinese. For instance, freedom, rationality, human rights, the rule of law – these were Western values that have now become universal values. Nevertheless, justice, sympathy, responsibility and courtesy, as emphasized by Confucians and Asians, should also be universal values.

In dialogue with Western culture, Chinese people should come to have a deeper understanding of their own cultural heritage and be aware of certain problems inherited from Western culture. One of the crucial problems is the marketization of the economy, politics, academic life, and education, due to the rise of capitalism. The marketization of everything has led to a vulgarization of civilization, which in turn has made intellectual activities shallow and trivial. Academic life has lost direction. Family values have diminished. What is worse is the marketization of religions, in which many religious temples have become profit-oriented. Religious rituals have

become profitable activities. The spiritual aura of religion has increasingly faded out.

Many moderns see the Enlightenment as a move from the realm of religion to that of natural science. Such an idea rejects religion and spiritual matters, and has given rise to an anthropocentrism. Human beings think of themselves as the masters of all things. They attempt not only to understand nature, but to use and conquer nature, seeing nature as a tool, as a human resource. The operation of modern capitalist society is dominated by instrumental reason, which is disembodied, unsympathetic, and even cruel. For Tu, people today, nourished by the Enlightenment, may have knowledge, but lack wisdom. Thus, it is important for the Chinese to retrieve their cultural heritage, in particular to restore Mencius's idea of the sense of commiseration (恻隱之心, *ceyin zhixin*).

Taylor's theory of excarnation of religious practices, morality and the self

Charles Taylor also generally agrees that the primacy of instrumental reason is one of important sources of "malaises of modernity."⁵ It forces societies, as well as individuals, to focus on instrumental reason – something that we should never do in serious moral deliberation. The primacy of instrumental reason partly arises from the idea of the disengaged human subject, proposed by Descartes. Descartes supposes that we are essentially disengaged reason; we are pure mind, distinct from our bodies. Our ordinary embodied way of seeing ourselves generates confusion. Furthermore, in *A Secular Age*,⁶ Taylor raises another problem of modernity: that is, the trend of "excarnation" (SA, p. 288). Taylor argues that the religious reform movement, which began in the Axial age, leads to the trend of the disenchantment of the world. The shift from enchantment to disenchantment effects a transformation of religious practice, morality, and the self. This transformation is what Taylor calls "excarnation."

Excarnation means a shift from an embodied form of life to a form of idea. In other words, the excarnation of religious practices refers to the transformation from "embodied, 'enfleshed' forms of religious life, to those which are more 'in the head'" (SA, p. 533). In older societies, rituals integrated people, through desire and its fulfillment, with nature and the cosmos (SA, p. 613). However, excarnation is a change from a more embodied religious life, in which the presence of the sacred is experienced and enacted in ritual, into one that is more in the mind, where the connection with God enters an endorsement of our religiously defined political identity, or sees God as a moral source supporting our ethical life (SA, p. 553).

Taylor sees excarnation as having three dimensions. First, the ethical dimension tends to deny bodily desire, seeing it as a lust that alienates us. The second is the disenchanted dimension which denies the deep resonance of these desires with the spiritual world. The third is the

disengaged stance towards self and body.

The trend of excarnation of religious practices has also influenced the development of ethical theory. "Enlightened" ethics today, whether in the Humean or Kantian stream, is very theory-oriented. We start with our head, and rely on a disengaged understanding of experience and ethics. We have excluded the possibility that "part of being good is opening ourselves to certain feelings; either the horror at infanticide, or agape as a gut feeling" (SA, p. 555).

This movement has also brought about the objectification of the self in the modern world. Such objectification can be seen in the current medicalization of the body, which takes an objectifying standpoint and finally devalues our living body. We are trained to see ourselves in an objectifying way. This has not only degraded our lived experience, but also changes our phenomenology of our lived experience, in which certain instinctive feelings are suppressed while biochemical, medical facets of life have been prioritized. Unfortunately, the tracks of the objectification have been covered and we do not see that we are being led to see and feel ourselves in different ways (SA, pp. 740-1).

For Taylor, the network of Christian agape can only be established in an embodiment in which agape is released from instinct. However, the corruption by excarnation takes us ever farther away from the network of agape. We can no longer understand this gut feeling as we go along with these alienating self-images. We can comprehend Christian doctrine of Resurrection only if we have overcome excarnation and take embodiment seriously.

TAYLOR'S EMBODIED SELF

The transcendental argument for the engaged and embodied self

The move of excarnation violates Taylor's understanding of a human being as an embodied agent, as revealed in his earlier writing. In his earlier work, following Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, Taylor used a transcendental argument to support the idea of embodied agency. The transcendental argument also challenges modern representational epistemology and the disengaged stance of the self and, therefore, the move to excarnation as well.

The transcendental argument was brought into philosophical prominence by the work of Immanuel Kant. Kant thought that in order to distinguish between experiencing an objective order of things (the noise I hear in the neighboring woods) and experiencing a merely inner subjective order (the buzzing in my head), our sensation must have a "dimension of 'aboutness'." This necessary condition will later be called 'intentionality,' in the Brentano-Husserl tradition (PA, p. 72). Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty follow this pioneering Kantian form of transcendental argument, further exploring the conditions of intentionality to undermine a belief in the disengaged subject.

Based on his reflections on the conditions of intentionality, Heidegger argues that we are “first and mostly” (*zunächst und zumeist*) agents in the world. Thus, we are indispensably engaged as agents coping with things. We could never really “form disinterested representations any other way” (PA, p. 11). For Merleau-Ponty, “our primary access to the world is through perception, and this is essentially that of an embodied agent who is engaged with the world” (PA, p. 25). I am always perceiving the world from where I am, through my senses.⁷ Another feature of embodied agency is teleological in nature. In the standard notions of mechanistic materialism, our body is just a machine which can be manipulated and objectified by the operations of consciousness. However, for Taylor, as the subject is inevitably in the world, if we want to describe the state of a person, the characterization has to involve certain features of the world which have meaning for us. In other words, one cannot be indifferent to those features of the world. The features have meaning for us because we are teleological beings. We have purposes, goals, and aspirations, and these features touch us.⁸

Taylor claims that the exploration of intentionality undermines the disengaged perspective and the entire epistemological position, because our representation of things is always grounded in the way we deal with those things. In other words, in our understanding, we are always engaged in dealing with those things. Basically, the problem of disengaged consciousness is that it leaves out a concern for the body and the other, and the role of these in constituting the self. As Taylor states, it is possible to draw a line between “my *picture* of an object” and the object. However, it is impossible to draw the line between “my *dealing* with an object” and the object (PA, p. 12). For instance, it may make sense to ask us to focus on imagining a football, even in its absence; but it would be absurd to ask us to play football without a football. The actions involved in the game can’t be done without the object. The action of our understanding is just the same. Understanding and perceiving are different from imagining. Our understanding of the world is an action which is grounded in our dealing with it, rather than ultimately based on representation.

Criticisms of the behaviourist approach and the positivist approach in human science

Concurrent with the rise of natural science and modern epistemology, behaviourist and positivist theories were the norms of the social scientific approach during the 1970 and 80s.⁹ These approaches tended to adopt the criteria of abstraction and neutrality in studying human beings, and a morality that sidelined the purpose and intentionality of the embodied agent. They attempted to define the paradigm of social science according to the model of natural science. Taylor criticizes such approaches as sterile; they cannot come to understand important dimensions of human life (PHS, p. 21). This is because the criteria of social science theories can never be based on

the degree they enable us to predict, as natural sciences do. In his article “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man” (PHS, pp. 15-57), Taylor elaborates three fundamental reasons why he disagrees with social science adopting the paradigm of natural science:

1. Human life and society are open systems. It is impossible to shield the domain of human events from external interference (PHS, p. 55).
2. Most human behaviours, values and motivations cannot be quantified and measured as natural sciences do; they can only be understood by interpretation.
3. Most fundamentally, according to Taylor, man is a self-defining (or self-interpreting) animal. Changes in his self-definition also change what man is, such that he has to be understood in different terms.

The first reason for Taylor’s disagreement is obvious. Social scientists can never put human beings or society into a laboratory for investigation as natural scientists do. It is impossible for social scientists to single out several factors as variables for investigation and delineate all other factors by setting them as constants. But the second and the third reasons are related to his theory of self-interpreting embodied agency, which has to be further elaborated.

Embodied reasoning

For Taylor, with the idea of embodied agency, one’s emotions, desires and actions also carry purposes and meanings for that person. Thus, to articulate the underlying meaning of our emotions and actions is an important part of self-understanding. Taylor’s concept of reason, I would argue, is a kind of embodied reasoning.

In “Self-Interpreting Animals”, Taylor maintains that many of our actions, motivations and emotions involve experiencing our situation as having a certain “import” or significance, which is of value to desires or purposes of a human subject (HAL, p. 48). Thus, most of what is important is subject-referring. The implication of the concept of subject-referring, import-attributing emotions is obvious: instead of conceiving emotion as an irrational obstacle to true knowledge, Taylor sees our bodily emotions and actions as the medium through which we can understand the self and others. So, to understand the self, we cannot be detached from the body; we have to engage with it. Since our subject-referring imports are irreducible, we have to grasp them through articulations in language. Through articulation, we can sometimes go deeper into our emotions and actions, and articulate more clearly what is hidden in our desires, and deepen our understanding of emotion. Such deeper understanding of emotion and actions through articulation may be, in turn, constitutive to our emotion and actions, and sometimes may call for further articulation.

For instance, as our emotion is “a response to the situation’s

bearing the relevant import" (HAL, p. 49), one cannot have a feeling – for instance, a feeling of remorse – unless one has a certain understanding of right or wrong. However, we sometimes feel remorse even without being able to fully articulate why what we did was wrong. In these cases, we may seek to articulate further. In further articulations, if we come to see that our sense of wrongdoing is unfounded, then the remorse may dissipate altogether. These kinds of understanding are what the mechanistic, reductive approach cannot attain. So our emotion and actions, and articulation by language, are mutually constitutive. We are impelled from time to time to interpret ourselves, and we are always embedded in our own interpretations. So Taylor says, we are "self-interpreting animals", because we are partly constituted by our continuous self-interpretation. Further, as our self-interpretation is largely determined by the form of the human body and is always mediated through our bodily emotions, desires and actions, Taylor's interpretative approach is a kind of embodied reasoning. It engages bodily actions and emotions, to find out their underlying significance and their relationship to personal identity, rather than to treat our body as an object – something which neglects our lived experience.

Furthermore, language exists and is maintained only in a community. We are brought up through conversations with those who are significant for us, and we understand ourselves through dialogue and communication with others. We learn our languages of moral and spiritual discernment from them. The meanings of the words are therefore inter-subjective. When we discuss something, the object is not simply for me and only that which happens for you; instead we make it an object for us together. Therefore, embodied reasoning is inevitably communitarian in nature. There is no investigation of the self which can be taken without reference to the surrounding culture.

For Taylor, grasping inter-subjective meaning is crucial for better understanding human behaviour in society, because many social practices inevitably require common understanding. For instance, negotiation and bargaining is the usual practice in Western democratic politics. Both are based on a contractual notion that is connected with distinct autonomous individuals and the voluntary nature of their relations. But in the traditional Japanese village, the villagers' relations to one another were largely based on a strong form of consensus; hence, they had no idea about negotiation and bargaining. Relations would be damaged and villagers would be upset, if the connected parties were separated. The Western notion of bargaining has no place there. This shows that the vocabulary of a given social dimension is usually based on the form of social practice. The vocabulary would not make sense in situations where certain ranges of practices did not exist. These ranges of practices simply could not exist without the prevalence of certain relevant vocabularies. This shows, then, a mutual dependence between the language and social practice. The meanings of these terms are, then, inter-subjective meanings (PHS, pp. 33-4).

In *A Secular Age*, Taylor further points out that our bodily emotions and desires are the medium which bear the aura of transcendence (SA, p. 288). The meaning involved in our desire is, to a certain extent, spiritual. Somewhere, deep down in our heart, we will feel drawn to recognize and relate to our spiritual reality. That is why even people who are very successful in ordinary human flourishing can still feel unease. Unfortunately, due to the trend of the medicalization of the body, such unease can only be understood as pathological. The aspirations of transcendence are held back (SA, pp. 620-1). For Taylor, this is a kind of mutilation. Thus, for Taylor, we are required to rediscover the sense of nature and bodily feeling that can be pathways in our contact with fullness.

The Subtler Language

To respond to the trend of disengagement and excarnation by which we have lost contact with the natural world and the spiritual domain, Taylor refers to a number of spiritual conversions or "epiphanic" experiences in Catholic artists and poets, including Vaclav Havel, Charles Peguy, and Gerard Manley Hopkins (SA, pp. 728-72). For Taylor, art and poetry is a key element to recovering an aesthetic dimension in contemporary life (SA, p. 755). The language of poetry makes better sense of possible meanings about spiritual matters. Through using language and symbols, spiritual matters enter our world. Poets establish meaning by creating symbols and, so, poetry is potentially world-making.

Understanding poetics in its performative sense opens up a new domain of possibilities. For instance, spiritual matters enter our world through the Bible and other related literature by means of the term "spirit." Spiritual reality is fixed in narrative and doctrine. However, the new poetics brings us a reflexive turn which directs our attention towards the manifestation of the events narrated in the Bible. This reflexive turn brings an awareness of the conditions for making the spiritual manifest. So the new poetic language can help to find a way back to the God of Abraham. We can see this in Hopkins and Eliot. For instance, Hopkins' poetry is a fusion of two spiritual sources: articulating experience of God and making sense of the action of God. These two elements transform in such a synthesis, which gives a deeper meaning to the experience of transcendence and a new kind of experiential reality to the work of God (SA, p. 757).

These transformations, by transcendent experience, in some sense contest the limits of generally accepted language. They appeal to a new "subtler language" which can point us beyond ordinary immanent realities. The arts can turn the reality of hidden depths into an epiphany of the divine. Through artistic expression, the convert's insights go beyond the boundaries of the prevalent understandings of immanent order, reaching a larger, more encompassing order of God by inventing a new language or literary style (SA, p. 732).

TU'S EMBODIED KNOWING

Moral knowledge vs. empirical knowledge

In his article, “On ‘Embodied Knowing’ – the Implications of Moral Knowledge in the Confucian Tradition,” Tu Wei-Ming argues that moral reasoning in the Confucian tradition is a kind of “embodied knowing” (體知, *tizhi*).¹⁰ Tu also rejects the use of the scientific method in the investigation of humanity. Following Zhang Zai (張載), a Neo-Confucian philosopher, Tu emphasizes the distinction between moral knowledge (德性之知, *dexing zhizhi*) and empirical knowledge (聞見之知, *wenjian zhizhi*). While empirical knowledge derives ideas or information from observation through our sense organs, it is not necessarily embodied in one’s body. Moreover, moral knowledge is not derived from empirical observation. While it cannot be totally separated from empirical knowledge, moral knowledge is a kind of bodily experience; it must be based on reflection on one’s bodily practice and experience.¹¹

Moral knowledge is a kind of bodily experiential knowledge (體驗, *tiyan*). Tu uses a Chinese idiom as a metaphor: “only the person who drinks knows whether water is hot or cold.”¹² It is similar to the English idiom, “only the wearer knows where the shoes hurt.” Ontologically speaking, the expression of the moral subject is necessarily true and honest. Such a claim is *a priori* rather than *a posteriori*. However, from the practical perspective, if we do not maintain the practice of self-cultivation, the moral knowledge of the subject would finally be depleted.¹³

Accordingly, embodied knowing is a kind of transformative act.¹⁴ Such bodily experiential knowledge can lead to self-transformation. It aims at the identification of knowledge and action. Thus, apart from intellectual understanding, embodied knowing also stresses the transformative effect of knowledge, that is, the renovation of one’s disposition.¹⁵ Such knowing must be beneficial to the body and leads to a practical implication of embodiment, that is, how to embody our moral knowledge. It is a kind of self-consciousness which is necessary for moral practice.¹⁶ For Confucius, the highest human achievement by moral self-cultivation is to become what Tu calls, “*ren-ren*” (仁人), that is a man who embodies *ren* (仁); and such embodiment must have a concrete manifestation in the observance of rites (禮, *li*).¹⁷

Knowing self, others, and Heaven

Embodied knowing is a kind of self-knowing by the moral subject. Such knowledge is derived naturally, through the subject’s self-understanding, rather than by objectifying others. The Confucian discipline of self-cultivation (為己之學, *weiji zhixue*) is not through a kind of disengaged introspection; rather it is realized through social practice in a complicated

social network. Confucius's understanding of human dignity is not atomistic; rather one's personality is established in the network of mutual support and encouragement. For a man of perfect virtue, he, "wishing to be established himself, seeks also to establish others; wishing to be enlarged himself, he seeks also to enlarge others" (*Analects*, 6:30).¹⁸

Knowing others also inevitably operates in social networks. Such knowing is a dynamic process. For instance, when we attempt to know, to understand a person, and to be friend with him/her, we have to go beyond detached empirical observation. We have to know the other's dispositions and character through dialogue and interaction with him or her. Embodied knowing is a kind of empathic sensual perception; it rejects the objectification of others, be they things or humans. Embodied knowing can accommodate and integrate everything in the world, and let all these things become something that is non-objectified in our mind.¹⁹

Tu stresses that Confucian human science (儒家知人之學, *rujia zhiren zhixue*) is an inter-disciplinary study. It attempts to integrate the study of culture, psychology, religion, and hermeneutics. It overcomes the framework of the subject/object dichotomy and value neutrality. We acquire insights about human nature from reading books, understanding the heritage of our traditions, spiritual communication with others, value regeneration, and the study of moral self-transformation.²⁰

Finally, embodied knowing cannot be separated from the framework of unity and harmony between man and Heaven (天人合一, *tienren heyi*). According to Zhang Zai, everything is included in Heaven; there is nothing which can be detached from the scope of Heaven. Zhang Zai's idea of "great heart" (大心, *taxin*) is based on one's endeavor to know heaven and nature. The way of Heaven and the way of Humanity is continuous and united. It is, what Tu calls, "The Continuity of Being".²¹ Everyone can be connected to Heaven by one's nature.

According to *The Doctrine of the Mean*, by Zisi (子思), the grandson of Confucius, "What Heaven has conferred is called THE NATURE". For Tu, such an understanding of Heaven and nature necessarily leads to the demand by the person of sincerity to:

development to his nature. Able to give its full development to his own nature, he can do the same to the nature of other men. Able to give its full development to the nature of other men, he can give their full development to the natures of animals and things. Able to give their full development to the natures of creatures and things, he can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth. Able to assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth, he may with Heaven and Earth form a ternion.²²

Thus, to know the way of Heaven is not to disengage and observe, rather it is to reflect, based on bodily experience by the self.

Four levels of human subjectivity

Tu's idea of embodied knowing is based on his theory of subjectivity. Tu's understanding of subjectivity includes body (身, *shen*), mind (心, *xin*), soul (靈, *ling*) and spirit (神, *shen*) – four different levels.²³ According to Tu, the foundation of Confucius's moral concern, shown in *Analects*, is an embodied person, a human being who is lively, vivacious, sensitive, emotional, with flesh and bone, and who can feel pain; rather than simply a disengaged, disembodied soul.²⁴ In short, it is an embodied person with sensitivity and emotion. Embodied knowing is an experiential knowledge based on the integration of these four different levels.

i. Body

For Confucians, self-cultivation (修己, *xiuji*) literally means “nourishing the body” (修身, *xiushen*). Our body includes five sense organs, providing us five sensual experiences: vision, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. Confucian teaching emphasizes nourishing our bodily senses through the Six Arts (六藝, *liuyi*); they are rites, music, archery, chariotering, calligraphy, and mathematics. To nourish one's body is not simply to exercise and maintain one's health; rather, it is to aestheticize human life through the practice of rituals (禮, *li*) and music (樂, *yue*). These practices, Confucians emphasize, help to cultivate one's disposition, to facilitate one's thinking and controlling of emotion.²⁵ Such discipline must aim at achieving one's embodiment of virtues (以身體之, *yishen tizhi*).²⁶

Embodied knowing means to have bodily experience or to think in terms of a particular situation. Through the term “embodied knowing”, we can see that cognitive activity is based on integration of body and mind.²⁷ As Confucius considers *ren* (仁) as a restoration of ritual (禮, *li*) through self-cultivation, he orders his students to see, listen, speak and act in accordance with rituals (*Analects*, 12:1). The process of learning to be human is to pursue a civilized mode of conduct by the ritualization of the body, to learn to express the self through bodily action. It is the result of a discipline of what the Song-Ming Confucians call, “*tizhiyushen*” (體之於身), that is “to embody it [the experience of each of the six senses] in the body”.²⁸ Therefore, Tu emphasizes, the body is not a kind of private property. “We do not own our bodies; we become our bodies and through that process of becoming we learn to fully realize ourselves as concrete living human beings.”²⁹

ii. Mind

Mind is a rational faculty. It attempts to integrate our different sensual experiences.³⁰ According to the Song-Ming Confucians, Mencius's Confucian anthropology is the study of heart/mind (心, *xin*). As Tu states, “Mencius stresses the spiritual resources inherent in human nature as both

the theoretical ground and the practical process of self-realization. He focuses his attention on the embodiment of the heart-mind as the spacious dwelling and the broad highway of profound persons (君子, *junzi*).³¹

For Mencius, there is something in every human mind that is a given reality and endowed by Heaven as the defining feature of being human. It is not learned or acquired, and can never be subject to external control.³² It is “the power of the will for self-realization, a power never totally lost, although it is conceivable that it can be forever latent.”³³ This power is what Mencius calls, “vast, flowing *qi*” (浩然之氣, *haoranzhiqi*) (*Mencius*, 2A: 2)³⁴ or vast, flowing vital force or vital energy. This vital force is great and strong. “If one nourishes it with uprightness and does not injure it, it will fill the space between Heaven and earth” (*Mencius*, 2A: 2). As Mencius said, “He who has exhausted all his mental constitution (heart/mind) knows his nature. Knowing his nature, he knows Heaven. To preserve one’s mental constitution, and nourish one’s nature, is the way to serve Heaven” (*Mencius*, 7A: 1). This *qi* is “the companion of rightness and the Way, in the absence of which, it starves. It is born from an accumulation of rightness rather than appropriated through an isolated display. If one’s actions cause the mind to be disquieted, it starves” (*Mencius*, 2A: 2).³⁵ Thus, in the process of realizing humanity and rightness in the world through self-cultivation, profound persons focus on tapping their own internal energy to achieve the goal.

For Mencius, everyone has the potential of acquiring the four virtues: benevolence (仁, *ren*), propriety (義, *yi*), observance of rites (禮, *li*) and wisdom (智, *zhi*). These virtues are not acquired by socialization. Moreover, our mind is not a *tabula rasa* that has no innate moral knowledge. Rather, these virtues result from our cultivation of four germinations (四端, *siduan*, four kinds of universal predispositions) in human nature. They are the sense of commiseration (惻隱之心, *ceyin zhixin*), the sense of shame (羞惡之心, *xiuwu zhixin*), a reverential attitude toward others (辭讓之心, *cirang zhixin*), and the sense of rightness and wrongness (是非之心, *shifei zhixin*). So humans, as living persons, have emotions; they can feel pain and are able to make judgments.³⁶ These senses are both a necessary and a sufficient condition for self-realization. Among them, the sense of commiseration (a combination of sympathy and empathy) is the most essential feature of humanity. By doing our utmost with our mind, we can extend our sympathy and empathy not only towards other persons, but beyond; our influence “flows abroad, above and beneath, like that of Heaven and Earth.” (*Mencius*, 7A: 13). As the sense of commiseration is unlimited, in principle, it can embody countless things, including an ever-expanding network of human relationships, and even Heaven and earth, in our sympathy and empathy. As Tu states,

This faith in the human potential for understanding Heaven through self-knowledge and the human capacity for self-knowledge through

the cultivation of the heart-mind is predicated on the sensitivity of the body both as a spacious dwelling and as a broad highway for our ultimate personal realization.³⁷

iii. Soul and Spirit

Soul is the extension of mind. It is expressed in terms of wisdom, a kind of awareness in the existential situation. Spirit is the state of transcendence. It is the ultimate goal of self-cultivation. According to Tu, the soul is concrete, definite, with fixed shape and direction; while the spirit is indefinite and hardly traceable. It is just like the relation between body and mind, in which body is concrete and mind is abstract.³⁸ In *Mencius*,

A man who commands our liking is what is called a good man. He whose goodness is part of himself is what is called real man. He whose goodness has been filled up is what is called a beautiful man. He whose completed goodness is brightly displayed is what is called a great man. When this great man exercises a transforming influence, he is what is called a sage. When the sage is beyond our knowledge, he is what is called a spirit-man. (*Mencius*, 7B: 7)

For Tu, this verse shows the stages of development of self-transcendence. The stage from goodness to realness belongs to the ascending level from body to mind. Ascending from beauty to greatness occurs at the movement from the mind to the soul. Sage-spirit is the product of the ascending status from the soul to the spirit. So, in Confucian self-elevation, one cannot detach oneself from the body. Rather, one must use the body, so that one can learn about mind, and then be aware of soul, and finally rise to the level of spirit. This is a process of creative self-transformation.

For Tu, embodied knowing is not only exercised in meditation, but also in our ordinary life. Through ritual practice, we expand our humanity by establishing a reciprocal communication with the outside world, so that we can experience a kind of union with the cosmos; as Mencius asserts, “all things are there in me” (*Mencius*, 7A: 4). By exercising embodied knowing through social practice, the embodiment of virtue and of the ritual-musical cultivated harmonious world (禮樂教化的大同世界, *liyue jiaohua de tatong shijie*) can then be established.³⁹

COMPARISON AND EVALUATION

If we compare Taylor’s and Tu’s philosophy of the body, we can see some similarities between them. They both criticize the domination of instrumental reason and the disembodied rationality of the Enlightenment. Their view of the body has both instrumental and constitutive senses. On the one hand, the human body, as an instrument of moral knowledge, helps human beings to achieve self-understanding, so that human nature is explored; the goals of human beings, the importance of the relationship

with the community, and the sense of transcendence are also illuminated. On the other hand, our body is also constitutive to our self-understanding. Morality and values, derived by embodied reasoning, are inevitably bodily knowledge. Such knowledge is constitutive to our self-understanding as embodied beings. We can never disengage ourselves from our body, or replace our body by machines, without distorting our self-understanding. To acknowledge our embodied nature is to recognize that we are embedded in a particular historical, social, and cultural community. To understand the self and others, our moral reflection must be based on our active participation in the community, rather than a kind of disengaged mediation. Moreover, apart from natural science and analytical philosophy, the arts, literature, music, religion, and social rituals are also important sources for our investigation of humanity. Furthermore, both men stress that our embodied perception and reasoning involves the sense of transcendence.

Although the moral epistemology of both stresses the significance of embodiment, Tu's account of bodily moral epistemology seems to have certain gaps. Tu bases his reflection mainly on Confucian tradition and, at times, his theory seems to verge on the mystical and the instinctive. His argument for the *a priori* nature of moral knowledge seems to beg the question. His distinction of soul and spirit remains obscure. His analogy of the distinction of soul and spirit with the distinction of body and mind seems to be misleading, because body/mind distinction is a difference between material and immaterial, whereas both soul and spirit are immaterial. Tu has also not provided an account of why we are embodied rather than disembodied. His distinction of moral knowledge and empirical knowledge is mainly analytical, based on an explanation and reflection on Zhang Zai's theory, rather than being argumentative in nature. Basically, he has not offered an account of why morality cannot be attained by empirical knowledge.

Nevertheless, in respect of a philosophical foundation, I would argue that Taylor's theory can supplement Tu's embodied knowing in the area of moral epistemology. Taylor's transcendental argument of embodiment and his exploration of intentionality can provide an ontological foundation for human embodiment. His criticism of the behaviourist and positivist approaches, and his argument of embodied interpretative reasoning also offers a persuasive philosophical argument for Tu's distinction between moral and empirical knowledge. Nevertheless, Taylor's theory of embodiment focuses too much on moral epistemology, and its practical implications seem to be neglected.

In the areas of marketization and the primacy of instrumental reason, Taylor's idea of excarnation provides a fresh perspective on the deficiency of contemporary disembodied culture. Ironically, while Taylor criticizes this feature of secular society as a kind of excarnation, his theory of embodiment itself remains too cerebral. Taylor is right to say that our emotions and desires involve value judgments that have to be articulated through the language of a particular community. His argument that arts and

poetry are a subtler language that has an epiphanic nature is illuminative. However, all of these explorations focus on conceptual knowledge rather than on practice. Admittedly, to claim that Taylor has totally neglected the social implication of embodiment would be unfair, because his communitarian political theory is mainly based on his theory of the embodied self. However, his political theory is mainly concerned with criticism of atomism, liberal neutrality, the significance of cultural community, and the common good. It does not provide many practical guidelines on individual conduct and self-cultivation.

With respect to individual practice, Tu's emphasis on the relation of embodied knowing and self-cultivation provides an important complement to Taylor's theory. Tu stresses the transformative effects of knowledge and the renovation of one's disposition, which finally leads to the realization of *ren*, with a concrete manifestation of ritual observance and embodiment of virtues. For Tu, the body, as an instrument, not only helps us to know about morality, but also lets human beings, as Heaven's co-creators, be involved in the great transformation by communicating with all modalities of being, so that we can realize the ultimate human goal, and sustain and enrich nature in ordinary life. Such a view of knowledge not only stresses the identification of knowing and acting, but also the transformation of being. For Tu, I would argue, moral knowledge is not simply intellectual or experiential, but also leads to existential embodiment. Such knowledge includes both conceptual and experiential understanding, but goes beyond both. It is a capability to realize what one conceptually and experientially understands through his or her bodily actions. This is the ultimate stage of embodied knowing. Furthermore, such practice has social and cosmological implications.

Through self-cultivation, Confucianism emphasizes that we should establish and enlarge others, and even the whole cosmos. By participating in ritual and intellectual and spiritual life, the body adapts and embraces the world, which generates the possibility of the union with the whole cosmos. Although Taylor also stresses the transformative nature of religion, its relation to embodiment remains unexplored. In contrast, Tu's emphasis on the integration of knowing, doing, and being, and the enlargement from the self to the universe, seem to reflect a more holistic view of the body. At least the Confucian's emphasis on ritual practice provides a more fully embodied understanding of the moral self.

Finally, both Tu and Taylor agree that our body can act as a conduit by which we can communicate with and be connected to the aura of transcendence, although their underlying metaphysical assumptions are very different. Taylor's philosophy is deeply influenced by his Catholic faith in which God and human beings are very different in nature. Our knowledge of God is mainly derived from God's revelation. Human beings are finite. Therefore, at best, we can conceive of an infinite God in an analogical way. However, according to Tu's thesis of the continuity of being, we are integral parts of Heaven, Earth, and a myriad of things. Human beings are intimately

connected with nature on the one hand and Heaven on the other. In short, human beings form a trinitarian relation with Heaven and Earth.⁴⁰ As human nature is imparted by Heaven, it is impossible to conceive humans as alienated from Heaven in any essential way. As Tu states, “the relationship between Heaven and man is not that of creator and creature but one mutual fidelity; and the only way for man to know Heaven is to penetrate deeply into his own ground of being.”⁴¹ Thus, briefly speaking, the Confucian religious view is a kind of pantheism, or what Tu calls “anthropocosmic”⁴², meaning that “there is implicit mutuality, constant communication, and dynamic interaction between the anthropological world and the cosmic order.”⁴³ For Confucians, any inquiry into religion must begin with a reflection on the problem of human being, rather than one acquired by transcendent revelation. Obviously, their religious views are important components to Tu’s and Taylor’s theories of embodied reasoning. Unfortunately, the current study is unable to further explore the relationship between embodiment and religion.

CONCLUSION

This paper has compared and shown some similarities and differences between Tu Wei-Ming’s and Charles Taylor’s view of embodied reasoning. While Taylor provides a clear ontological foundation of embodied moral epistemology, Tu elaborates on how we can enlarge and cultivate ourselves by bodily practice. I have demonstrated that these two theories, although based on very different traditional backgrounds, can be mutually enriching. Furthermore, their respective theories of embodiment are also related to their religious views. In order to have a more in-depth comprehension of Tu’s and Taylor’s theory of embodiment, the investigation of their underlying metaphysical and religious views, and their relation to embodiment, deserves further study.

NOTES

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the conference, “Spiritual Foundations and Chinese Culture: A Philosophical Approach”, organized by the Council for Research in Values and Philosophy and the Fu Jen Institute of Scholastic Philosophy, Taiwan, December 13-14, 2013. The work on this article was supported by a grant from the College of Professional and Continuing Education, an affiliate of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

² John Tambornino, *The Corporeal Turn: Passion, Necessity, Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), pp. 41-72; Zhang Bing (張兵), “‘Embodied Knowing’ from the Perspective of the Study of Body” (身體觀研究視野下的“體知”述議) (Chinese Article), *Philosophical Trends* (《哲學動態》), Issue 11 (2010), pp. 27-29; Gu, Hong-Liang (顧紅亮), “An Reinterpretation of Moral Knowledge: On Tu Wei-Ming’s Theory of Embodied

Knowing” (對德性之知的再闡釋 —— 論杜維明的體知概念) (Chinese Article), *Confucius Studies* (《孔子研究》), Issue 5 (2005), pp. 105-111; Ning, Xin-Chang (寧新昌), “On Culture of Confucian Embodied Knowing: Review on Tu Wei-Ming Confucianism” (“體知” 儒學考量文化——杜維明儒學思想評述)(Chinese Article), *Newsletter of History of Chinese Thought* (《中國思想史研究通訊》), Issue 8 (2006), <http://www.confucius2000.com/admin/list.asp?id=2318>, accessed on 15 October, 2013.

³ Tu, Wei-Ming (杜維明), *Embodied Knowing: Conversation on the Modern Value of Confucianism* (《體知儒學：儒家當代價值的九次對話》) (Hangzhou: Zhejiang da xue chu ban she [浙江大學出版社], 2012), pp. 1-88.

⁴ The term "May Fourth Movement", in a narrow sense, refers to the student protest in Beijing on 4 May 1919 following the Versailles Peace Settlement decision that Japan should take over former German concessions in Shandong. In a broader sense, it often refers to the period during 1915-1921, more often called the New Culture Movement. In the following months hundreds of similar student demonstrations were held across the country. A wave of intellectual debate and the re-evaluation of traditional Chinese culture in light of Western thought were triggered by these demonstrations. Scholars of the New Culture Movement, such as Chen Duxiu (陳獨秀), Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培), Lu Xun (魯迅) and Hu Shih (胡適), believed that traditional Confucianism was responsible for the political weakness of the nation. Chinese nationalists called for a rejection of traditional values and the creation of a ‘new culture’, based on Western ideals of science and democracy, to strengthen Chinese culture itself.

⁵ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 8-9.

⁶ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007); *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); *Philosophical Arguments*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995). Reference to these works, cited as SA, HAL, PHS, SS and PA respectively, will appear parenthetically in the main text.

⁷ Charles Taylor, “Embodied Agency”, in *Merleau-Ponty: Critical Essays*, ed. Henry Pietersma (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1989), p. 3.

⁸ Taylor, “Embodied Agency”, p. 2.

⁹ Steve Smith, “Positivism and Beyond”, *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, ed. Steve Smith et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 11.

¹⁰ Tu, Wei-Ming (杜維明), “On ‘Embodied Knowing’ — the Implications of Moral Knowledge in the Confucian Tradition” (論儒家的「體知」——德性之知的涵意) (Chinese Article), in *Essays from the seminar on*

Confucian ethics (《儒家倫理研討會論文集》), ed. Liu Shu-hsien (Singapore: Institute of East Asia Philosophy, 1987), pp. 98-111; See also Tu, Wei-Ming (杜維明), *Tu Wei-Ming Collections, Book V*, eds. Guo Qiyong, Zheng Wenlong bian (《杜維明文集》卷五, 郭齊勇、鄭文龍主編), (China: Wuhan chu ban she [武漢出版社], 2002), pp. 329-76.

¹¹ Tu, “On Embodied Knowing”, p. 103.

¹² Tu, “On Embodied Knowing”, p. 101.

¹³ Tu, “On Embodied Knowing”, p. 101.

¹⁴ Tu, *Tu Wei-Ming Collections, Book V*, p. 371.

¹⁵ Tu, Wei-ming, “Confucian humanist learning in the four related perspectives of body, mind, soul and spirit” (從身、心、靈、神四層次看儒家的人學) (Chinese Article), in *Tu Wei-Ming Collections, Book V*, eds., Guo Qiyong, Zheng Wenlong bian (《杜維明文集》卷五, 郭齊勇、鄭文龍主編), (China: Wuhan chu ban she [武漢出版社], 2002), pp. 331-2. Hereafter “Four Perspectives”.

¹⁶ Tu, “On Embodied Knowing”, p. 101, 109.

¹⁷ Tu, Wei-Ming, “The Creative Tension between *Jēn* and *Li*”, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 18, No. 1/2 (Jan. - Apr., 1968), pp. 31, 34.

¹⁸ Tu, “On Embodied Knowing”, p. 106.

¹⁹ Tu, “On Embodied Knowing”, p. 103.

²⁰ Tu, “On Embodied Knowing”, pp. 106-7.

²¹ Tu, Wei-ming, “The Continuity of Being: Chinese Visions of Nature”, in *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought*, ed., J. Baird Callicott and Roger T. Ames. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), pp. 67-78.

²² *The Doctrine of the Mean*, 22.

²³ Tu, “Four Perspectives”, p. 329.

²⁴ Tu, “Four Perspectives”, p. 330.

²⁵ Tu, “Four Perspectives”, p. 331.

²⁶ Tu, “Four Perspectives”, p. 331.

²⁷ Tu, “On Embodied Knowing”, p. 99.

²⁸ Tu, Wei-Ming, “Chinese Philosophy: a Synoptic View”, in *A Companion to World Philosophies*, eds. Eliot Deutsch and Ron Bontekoe (Blackwell Publishing, 2004), *Blackwell Reference Online*. 09 October 2013 <http://0-www.blackwellreference.com.lib.cpce-polyu.edu.hk/subscriber/tocnode.html?id=g9780631213277_chunk_g97806312132773>

²⁹ Tu, Wei-ming, “Body, Body Politic and The Way”, *Reischauer Lecturer*, Fairbank Center for East Asian Research, Harvard University, April, 1996, <http://archive.is/3KHMx> accessed on 27 Oct 2013.

³⁰ Tu, Wei-ming, “From Embodied Knowing to Human Dignity (Outline)” (從“體知”看人的尊嚴 [提綱]) (Chinese Article), in *Tu Wei-Ming Collections, Book V*, eds., Guo Qiyong, Zheng Wenlong bian (《杜維明文集》卷五, 郭齊勇、鄭文龍主編), (China: Wuhan chu ban she [武漢出版社], 2002), p. 362.

³¹ Tu, "Chinese Philosophy: a Synoptic View"

³² Tu, Wei-Ming, "On the Mencian Perception of Moral Self-Development", *The Monist*, Vol. 61, no. 1 (1978), p. 76.

³³ Tu, "On the Mencian Perception of Moral Self-Development", p. 76; In this article, Tu did not explicate what this is in the human mind. However, according to another of his articles, "Four perspectives", we know that Tu is talking about *Qi*. *Qi* is a kind of vital force or vital energy. See Tu, "Four perspectives", p. 334; see also Tu, "The Continuity of Being: Chinese Visions of Nature", p. 37.

³⁴ *Mencius*, Irene Bloom trans.; edited and with an introduction by Philip J. Ivanhoe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 30.

³⁵ *Mencius*, Irene Bloom trans., p. 30.

³⁶ Tu, Wei-ming, "Four Perspectives", p. 333.

³⁷ Tu, "Chinese Philosophy: a Synoptic View".

³⁸ Tu, "Four Perspectives", pp. 335-6.

³⁹ Tu, *Tu Wei-Ming Collections, Book V*, p. 352.

⁴⁰ Tu, Wei-Ming, "Soul: Chinese Concepts," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, vol. 13, (New York: Macmillan, 1987), p. 447.

⁴¹ Tu, Wei-Ming, *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Confucian Religiousness* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 10.

⁴² Tu, *Centrality and Commonality*, p. 102.

⁴³ Tu, "Chinese Philosophy: a Synoptic View".

ABOUT THE JOURNAL

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.

William Sweet,
Editor

