PHILOTHEOS

International Journal for Philosophy and Theology

ΦΙΛΟΘΕΟC

International Journal for Philosophy and Theology

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,Der letzte Gott'?

1. Von der Transzendenz zur Absurdität und zum Nihilismus

Die Lektüre des Buches ,Die Lektion des Jahrhunderts' von H.-G. Gadamer verdeutlicht, wie sehr der Prozess der Atomisierung des Menschen und seines personalen Bewusstseins in der Zeit nach Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) weitergeschritten ist[1]. Die Subjektivierung, die mit der Individualisierung zusammenhängt, ist seit der Italienischen Renaissance und den christlichen Reformatoren, dieser tiefgreifenden Wende innerhalb der Geschichte der christlichen Kultur, stetig fortgeschritten und hat ihre Spuren in der Philosophie der Neuzeit hinterlassen. Die jeweilig geltende Philosophie, die auf der Akzeptanz durch das kollektive Bewusstsein angewiesen ist, findet in dem Maße Beifall, wie sie dem jeweils geltenden Lebensgefühl, der jeweils geltenden Mentalität entspricht. Die jeweils geltende Philosophie ist der Gradmesser für das jeweils geltende Bewusstsein des Menschen von sich selbst und der Weltwirklichkeit, also dem Menschen- und Weltbild. Insofern ist das menschliche Denken auch, aber nicht nur, Ausdruck eines auf die Zukunft hin offenen geschichtlichen seelischen und geistigen Prozesses. Mit Hilfe der Hinterlassenschaft dieses Denkens können wir dieses von seinen Anfängen bis heute umrisshaft nachzeichnen.

Je mehr der europäische Mensch seit der Italienischen Renaissance auf sich selbst zurückgefallen ist, umso mehr entglitt ihm der Sinn für seine Verwandtschaft mit dem Ganzen der Welt und mit dem Göttlichen. Das Fazit aus der Geschichte der Philosophie des 20 Jahrhunderts lautet: Der Mensch ist nur endlich und deshalb nur geschichtlich und befindet sich deshalb in einem heillosen Zustand[2]. In der Epoche der idealistischen Philosophie schien der Mensch weithin noch im Kraftfeld einer Gottverwandtschaft zu stehen. Nach Auguste Comte (1798–1857), Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–1872), Karl Marx (1818–1883) und Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) fällt das Thermometer der Gottverwandtschaft gleichsam auf Null: Der Mensch fällt gänzlich auf sich selbst zurück und ähnelt einem Blinden, wobei der Philosoph als gleichfalls Erblindeter sich anheischig macht, Blinde zu führen. Hier bleibt dann nur der Zirkel des Immanentismus übrig[3].

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1 H.-G. GADAMER, Die Lektion des Jahrhunderts. Ein philosophischer Dialog mit Riccardo Dottori (Münster 2001).

2 Ausdruck dieses existenzialistischen Denkens finden wir bei GADAMER a. O. (s. o. Anm. 1) 22-33: ,Eine Philosophie der Endlichkeit', wo es 30 f. heißt: „das ist gerade der Mensch: Zeitlichkeit, Endlichkeit".

3 H. FRIEDRICH, Die Struktur der modernen Lyrik. Von Baudelaire bis zur Gegenwart (Hamburg 1956) 72-

Der Gang der abendländischen Philosophie mündet am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts in seinen den Zeitgeist bestimmenden Repräsentanten in eine reine Diesseitigkeit. Die Dimension des Unendlichen – nicht in einem quantitativen, sondern in einem qualitativen Sinn verstanden – weicht der Dimension der Endlichkeit. Weder die Welt der Erscheinungen noch der Mensch selber erscheinen mehr für das Göttliche im Sinne der frühen Griechen durchlässig, aber auch nicht für den jüdischen und christlichen Schöpfergott. Ein derartiges Empfinden wetterleuchtet bereits in Versen des goethischen Faust:

> Nach drüben ist die Aussicht uns verrannt;
> Thor! wer dorthin die Augen blinzend richtet,
> Sich über Wolken seines gleichen dichtet!
> Er stehe fest und sehe hier sich um;
> Dem Tüchtigen ist diese Welt nicht stumm.
> Was braucht er in die Ewigkeit zu schweifen!
> Was er erkennt läßt sich ergreifen[4].

Nach dem langen Menschheitszeitalter des Mythischen und der Mythen mit der *unio magica* des Menschen mit der Welt erwies die Philosophie im Zeitalter der Metaphysik ihr Ringen um den Sinn des Ganzen von Welt und Mensch und damit auch um Glauben und Zweifel und dies auf der begrifflichen Stufe des Denkens. Insofern sind die Darlegungen H.-G. Gadamers aufschlussreich; denn letztlich zeigen sie erneut, dass alles begriffliche Denken seit den frühen religiösen griechischen Philosophen um die eine Frage kreist: Was ist der Mensch? Eine geschlossene oder eine offene, eine endliche oder eine unendliche Größe oder vielleicht doch beides? Dem Menschen sollte stets das Gemeinsame und das Unterschiedliche zu den Geschöpfen, die unter ihm stehen, bewusst bleiben. Im Gegensatz zu Pflanzen und Tieren, die in die engen Grenzen ihres sinnenhaften Wahrnehmens gebannt sind, vermag der Mensch die sinnenhaft aufgefassten Erscheinungen bewusst und personal in den Koordinaten der Zeit und des Raumes zu erleben, wobei er aber nicht in diesen beiden aufeinander bezogenen Koordinaten aufgeht. Ferner besitzt er in seinem Person-Sein die geistigen Anschauungen von Einheit/Ganzheit, Verschiedenheit/Teil, von Leben/Sein und Werden/Vergehen sowie von Gegensatz, Verwandlung und Kontinuum und gehört damit in seiner personalen Identität einer alle Wirklichkeitsaspekte überschreitenden Wirklichkeit an. Gewiss werden Zeit und Raum vom Menschen nicht immer in gleicher Weise während seiner Lebenszeit wahrgenommen. Vielmehr wissen wir aus der Geschichte der Menschheit, dass erst in den letzten zehntausend Jahren oder noch etwas später das Empfinden für Perspektive und deren Differenzierung, also der Sinn für verschiedene Standpunkte oder Aspekte, und infolgedessen für Geschichtlichkeit entwickelt wurde. Das

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106: ,Mallarmé', bes. 87 f.: ,Das Nichts und die Form' und 89 f. zu dessen "Mystik des Nichts", die der "leeren Transzendenz" bei Baudelaire und Rimbaud entspreche; W. Muschg, Die Zerstörung der deutschen Literatur ³(Bern 1958); E. Grassi, Der Tod Gottes. Zu einer These von Mallarmé: K. Gaiser (Hrsg,), Das Altertum und jedes neue Gute, Festschrift W. Schadewaldt (Stuttgart 1970) 195-214. – Zum Absurden im Theater des 20. Jahrhunderts J. L. Styan, Modern Drama in Theory and Practice, vol. 2: Symbolism, Surrealism and the Absurd (Cambridge 1981, Ndr. ebd. 1992).

4   J. W. Goethe, Faust II Verse 469-475.

Gedächtnis, die Erinnerung der Menschheit verfügt also über eine sehr kleine Zeitspanne, verglichen mit den Zeiten, da der *homo sapiens* auf der Erde ist. Wie jung ist erst die schriftliche Überlieferung! So ist der Mensch erst in relativ später Zeit fähig geworden, über seinen Eigenstand in der Welt nachzudenken. Dieses Denken des Denkens, dieses Bedenken der Fähigkeiten des menschlichen Geistes, ermächtigt ihn zu sagen, dass er trotz aller Bedingtheit und aller Begrenztheit seiner selbst in Zeit und Raum doch ein Vermögen besitzt, das diese Grenze immer wieder übersteigt und weiter hinauszuschieben imstande ist. So kann der Menschengeist sich seiner eigenen Unendlichkeitsdimension bewusst werden, deren er vor allem in dem nie endenden Wechsel von Frage und Antwort innewird[5]. Wäre dem nicht so, so besäße er keinen Begriff der qualitativen Unendlichkeit, der Ewigkeit, des Absoluten, der Wahrheit, des Guten, aber auch der Freiheit seines Willens.

Deshalb ist es falsch, nur auf die Endlichkeit des Menschen hinzuweisen; vielmehr ist es notwendig, wieder das Gesetz des Gegensatzes zu berücksichtigen und in diesem Fall das Gegen-, Mit- und Ineinander des Gegensatzes von Endlichkeit und Unendlichkeit zu beachten. Ein Versuch hierzu liegt in dem letzten Kapitel des Dialogs zwischen H.-G. Gadamer und R. Dottori (1940–2021) vor. Hier wird deutlich, dass H.-G. Gadamer mit seiner Philosophie der Endlichkeit des Menschen nur die eine Seite des Menschen erschlossen hat. Der Bezug des Menschen zu Unendlichkeit oder Ewigkeit oder Absolutheit oder Göttlichkeit ist eben nicht außer Acht zu lassen. Er äußert sich auch nach F. Nietzsches Rede vom ‚Tode Gottes‘, einer Rede, die ohne das christliche Erbe nicht denkbar ist[6].

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5 E. Coreth, Metaphysik. Eine methodisch-systematische Grundlegung ³(Innsbruck 1980); Ders., Was ist der Mensch? Grundzüge einer philosophischen Anthropologie ⁴(Innsbruck 1986) 11-13: ‚Frage und Vorwissen‘.
6 F. Nietzsche, Die fröhliche Wissenschaft, 3. Buch 125: ‚Der tolle Mensch‘ (Chemnitz 1882) = G. Colli / M. Montinari (Hrsg.), Nietzsche Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 5. Abt., Bd. 2 ²(Berlin 1973) 158-160. – M. Röbel, Staunen und Ehrfurcht. Eine werkgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum philosophischen Denken Peter Wusts = Edition Peter Wust 3 (Berlin 2009) 49-82: ‚Peter Wust und die ‚Krisis des Menschen schlechthin‘‘; H. Thielicke, Glauben und Denken in der Neuzeit. Die großen Systeme der Theologie und Religionsphilosophie ²(Tübingen 1983) 542-566: ‚Ludwig Feuerbach‘.

Zur Geschichte der beiden Wörter ‚Nihilist‘ und ‚Nihilismus‘, allerdings nur die Neuzeit betreffend und nicht deren antike und alttestamentliche Wurzeln (Buch Kohelet; dazu R. Braun, Kohelet und die frühhellenistische Popularphilosophie = Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 130 [Berlin 1973, Ndr. ebd. 2018] 14-43: ‚Die griechisch-hellenistische Bildung der Zeit Kohelets und ihre gnomischen und popularphilosophischen pessimistischen Überlieferungen‘ mit einem Überblick von Homer, der Lyrik, dem Drama, der Komödie, der Philosophie bis zur hellenistischen Bildung; nicht beachtet von E. Birnbaum, Art. Qohelet: RAC 28 [2018] 523-536); O. Pöggeler, ‚Nihilist‘ und ‚Nihilismus‘: Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte 19 (1975) 197-210.

Weitere Literatur zum ‚Nichts‘ und zum Nihilismus: B. Delfgaauw, Das Nichts: Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung 4 (1949) 393-401, bes. 401: „Die Frage nach dem Nichts ist eine Frage nach dem Wesen des Menschen, das bestimmend und bestimmt, unendlich und endlich ist"; H. de Lubac, Die Tragödie des Humanismus ohne Gott. Feuerbach-Nietzsche-Comte und Dostojewskij als Prophet, dt. Übers. (Salzburg 1950) 39-49: ‚Nichts und der ‚Tod Gottes‘‘; K. Riezler, Das Nichts und das Andere, das Sein und das Seiende: Varia Variorum, Festschrift K. Reinhardt (Münster in Wf. 1952) 82-102; E. Jünger, Über die Linie ³(Frankfurt 1951); W. Höck (Hrsg.), Herr Je das Nichts ist bodenlos. Unsinn in Poesie und Prosa (München 1968); J. Salaquarda (Hrsg.), Philosophische Theologie im Schatten des Nihilismus (Berlin 1971); W. Müller-Lauter, Nietzsche. Seine Philosophie der Gegensätze und die Gegensätze seiner Philosophie (Berlin

F. Nietzsche bleibt hier im Karfreitagsgeschehen stecken: Die Verlassenheit Jesu am Kreuz weist auf die Dimension des Abgrundes und auf den Riss hin, der sich auftun kann, wenn scheinbar oder anscheinend der Mensch aus der Gemeinschaft mit Gott fällt, ihn nicht mehr spürt und so seine Abwesenheit mit einem Nicht-Wirklich-Sein verwechselt. Am Schluss dieser Einstellung zur Welt ergibt sich dann die Annahme der Sinnlosigkeit von allem, der Absurdität und des nichtenden Nichts. Im Fall Jesu liegt nach christlichem Verständnis eine Sonderfall vor, seine Stellvertretung der sich von Gott verlassen fühlenden Menschheit[7].

2. Vom ‚Tode Gottes‘ zum ‚Neuen‘ oder ‚Letzten Gott‘

Das Schlusskapitel bei H.-G. Gadamer lautet: ‚Der letzte Gott‘. Im ersten Teil kehrt H.-G. Gadamer wieder auf sein Verhältnis zu M. Heidegger (1889–1976) zurück. Dabei spielt eine Äußerung dieses Philosophen eine fast leitmotivartige Rolle. Diese Äußerung bezieht sich auf M. Heideggers Verhältnis zu seinen philosophischen Vorgängern, insbesondere zu F. Nietzsche und lautet überraschenderweise: "Nietzsche hat mich kaputt gemacht". Wie ist diese Aussage zu verstehen? Von dieser Äußerung des späten M. Heidegger hat H.-G. Gadamer erst nach M. Heideggers Tod von dessen Sohn erfahren. Das Verständnis dieser Äußerung liegt auf zwei Ebenen: dem Selbstverständnis M. Heideggers und dem Verständnis, das H.-G. Gadamer bzw. die Forschung dazu äußert[8]. Lesen wir die Deutung R. Dottoris, so fällt auf, dass im gesamten Kontext stets eindeutige Aussagen als Letztaussagen begegnen, gleichsam Schlag-Sätze, die diktatorisch eine Summe von allem ziehen wollen. Das gilt individuell gefärbt bereits von M. Heideggers später oder am Ende seines Lebens

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1971) 66-80: ‚Nihilismus als Wille zum Nichts‘; 81-94: ‚Nihilismus und Christentum‘; W. Weischedel, Der Gott der Philosophen. Grundlegung einer philosophischen Theologie im Zeitalter des Nihilismus, Bd. 1/2 (Darmstadt 1972); D. Arendt, ‚Der poetische Nihilismus‘ in der Romantik. Studien zum Verhältnis von Dichtung und Wirklichkeit in der Frühromantik = Studien zur deutschen Literatur 29/30 (Tübingen 1972); E. Benz, Endzeiterwartung zwischen Ost und West. Studien zur christlichen Eschatologie = Sammlung Rombach N. F. 20 (Freiburg i. Br. 1973); W. Weischedel, Die Frage nach Gott im skeptischen Denken, hrsg. von W. Müller-Lauter (Berlin 1976); B. Welte, Religionsphilosophie ²(Freiburg i. Br. 1978) 48-57: ‚Über die verschiedenen Bedeutungen des Nichts‘, bes. 53: Das nichtige Nichts ist zu unterscheiden vom Nichts der absoluten Verbergung; W. Weier, Nihilismus. Geschichte, System, Kritik = Abhandlungen zur Philosophie, Psychologie, Soziologie der Religionen und Ökumenik, N. F. 39 (Paderborn 1980); Th. Kobusch, Art. Nichts, Nichtseiendes: Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie 6 (1984) 805-836; H. Deku, Wahrheit und Unwahrheit der Tradition. Metaphysische Reflexionen, hrsg. von W. Beierwaltes (Sankt Ottilien 1986) 221-246: ‚De nihilo‘; E. Jüngel, Gott als Geheimnis der Welt. Zur Begründung der Theologie des Gekreuzigten im Streit zwischen Theismus und Atheismus ⁵(Tübingen 1986) 55-137: ‚Die Rede vom Tode Gottes als Ausdruck der Aporie des neuzeitlichen Gottesgedankens‘; B. Hillebrand, Ästhetik des Nihilismus. Von der Romantik zum Modernismus (Stuttgart 1991); K. Hübner, Glaube und Denken. Dimensionen der Wirklichkeit (Tübingen 2001) 530-575: ‚Die Metaphysik der Gottlosigkeit‘, 576-605: ‚Der Zerfall der Metaphysik in der Philosophie der Gegenwart‘.

7 Mt. 27, 46: „Mein Gott, mein Gott, warum hast du mich verlassen?"; nicht überzeugend die Deutung von H. Hanse, ‚Gott haben‘ in der Antike und im frühen Christentum. Eine religions- und begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung = RGVV 27 (Berlin 1939) 149.

8 Gadamer a. O. (s. o. Anm. 1) 144.

wiederholten Selbstbekenntnis: „Nietzsche hat mich kaputt gemacht"[9]. Über die Trivialität der sprachlichen Ausdrucksweise ist nicht weiter zu befinden. Der Tenor dieser Aussage zielt auf etwas Endgültiges: M. Heidegger bekennt, an F. Nietzsche, d.h. doch wohl an dessen Nihilismus, gescheitert zu sein. Das sagt der ehemals der katholischen Theologie nahestehende M. Heidegger, von dem H.-G. Gadamer sagt, dass er ein tiefreligiöser Mensch war[10].

Entscheidend für das Verständnis der abendländischen Denkgeschichte sind dann die weiteren Sätze: F. Nietzsches Lehre vom absoluten ,Willen zur Macht', und G. F. W. Hegels Ziel des ,absoluten Wissens'[11]. Der Begriff des Absoluten wird hier auf Denkinhalte des Menschen angewendet. Hier ist die von den Griechen gefürchtete Hybris eines Denkens zu erkennen, das sich nicht mehr seiner Gebrochenheit bewusst bleibt und sich philosophisch „über Wolken Seinesgleichen dichtet", d.h. zu endgültigen Ergebnissen gelangen möchte[12]. Wie F. Nietzsches Annahme des Gesetzes des ,Willens zur Macht' und des Gesetzes der ,Ewigen Wiederkehr des Gleichen' nur bedingt Grundprinzipien dieser zeitlich-räumlich-gestalthaften Wirklichkeit sind, so gehören zu diesen Gesetzen auch die von ihm nicht thematisierten, aber gleicherweise vorhandenen Grundprinzipien der Einheit, der Gerechtigkeit, der Metamorphose und des Kontinuums[13]. Tatsächlich fassen wir weder mit dem absoluten ,Willen zur Macht' noch mit der ,Ewigen Wiederkehr des Gleichen' F. Nietzsches noch mit dem absoluten Begriff des ,Wissens' G. F. W. Hegels das Eigentliche der Wirklichkeit. Diese Gedanken sind nur bedingte Einsichten in ein weit komplexeres und unergründlich bleibendes geheimnisvolles lebendiges Ganzes, in dem der denkende Mensch als bedingtes-unbedingtes Wesen steht. Nur in dem In- und Miteinander der prinzipiellen Gegensätze besteht die Welt und das auf Wahrheit angelegte, aber sie nie ausschöpfende mit Reflexion ausgezeichnete Wesen des Menschen.

Insofern sind die inspirierten Dichter den Philosophen überlegen, jedenfalls jenen Philosophen, die den Schlüssel für das Ganze gefunden haben wollen; denn diese Dichter lassen die verschiedenen gegensätzlichen Mächte und Kräfte, welche die Wirklichkeit bilden, auch in ihrer Gegensätzlichkeit stehen. Darauf deutet auch F. Nietzsches Zarathustra hin, wenn es am Schluss des 3. Buches im ,Siebten Siegel' mehrfach heißt: „Singe, sprich nicht mehr! ...". Durch das Singen soll man nach H.-G. Gadamer die Unschuld des Kindes [Unschuld als Zustand vor dem Begriffsdenken? Kindsein als halbbewusstes Leben] und dessen Spiel wieder erreichen[14]. Tatsächlich aber bedeutet ,Singen' etwas Urreligiöses der

9 Ebd. 140. 144.

10 Ebd. 151.

11 Ebd. 144 f.

12 J. W. Goethe, Faust II Vers 11444. – E. J. HEINDL, Ist das sich selbst reflektierende Ich des Menschen nur eine Fiktion? Erkenntniskritische Anfragen an die Neurobiologie: Philotheos 13 (2013) 66-79, bes. 66-68.

13 J. W. Goethe, Faust II Vers 6286 f.: „Gestaltung, Umgestaltung, / Des ewigen Sinnes ewige Unterhaltung".

14 GADAMER a. O. (s. o. Anm. 1) 145 f. mit Hinweis auf H.-G. GADAMER, Nietzsche, Der Antipode. Das Drama Zarathustras: Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 4 (Tübingen 1987) 458-462. – F. Nietzsches Wort „Denn ich liebe dich, o Ewigkeit!" kann auf den platonischen Eros und auf Dionysos hinweisen und sein Gedanke der ,Ewigen Wiederkehr des Gleichen' auf Apollon, Nous und Nomos, das Gesetz. – W. SPEYER, Kosmos, Schöpfung,

Form und dem Inhalt nach: Singen als Hymnus ist ein Preisen des Göttlichen und eine Frühform des Gebets.

Die Einheit des Bewusstseins, besser des Selbst, legt sich im abendländischen Denken immer mehr in eine Zweiheit auseinander: Herz und Geist, Lust und Erkenntnis, Praxis und Theorie[15]. Der Riss zwischen den genannten Polen wird immer deutlicher und schmerzlicher empfunden.

Die Opposition Bewegtes und Unbewegtes, Lebendiges und Totes, Leben und Tod, werden in der Reflexionskultur immer stärker bewusst. Hier liegt dann als ein Weg der Heilung innerhalb der griechisch-römischen Reflexionskultur die Bedeutung der griechischen Mysterien; denn die Mysterien versuchen den Riss zu heilen, nicht aufgrund eines bestimmten Denkens, sondern auf der Grundlage des mythischen Erlebens und eines vertieften Innewerdens der Einheit von Ruhe und Bewegung sowie von Leben und Tod in diesem Dasein[16]. Allerdings muss die Antwort auf die dies von der Tradition unverstellte ganzheitliche Denken nicht als eine Letztantwort gewertet werden. Diese gibt es hier nicht; denn hinter oder über dem Gegen-, Mit- und Ineinander von Dionysos/Hades und Apollon/Sol, von Finsternis und Licht, von Nacht und Tag, steht die diese gebrochene Welt bedingende andere Weltwirklichkeit, die alles hier Analysierte übersteigt. Die Paradoxie des Gegensatzes auch als eines Mit- und Ineinanders, des Zusammenfalls der Gegensätze, muss nicht das Letzte sein, ja kann nicht das Letzte sein; aber hier beginnt bereits der Glaube, der nicht von einer noch so umsichtigen und alle Spannungen bedenkenden Betrachtung einholbar ist.

Das letzte Kapitel in dem Rückblick, den H.-G. Gadamer auf sein Denken gibt, endet mit dem Ausblick auf Heideggers Rede vom ‚Neuen‘ oder ‚Letzten Gott‘. Damit wird ersichtlich, dass das Denken, wie es im Abendland entfaltet wurde, trotz aller Abbrüche und Neueinsätze in den letzten zweihundert Jahren wieder dort angelangt ist, von wo es seinen Ausgang genommen hat: von der Rede vom Geist, vom menschlichen Geist als einem Widerschein eines alles bestimmenden, gestaltenden und ordnenden Geistes mit Sein, Einheit, Ganzheit und Differenz, mit Ruhe und Bewegung, mit Gesetzmäßigkeit von Anfang und Ende, Werden und Vergehen, mit dem Energie- und Lebensstrom, mit dem Kontinuum von Zeit und Raum sowie verwandter Grundvorstellungen über die Wirklichkeit. Das Verwiesensein des menschlichen Geistes als eines individuellen und als eines art- und gattungsbestimmten Geistes auf einem ihn ermöglichenden Geist wird im Gang der Theologie- und Philosophiegeschichte des Abendlandes sichtbar. Insofern betrifft F. Nietzsches

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Nichts. Der Mensch in der Entscheidung = Salzburger Theologische Studien 37 (Innsbruck 2010) 250-275, bes. 272-275: ‚Die Ambivalenz der göttlichen Macht bei Friedrich Nietzsche‘. – H. Herter, Das unschuldige Kind: Ders., Kleine Schriften = Studia et Testimonia Antiqua 15 (München 1975) 598-619.

15 B. Snell, Die Entdeckung des Geistes. Studien zur Entstehung des europäischen Denkens bei den Griechen ³(Hamburg 1955) 401-411: ‚Theorie und Praxis im Denken des Abendlandes‘; K.-J. Grün, Art. Theorie/Praxis: Goethe-Handbuch 4, 2 (Stuttgart 1998) 1049-1051; W. Speyer, Die Einheit von theoretischem Denken und kontemplativer Lebensform in der griechischen Frühzeit: J. Schaber / M. Thurner (Hrsg.), Philosophie und Mystik – Theorie oder Lebensform? (Freiburg i. Br. 2019) 39-56.

16 Ch. Auffarth, Art. Mysterien (Mysterienkulte): RAC 25 (2013) 422-471.

‚Rede vom Tode Gottes‘ – genau betrachtet – nur eine bestimmte Rede von Gott, die er als unpassend zurückweist, weil Gott das Unaussprechbare ist. Ob hier auch eine Fortführung des alttestamentlichen Bilderverbotes zu sehen ist, das in der christlichen Überlieferung weitgehend verdrängt und vergessen worden ist[17]? Die Gründe hierfür, die in der Christologie liegen, wären näher zu beleuchten.

‚Neuer Gott‘, ‚Letzter Gott‘, Vergessen Gottes, Leugnung Gottes – das Atheismusproblem – sind möglicherweise nur Spielarten der Auseinandersetzung des menschlichen Geistes mit jeweils auch von der Denkgeschichte aufgeladenen und belasteten Vorstellungen über das Gründend-Absolute, die als unzulänglich beiseitegeschoben werden, wobei dann das Eigentliche verdunkelt wird. Tatsächlich gibt es auch eine gewisse Art des nihilistischen Denkens, die mit der negativen Theologie eines Theismus in Verbindung steht.

Solange der Mensch natur- oder schöpfungskonform denkt, – wieder ist die Rückbindung des Denkens an das Handeln und so an die ethische Grundstruktur des Menschen zu beachten! – der Mensch aufgefasst als sittlich denkende und handelnde Person, wenigstens seiner Grundanlage nach –, solange kann er nicht ernsthaft aus der Gewissheit einer alles umfassenden und alles sittlich bestimmenden Macht fallen[18].

M. Heidegger interpretierte F. Nietzsches Rede ‚Vom Tode Gottes‘ als die Rede vom Tod des christlichen Gottes. Hier geht es um die Frage nach der richtigen Interpretation der christlichen Gottesvorstellung durch F. Nietzsche. Wenn wir beispielsweise R. M. Rilkes ‚Brief des jungen Arbeiters‘ lesen, in dem Rilke sein Verständnis des Christentums darlegt, so ließe sich nachweisen, dass er ein unzulängliches Bild des christlichen Glaubens bekämpft, dass er wissend oder unwissend ein inadäquates Bild bekämpft, also – etwas übertrieben ausgedrückt – ein Phantom bekämpft[19]. Ob nicht Ähnliches *mutatis mutandis* auf F. Nietzsches Interpretation zutrifft?

Im Fortgang des Gespräches über den ‚Letzten Gott‘ stellt R. Dottori H.-G. Gadamer folgende Frage: „Wenn wir uns aber jetzt auf seinen [M. Heideggers] Gedanken des Neuen Gottes wieder beziehen, könnten wir vielleicht denken, dass dieser neue Gott, oder letzte Gott, nach dem Tod Gottes kommen soll, der von dem tollen Menschen Nietzsches <in der> *Fröhlichen Wissenschaft* verkündet wurde, den Heidegger eben als Tod des christlichen Gottes interpretiert. Wir könnten auch denken, dass der neue Gott gerade die neue Orientierung des eigenen Weges der Menschheit darstellt, den die Menschheit nach dem

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17 Ex. 20, 4 f.

18 Hier ist an die antiken Hymnen an den Kosmosgott zu erinnern, von dem orphischen Zeushymnus: Orph. frg. 243: Vers 1-32: Hymnus in Iovem (Poetae Epici Graeci. Testimonia et Fragmenta, Pars II: Orphicorum et Orphicis similium Testimonia et Fragmenta, Fasciculus 1 (München 2004) 205-214 Bernabé) bis zu den Zeushymnen der Stoiker Kleanthes und Aratos: J. C. Thom, Cleanthes' Hymn to Zeus. Text, Translation and Commentary = Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 33 (Tübingen 2005). – A. Olerud, L'idée de macrocosmos et de microcosmos dans le ‚Timée‘ de Platon. Etude de mythologie comparée (Uppsala 1951); W. M. Neidl, Die Orphik als mythisches Präludium der Metaphysik. Grundzüge hellenisch-hellenistischen Denkens im Lichte des großen orphischen Zeushymnus: Sinngestalten. Metaphysik in der Vielfalt menschlichen Fragens. Festschrift E. Coreth SJ (Innsbruck 1989) 192-211.

19 Rainer Maria Rilke, Sämtliche Werke, Band 6 (Wiesbaden 1966) 1099-1100, 1111-1128.

Verlust des Glaubens an den christlichen Gott zu gehen hat. Wäre dann der letzte Gott der eigentliche Gedanke des Göttlichen, der in allen Religionen vorhanden ist, d.h.: die Transzendenz ohne christliche Theologie oder ohne jede Form von Theologie, die eben mit dem christlichen Gott gestorben ist?". Hierauf antwortet H.-G. Gadamer ausweichend: „Vielleicht, aber ich bin nicht ganz sicher. Ich kann Ihnen keine endgültige Antwort geben"[20].

Wie das Gespräch in seinem Fortgang lehrt, wechselt der Blickpunkt dauernd zwischen dem Menschen und dem Absoluten. Der Mensch ist, wenn er sich nur auf sich selbst stellen will, nicht genug. Er bleibt sich selbst die größte Frage und sucht eine Antwort in Hoffnung oder in Verzweiflung, der Angst vorausgeht. Der Verlust des Urvertrauens ist der Anfang einer Daseinsangst, die über den Exzess der Verdrängung infolge beabsichtigter Weltbeherrschung in einer Ohnmacht endet oder bereits geendet ist. Das Misstrauen gegenüber der ursprünglichen Ausstattung des Menschen mit Urvertrauen und damit Hoffnung ist in den letzten Jahrhunderten immer mehr angestiegen. Man vergleiche den Satz F. W. J. Schellings (1775–1854), den M. Heidegger so oft zitiert hat: „Die Angst des Lebens treibt die Kreaturen aus ihrem Zentrum"[21].

Verglichen mit den Gedanken der frühen griechischen religiösen Philosophen enttäuscht diese Rückschau, die H.-G. Gadamer von seinem philosophischen Weg gibt, der durch die Philosophen M. Heidegger und K. Jaspers (1883–1969) wesentlich mitbestimmt war.

3. Zu dem ‚Neuen und Letzten Gott‘

Blicken wir in die Tiefe dieses Gespräches, so erkennen wir Grundprobleme des abendländischen Denkens, d.h. des Begriffs-Denkens. Auffallend ist, dass das Buch mit dem Kapitel ‚Der Letzte Gott‘ endet. Vielleicht ist es ein arger Irrtum, dass die Menschen immer ihr jeweils bald schärfer, bald offener gefasstes Bild von Gott als das ihn treffend oder hinlänglich beschreibende Bild ausgegeben haben oder es naiv so angesehen haben. Wie festzuhalten ist, hat sowohl für das mythische Zeitalter als auch für das geschichtlich-begriffliche Zeitalter das Thema des Unbedingten/Bedingenden oder Göttlichen im Zentrum des menschlichen Bewusstseins gestanden und dies zunächst mehr kollektiv, sodann mehr individuell, und weiterhin steht. Der Mensch ist wesentlich ein Bürger zweier Welten. Er ist selbst in seiner Existenz symbolisch und weist damit über sich hinaus. Eine Stufung ist damit angedeutet, die sich nicht in einem eindeutigen Monismus auflösen lässt, d.h. die Zweiheit von Unbedingtem/Bedingendem und dem Menschen bleibt bestehen und damit auch ihre Relation, jedenfalls, solange der Mensch als Erdenwesen empfindend, den-

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20 GADAMER a. O. (s. o. Anm. 1) 147.

21 GADAMER a. O. (s. o. Anm. 1) 151. – Müsste der Satz nicht vielmehr umgekehrt lauten: „Die Angst des Lebens treibt die Kreaturen in ihr Zentrum"? Vgl. dazu die zahlreichen Zeugnisse bei HANSE a. O. (s. o. Anm. 7). – W. SPEYER, Zwischen Traum und Wirklichkeit, Zeit und Ewigkeit. Der Mensch als das Wesen des ‚Zwischen‘ = Salzburger Theologische Studien 51 (Innsbruck 2014) 106-132: „Mitte" und ‚Zentrum‘ als Grundanschauung von Mensch, Welt und Gott‘.

kend, wollend und handelnd unterwegs ist, ohne im Zentrum von allem auf Dauer ange-kommen zu sein. Hier liegen dann auch die Möglichkeiten für verschiedene Deutungen und auch Antworten, wie mit dieser Zweiheit von Diesseitigkeit: Welt-Mensch und Jen-seitigkeit: Unbedingtes/Bedingendes, von Immanenz und Transzendenz umzugehen ist[22]. Zu denken ist beispielsweise an die Aufstiegstheologie im Platonismus und an die Vernei-nungstheologie, die negative Theologie. Dass sich der Mensch nicht selbst genug ist, ergibt sich bereits aus seiner Aufgespaltenheit in Mann und Frau. Die Zweiheit von Welt-Mensch und Unbedingtes/Bedingendes setzt sich in der Existenz der jeweiligen konkreten Men-schen fort. Die Zweiheit und die Vielheit verweisen auf eine hinter allem stehende Einheit, in der alle diese Spaltungen aufgehoben sind. Dieses Göttlich-Eine aber überschreitet, se-hen wir von dem mystischen Weg einer Vereinigung mit dem Einen ab, unsere Erfahrun-gen in dieser Welt.

Die Rede vom ,Letzten Gott' ist eine unpassende Rede, da die Gottesbilder nicht eine arithmetische Reihe bilden und wir nicht in Anmaßung uns als die letzten Menschen bezeichnen dürfen, denen sich nun ein *neuer* Gott zeigen müsste. Es kann nicht einen ers-ten und einen letzten Gott geben. Hier scheinen bei M. Heidegger antike mythische Vor-stellungen weiterzuwirken, wie die der antiken Sukzessionsmythen, wie die der drei Göt-tergenerationen Uranos, Kronos, Zeus bei Hesiod: Zeus/Juppiter als der letzte Gott in einer Reihe entthronter Götter[23], sowie ferner gnostische Vorstellungen, etwa Markions böser Gott des Alten Testamentes und der gute oder neue Gott des Neuen Testamentes.

Zeit und Raum sind für mathematische Reihen notwendige Voraussetzungen, ha-ben aber mit der Gegenwart und Ewigkeit Gottes nichts zu tun. Erkennen wir, dass Gott jenseits aller bisher ausgedachten oder noch auszudenkenden Bilder des Menschen von ihm steht, dann werden wir auch mit allen bisher geäußerten Gedanken des Menschen im Für und Wider gegenüber dieser umfassenden geheimen-offenbaren Wirklichkeit behut-samer umgehen; denn in der scheinbar so gegensätzlichen Gegenüberstellung des Theis-mus-Atheismus spricht sich nur die Sorge des Menschen aus, das Grundgeheimnis dieser unserer Wirklichkeit zu entschleiern und doch bestehen zu lassen, es sei denn, der Mensch würde im Wahn glauben, dass er die Stelle Gottes einnehmen könne[24]: Er, der aufgrund seiner Begrenztheit immer wieder täglich, ja minütlich bewiesen erhält, wie abhängig er ist und dies leiblich, geistig und seelisch. Hier liegt die Wurzel der ,Sünde wider den Hei-ligen Geist', von der im Evangelium die Rede ist[25]. Gemeint ist die Hybris, dort stehen zu wollen, wohin nur, wenn überhaupt, die Gnade führen kann. Es gibt deshalb eine Sünde,

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22 A. P. Bos, Immanenz und Transzendenz: RAC 17 (1996) 1041-1092.

23 Obwohl M. Heidegger sich immer wieder besonders auf die frühgriechischen Philosophen bezogen hat, fehlten ihm doch dafür ausreichende Kenntnisse des Griechischen, wie W. Beierwaltes, Heideggers Rückgang zu den Griechen (München 1995) offenlegt. Daraus folgt auch seine Vernachlässigung der neuplatonischen Philosophie.

24 Jüngel a. O. (s. o. Anm. 6); Speyer, Traum a. O. (s. o. Anm. 21) 164-182: ,Die Wirklichkeit als das Geheime-Offenbare'.

25 Mt. 12, 31 f.; Mc. 3, 28 f.; Lc. 12, 10. – A. Vögtle, Art. Sünde wider den Hl. Geist: Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche 9 ²(1964) 1187 f.

die bestimmten Denkinhalten vorausliegt und diese geradezu bedingt: Der Mensch ist auf allen Ebenen seiner selbst und seiner Selbstentfaltung, also auch als Denkender und als sittlich Handelnder gefordert: Er soll seins-, natur- oder schöpfungsgemäß denken und handeln. Die Wege des Menschen, der seinsgemäß denken und handeln will, sind dabei ebenso mannigfaltig wie die gegenteiligen Wege und lassen sich trotzdem auf zwei gegensätzliche Wege zurückführen. Über diese das Leben eines jeden Einzelnen entscheidenden zwei Wege liegt eine reiche antike und christliche Überlieferung in Schrift und Bild vor[26].

26 Hesiodus, opera 287-292: „Übles kannst Du, wahrhaftig, Dir haufenweise gewinnen / Mühelos, glatt ist der Weg und nahe seine Behausung. / Vor Verdienst setzten den Schweiß die unsterblichen Götter; / Lang und steil jedoch erhebt sich zu diesem der Fußpfad / Und zu Anfang auch rauh; doch wenn Du zur Höhe gelangtest, / Leicht dann zieht er dahin, so schwer er anfangs gewesen" (übers. von Th. von Scheffer); zitiert von Plato, de legibus 4, 9, 718 e – 719 a. – Die orphisch-pythagoreischen Goldplättchen sprachen davon, dass die Seele im Hause des Hades auf der linken Seite eine Quelle mit einer weißen Zypresse sehen werde. Dieser Quelle, der Quelle des Vergessens, Lethe, solle sie sich nicht nahen, sondern der Quelle auf der rechten Seite, der Quelle der Erinnerung, Mnemosyne: Orph. frg. 474-484 a (PEG 2, 2, 9-43 Bernabé); M. Ninck, Die Bedeutung des Wassers im Kult und Leben der Alten. Eine symbolgeschichtliche Untersuchung = Philologus, Suppl.-Bd. 14, 2 (Leipzig 1921, Ndr. Darmstadt 1967) 103-109; K. Ziegler, Art. Orphische Dichtung: PW 18, 2 (1942) 1321-1417, bes. 1386 f.; B. Lincolm, Waters of Memory, Waters of Forgetfullness: Fabula 23 (1982) 19-34; H. Wirth / F. Zanella / H. Brakmann, Art. Rechts – links: RAC 28 (2017) 771-799, bes. 777.– Die antike Erzählung ‚Herakles am Scheideweg‘ geht auf die ‚Horen‘ des Sophisten Prodikos aus Keos (2. Hälfte des 5. Jahrhundert v. Chr.) zurück und ist bei Xenophon, memorabilia 2, 1, 21-34 überliefert. – J. Alpers, Hercules in bivio, Diss. Göttingen (1912) 9-16; E. Panofsky, Herkules am Scheidewege = Studien der Bibliothek Warburg 18 (Hamburg 1930); B. Snell, Die Entdeckung des Geistes. Studien zur Entstehung des europäischen Denkens bei den Griechen ³(Hamburg 1955) 320-332: ‚Das Symbol des Weges‘; W. Harms, Homo viator in bivio. Studien zur Bildlichkeit des Weges (München 1970); P. Svendsen, Europäisches Zentralthema Homo viator: Elemente der Literatur, Festschrift E. Frenzel (Stuttgart 1980) 23-34; J.-C. Fredouille, Art. Lebensform: RAC 22 (2008) 993-1025, bes. 998; G. Ch. Hansen, Herakles am Scheideweg. Der Kyniker als Leitbild in der Spätantike: J. Dummer / M. Vielberg (Hrsg.), Leitbilder im Spannungsfeld von Orthodoxie und Heterodoxie = Altertumswissenschaftliches Kolloquium 19 (Stuttgart 2008) 101-117, wo aber die wichtige Untersuchung von Alpers nicht beachtet ist. – Zum Ypsilon Pythagoricum Persius, sat. 3, 57; vgl. die anonyme neupythagoreische Schrift ‚Tabula Cebetis‘; R. Joly, Le Tableau de Cébès et la philosophie religieuse = Collection Latomus 61 (Bruxelles 1968); R. Schleier, Tabula Cebetis oder ‚Spiegel des Menschlichen Lebens / darin Tugent und untugent abgemalet ist‘. Studien zur Rezeption der antiken Bildbeschreibung im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert (Berlin 1973) 69 f. zu c. 15 f. mit Darstellungen des steilen Weges zur Tugend.

 Zur christlichen Zwei-Wege-Lehre 2 Cor. 6, 14-16.; Didache 1-6; Pseudo-Barnabas 18-20; Tagebuch der Schwester Maria Faustyna Kowalska (1905–1938) aus der Kongregation der Muttergottes der Barmherzigkeit, Heft 1, 153, dt. Übers. ¹⁰(Hauteville 2017) 75. – Alpers a. O. 60-76; G. B. Ladner, Handbuch der frühchristlichen Symbolik. Gott, Kosmos, Mensch (Wiesbaden 1996) 173-175: ‚Die Zwei Wege, Licht und Finsternis, Tugenden und Laster‘; F. J. Dölger, Die Sonne der Gerechtigkeit und der Schwarze. Eine religionsgeschichtliche Studie zum Taufgelöbnis = Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen 14 ²(Münster i. Wf. 1971) 124-129: ‚Die beiden Wege der Finsternis und des Lichtes‘; F. R. Prostmeier, Art. Zweiwegelehre: Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche 10 ³(2001) 1521; W. Speyer, Gesetz und Freiheit, Bedingtes und Unbedingtes. Zum Gegensatz in Mensch und Wirklichkeit = Salzburger Theologische Studien 56 (Innsbruck 2016) 58-60.

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A Temporal and Timeless God:
How Multiple Divine Persons Can Reconcile Libertarian Free Will, Divine Foreknowledge, and Divine Agency

Abstract: Libertarian free will and divine foreknowledge at first seem incompatible. Are humans in charge of their own destiny if God knows human agents' free choices? We also have the related issue of God's agency concerning foreknowledge of human events. Can God escape divine fatalism and interact with us meaningfully if he knows how humans will act in the future? There are ways to reconcile the three, but one proposal is to utilize the concept of separate divine persons. What if there are two persons, with their difference that one is in time and one outside it? Through an exploration of this potential model one can see how foreknowledge, free will, and agency might fit together.

Keywords: foreknowledge, agency, god, free will, libertarian, person, temporal, timeless

Introduction

When describing the relationship between God and man, libertarian free will and God's foreknowledge are difficult to reconcile. How can God knowing the future coexist with human agents' free choices? Things are further complicated if we wish to support divine agency and the image of God responding to these choices. If God knows what will happen through foreknowledge, does God have agency to align future events with his goals? We appear to be stuck with a trilemma, where God can support two of libertarian free will, foreknowledge, and divine agency, but not all three.

I propose one such method, which utilizes the concept of divine personhood. What if there exist have two divine persons, with the difference between them that one is in time, subject to the flow and experience of time, and one is outside time? One person would be above all, knowing in one instant the full thought of everything that we ever experience. To this person we could ascribe the qualities of omniscience and any other related fundamental, timeless properties. A second divine person, by contrast, would be subject to the flow of time. With this person, we would get a God who we can say possesses agency to do what he sees fit, and who can perform actions such as governing the universe, addressing prayers, responding to our choices, and any other time related interactions that arise.

There are a number of items to work through when addressing such a theory's feasibility. First though, let's start with the exact definitions.

Definitions

Pondering free will, when referring to temporal entities such as humans, I will assume freedom according to an incompatibilist perspective. We might, for a considered action, simultaneously either enact or not enact it. It could be agent-caused, event-caused, or in some other form, as long as this truth holds. I will call this freedom libertarian for now because of this union of incompatibilism and free will, although we will revisit this definition later on.

However, this may not be what is happening from another point of view, such as God regarding man's thoughts and deeds. For example, God might order the universe a certain way, and through his foreknowledge know what we will do in any given situation. Perhaps there are compatibilist frameworks where divine and human choices both support human free will, but we may want a cleaner separation of responsibility. Thus, this paper will aim for a libertarian perspective. Yet, while from our perspective our will is free enough, can we really call this God-influenced will libertarian?

I will maintain we possess libertarian will through a specific definition of a timeless God. This God sees all of the universe as one present thought. However, I will also say that this thought and state for God are fundamental, and that in his timeless state it cannot be changed. Thus, while God in his timeless thought can see our deliberations and what we are thinking, he cannot in this person compel us to do otherwise. Our free will, as part of this divine thought and state of being, is also fundamental.

This line of reasoning may suggest pantheistic equivalences of God and the universe. However, I aim for Abrahamic or panentheistic conceptions where at least part of God is not equivalent to the universe. God in these models will not just be an infinite source of the universe's properties, but similar to us in capacity of reason and will. Humans in a sense reflect God's image, although we can leave open the exact definition of image. Thus, our timeless God thinks his one fundamental thought while retaining other anthropomorphic capacities.

We could put forward other timeless modes where, for example, God thinks about what he wants the universe to be in his own time stream. He deliberates and eventually decides what he wants to come to pass. When he reaches his final decision, he will then create the universe and the creatures within it. This is not the timeless God I am considering as he could determine ahead of time how we behave. It does not yield new insights into our questions. Thus, the only thought my timeless God thinks is coexistent with his decision affirming the thought, and both do not change.

However, with such a definition of a timeless God, we run into another problem. Can such a timeless God really do anything on his own? This highlights a problem of divine agency, asking whether we can say whether God in fact does anything, or whether he just sits there as a source from which all things are derived. Would God fatalistically see all of the universe in one moment, in an eternal present, but not be able to change what he sees? Perhaps, but only if we insist that all of God remain timeless. This is where a temporal divine person enters the picture, who can avoid fatalism and act to follow his desires. This

temporal person might know the future or he might not. Either way, he will not interfere in our free will to maintain its libertarian state, but he permits himself to do whatever else he might require.

In short, for any temporal event, this model supports a maximum of one time-bound agent enacting it. The agent could be human or the temporal deity. The atemporal person may in some sense cause events too, but if so, this causation is fixed and fatalistic.

High Level Generalities

These definitions should help, but it can be hard to visualize what exactly I am proposing. Free will, foreknowledge, the nature of God, and his relationship to the universe are large enough topics. What do divine persons add?

We will discuss later how these two persons might fit into existing Christian Trinitarian models. For now, we can just note that the persons of this proposal can share the same substance, perichoresis, or any other traits desired if one can support the consequences. This shared nature may just include a least common denominator where these two divine persons are not aware of each other. For our purposes, one person just experiences a timeless thought, and another person manifests that same divine thought in temporal succession. The model supports further additions and trait sharing if desired for other theological goals, but these are optional.

This God still supports theistic divine attributes, at least from an empiric, anthropocentric perspective. He has the same motivations and plan, whether in temporal or timeless form. These are not two polytheistic deities each with their own agendas. God can act as he pleases in his temporal form, both when governing the universe and, if we extend time outside of the universe, before and after it. God is omniscient in his timeless form. We might wish foreknowledge and agency to always blend in God's mind, but if for some reason they do not, from our frame of reference we just experience God acting in the universe. From an empiric point of view our model allows God to behave as he would in other forms of theism.

As an analogy, let us consider a sheet of music. God is the musician, but depending on his relationship to time he has two different ways to "play" this music. If he is timeless, he can look at the sheet of music, process it atemporally and never otherwise, and manifest the music all at once but aligned with time's flow. If he by contrast is bound temporally, he can progress through the notes in sync with the arrow of time, playing notes at some points while resting at others. A temporal and timeless player need not be aware of the other, as each can manifest the music independently with the same result. They can share the same underlying nature, however defined, so that they would play the music in the same manner whether bound temporally or atemporally. Yet how they are playing and what they regard while doing so are not the same.

There are advantages to such an approach with our libertarian free will / foreknowledge / divine agency trilemma, at least with a first pass. Can we choose between two different choices without God choosing for us? Yes for the temporal God, but no for the timeless God. Does God have foreknowledge? For God outside time, yes, but not necessarily

for God in time. Does God have multiple-choice agency? Atemporally no, but temporally he can do what he wants.

This may be academic if we want a God exactly us who can handle the whole trilemma temporally while paralleling our experience of time. However, perhaps we are anthropomorphizing too much. Using our earlier example, we may desire a relationship with both the temporal and timeless musician. Neither would have all the divine attributes we might desire, and if a relationship with just one musician our experience might suffer. Yet we need not choose. We can desire a relationship with all persons of God, and the same constant divine nature that underlies them both. By just focusing on one person we can too easily get caught in false dilemmas.

This sword can cut through many knots if one is willing to accept the consequences. Should we be concerned with, as Pike notes, humanity's seeming inability to go against what an omniscient God believes regarding coming events (1965)? If we agree, we might be stuck in a timeless sense but not temporally, which may be good enough if our day-to-day interactions are with a temporal God lacking foreknowledge. We could also avoid some tradeoffs with models such as Hartshorne's Dipolar Theism. There exist similarities, in that his panentheistic God might parallel our fundamental divine thought. However, his view of omniscient foreknowledge requires a level of indeterminism (Viney & Shields). We can go further by saying God in one part of his being "knows" the future, but it need not affect our day to day interaction with another part of God through our free choices.

One can follow these patterns through through other proposals concerning the trilemma. As a general pattern though, if a trait concerns metaphysical bases underlying will and foreknowledge, assign it to the timeless God. If it has to do with the give and take of a person-to-deity relationship, assign it to the temporal. We can have our cake and eat it too if we are willing to view things in a certain light, not insisting that all of God experience every divine attribute at once. We can have a back-and-forth relationship where humans have agency with one part of God, while fatalistically following a script with another.

The remainder of this paper will expound on trilemma points and the persons' natures. We will first discuss divine agency through fatalist traps and temporal-person consistency checks. We will then note why we should call human will in such a model libertarian. We will next touch on how the model might fit within conceptions of divine foreknowledge, while remaining agnostic as to which, if any, is correct. Finally, we will discuss how the persons fit into existing Trinitarian models.

Timelessness and Fatalism

It is tempting to just say that God is a timeless being, somehow above time, and that this helps with foreknowledge. However, how could an atemporal God possess knowledge of a changing environment, and how can God interface with humans and our actions (Kane, 2005, 153)? One might plump for something like the ET-simultaneity of Stump and Kretzmann (1981), where eternal events can cause temporal events and vice versa. Yet there are dangers with explaining timeless agency through ET-simultaneity and other methods entirely.

Perhaps God exists, and is an entity that thinks one thought consisting of all of space and time. Perhaps he has some other relationship to space and time, but still sees all instances of them as one eternal moment. But if this all he does, there is a danger that such a God may lack power over our lives. He may not be able to do good or prevent evil, or respond to prayers and petitions. He may lack agency within the timeless "thought" that he is thinking.

To illustrate the problem, imagine that someone (say, "Mark") has witnessed a murder. Mark cannot escape the horror of the event, and replays the event over and over in his head. These thoughts haunt Mark, and he keeps thinking that if he could go back in time and perform any steps necessary to prevent the loss of life, he would. However, what if God was in Mark's situation? God could be a moral being, and wishes to prevent evil if he can. However, he can only think one thought, the thought that encompasses space and time. God in this thought sees and experiences countless killings, and perhaps somewhere in this thought he deplores them. But as a being not subject to the flow of time, he has no power to change the outcome. We might say such a thought is inconsistent with God's nature, and thus it is inconsistent for a timeless God to even think it. However, such a situation is conceivable, so I am not sure how much we can rely on the inconsistency.

To mitigate the above scenario, we can always add elements of thought to the timeless God that are separate from what we experience. For example, we might state that God is in his own time stream, but is somehow separate from ours. Another of Padgett's is that God is omnitemporal, in that while God is separate from our time, he experiences it somehow within himself and who he is. We might even follow Craig and propose that God once was outside of time and became temporal upon creation of the universe, although this scenario seemingly requires the ability to convert from one mode to the other (Ganssle n.d.).

There is thus room for divine agency in scenarios like these, but while possible, they rely on extra elements we attribute to God that are not strictly necessary to the minimum requirements of our experience. We need extra features, such as hypothesized extra time streams, whether internal or external to God, or the ability to convert from timeless to temporal. The advantage of our separate divine personhood scenario is that we can take things as they are, assigning potentially contradictory experiences either to the temporal or the timeless being. Our model's temporal God through his agency would never permit our murder scenario. Thus at least one person of God is providing validation and consistency checks, and we need not only rely on timeless coincidence.

We still, however, have the temporal God also influencing events. One may thus fear that a temporal God would not be much better in avoiding fatalism. Perhaps he also lacks agency to do otherwise. However, this is not the right way to regard our model. God in any time stream will act according to his will. He still has full power to do anything he desires as long as he has time in which to work. The temporal God is not limited.

One might also object that divine personhood is also an extra "feature". Yet, without getting too attached to labels, I'm not trying to add extra properties to say temporal and timeless mental experiences have to be experienced at once. We can assign the experiences to the separate buckets that will take them, without hypothesizing extra ways to combine them.

How This Free Will is Libertarian

After clarifying God's agency, we can now focus on how human freedom can remain libertarian. There may be features in the arrow of time that allow free will to seem libertarian, but there are concerns if the path of all things is fixed at a timeless level. How does our dual nature of God addresses incompatibilist free will propositions?

We will start by assuming a leeway incompatibilist conception of free will. In this conception, we start from the viewpoint of the actions themselves, whether an action could or could not have been enacted. This might be in contrast to, say source incompatibilism, where we start from the source and ask whether the agent could or could not have made a specific choice (Timpe). Because of our model's ontological overlap of humans with God, where humans are derived from God's timeless base, it is not easy and perhaps impossible to disentangle the two. Thus we will focus on actions themselves, and how our free will supports leeway incompatibilism.

Let us take three propositions of van Inwagen's concerning free will in general as an example of how this framework can help:

1. "We are sometimes in the following position with respect to a contemplated future act: we simultaneously have both the following abilities: the ability to perform that act and the ability to refrain from performing that act."
2. "The past and the laws of nature together determine, at every moment, a unique future."
3. "Necessarily: If one is contemplating some possible future act, and if the past and the laws of nature do *not* together determine that one shall perform that act, then one is unable to perform that act."

He argues that (1) and (2) are opposed because of the Consequence Argument. (3) is true because of the Mind Argument: where if not affirming determinism one must affirm indeterminism and the unknowability of results. (2) and (3) together both being true would seem to rule out (1) entirely. Thus, the concept of agents choosing otherwise seems questionable (van Inwagen 2008).

All of this appears valid if we regard everything from one perspective, in time's flow. Yet, if we mix and match perspectives of time, with some of the propositions regarded from within time and others from without, we arrive at different results. For example, (1) may be true from a temporal perspective, if we think of ourselves as constant agents who manipulate actions contingent on our will. However, atemporally this assumed contingency is less assured. Why would we assume that the agents in any way "cause" the events? Why would we not instead say the events "cause" the agents? Other perspectives are also valid, in that the surrounding environment might "cause" both. Any such classification seems arbitrary.

Thus I see no reason to affirm (1) from an atemporal perspective. Things just are what they are. The raw material of events, agents, and the surrounding enviroment has similarities which we can artificaly group into agents, events, and the surrounding environment. Yet saying one of these groupings could change another grouping does not make sense, as each grouping is equally fundamental. Similar issues exist with (2) and (3). The past determining a unique feature through natural law, or saying an agent cannot perform the action,

is an arbitrary correlation. We might see patterns, but nothing is stopping aberrances and deviations at a fundamental level.

All of this might be true, yet is it really useful? The dilemmas are in the patterns themselves, and we must work within the patterns if we are to discern order in the universe. However, there is danger in conflating the patterns with the fundamental order of the universe. Just because a pattern does not hold from one viewpoint does not make the universe fundamentally indeterministic. Take, for example, combining (2) and (3). We might think that the past and natural law would force an agent to enact event E_1. However, if an agent decides for a different event E_2 instead, and E_2 occurs, perhaps things are indeterministic in the arrow of time. Yet, this is not necessarily true from a timeless viewpoint.

We can take the easy way out and say that any groupings of events are arbitrary from a timeless viewpoint. Yet we can justify more, and broadly affirm the patterns even if we allow for a few discrepancies like E_2 instead of E_1 that follow different patterns. Just thinking atemporally alone we cannot, as things are what they are. However, if we expound upon the atemporal viewpoint, adding other attributes, we can ascribe fundamentality to the patterns. The trick is just determining what else would bring the necessary order.

I propose that a temporal God is one addition to the atemporal viewpoint that brings this order. His agency is one element that could fundamentally align the disparate patterns as time flows. This agency through natural law can uphold patterned events unwilled by any other agents. It can also undergird yet stay separate from the processes of free will that allows either E_1 or E_2 to occur depending on the whims of a human agent. By considering all viewpoints, we can see how other conflicting patterns might arise.

Thus, free will can be compatibilist from a timeless viewpoint, and incompatibilist for those experiencing the same events within the arrow of time. A static timeless God and pattern-promoting temporal God allow both viewpoints to be equally true. We can always appeal to the other viewpoint; they are two sides of the same coin.

Further Free Will Observations

This line of reasoning is not necessarily new. Leftow (1991) noted that metaphysical necessities do not preclude agency and compared timeless knowledge to knowledge of another time sequence. Green and Rogers (2012) point out how isotemporalism can coexist with free will, discussing how an action can be free in a libertarian sense even though there are ways of regarding the results of a choice outside of time. Such arguments also fit in this model, with the model potentially providing more support for other parts of the trilemma.

We do, however, need some model, even if not our own, to address other concerns. Further issues are related to the chaos and unpredictability that truly libertarian free will might entail. Questions include whether a multitude of will-caused seemingly indeterministic actions aesthetically resemble randomness and chance, especially if every choice we might make in our lives requires this. The system might be consistent, but such a multitude might lead to absurdity with respect to the whole system (Kane, 2005, 37-47).

Fortunately, our model can address randomness through timeless fundamentality. It affirms libertarianism through an atemporal base without temporal-person interference. We

wouldn't have to worry about wills and parts of thought entailing from those wills randomly manifesting themselves. If the will and mental processes were somehow based in our model, then we can tie them into a divine timeless thought and say they could not be otherwise.

Foreknowledge vs. Freedom: Enhancements to Existing Theories

Now we pivot to another question: foreknowledge vs. freedom. On a first pass we can always subsitute "determinism" in the free will discussion for "foreknowledge", and many of the same points hold. The timeless God will know the future, and the temporal God will experience agency. This might be enough if we only cared about our anthropocentric viewpoint where we just want some part of God to know the future. Yet we might desire a more useful foreknowledge, one in which God can act on what he knows.

Since our timeless God lacks full agency, we cannot rely on timeless answers like ET-simultaneity, and thus must ask how a temporal God can combine agency and foreknowledge. He may be out of luck if he, according to our least common denominator, is not aware of the timeless person. He cannot use his agency with the timeless person's knowledge of the future. Our model thus has room for a robust treatment of foreknowledge as the temporal God would understand it.

There are many historical and contemporary ways to reconcile foreknowledge and free will. This paper will remain agnostic as to whether one of these approaches is correct, if any. Yet if true, the timeless / temporal framework offers support to address potential metaphysical issues, as shown in the following brief, non-exhaustive survey.

Some initial answers are traditional ones. One such is Molinism, emphasizing middle knowledge. In this, God would have knowledge of what every human would do, given any situation we might find ourselves in, yet we would still possess libertarian free will to decide those things for ourselves. However, one objection is whether this truly supports libertarian free will, concerning whether man could really go against this middle knowledge (Rissler n.d.). I do not want to focus too much on middle knowledge. If somehow valid for libertarian free will, this form of knowledge provides all the separation needed between foreknowledge and free will, so not much is gained from our framework.

Another divine foreknowledge solution is William of Ockham's and others' division of this knowledge into "soft" and "hard" facts. "Hard" facts could be ones about occurring completely in the past, presumably unchangeable, but not "soft" facts, concerning future events. Human future actions wouldn't necessarily deviate from God's past beliefs, so humans couldn't do anything to falsify past divine beliefs (Zagzebski 2017).

Yet another way for God to know the future is for God to act and compel as needed regardless of any particular willed human activity. One can belittle the Principle of Alternate Possibilities, as discussed in the papers of Harry Frankfurt. Say a human could make two choices in a given situation, choice 1 or choice 2. Now let us say another actor, who has power over the human, allows the human to choose choice 1 whenever the human willfully decides to choose 1. Yet, if the human instead would choose choice 2, the actor intervenes to make the actor choose choice 1. For these examples, choice 1 would always occur, yet the human could still arguably make an independent choice (Zagzebski 2017).

These proposals, and others like them, may or may not be plausible, but if true, what is the temporal God's perspective? It is possible God knows a few one-off future facts. For example, he might know the journey and not the destination, such as that the world will end but not how. Perhaps the overlap of his knowledge with the timeless God's knowledge allows for a few future facts to be shared, and we must accept it as being what it is, even if the facts shared are arbitrary and do not fit a pattern. However, while this option is admittedly open, we might want a more systematic answer.

The temporal God likely needs some relationship to time different from ours if knowing the entire future without middle knowledge. How else will he know something will definitely occur in the future, as it is hard to see how soft facts and anti-PAP might work from our exact temporal perspective? We could postulate some special interactions inside God's being and essence, but to accomodiate a time-bound God with a nature familiar to us, we might tweak our model to say God is not fully on our time stream. Perhaps he experiences our future before we experience it, and the past after we experience the past. Or, with the anti-PAP Frankfurt example, perhaps he has a few extra milliseconds in which he can interpret how we would behave and then compel or allow us to proceed accordingly. These may be feasible, but separate time streams may seem too arbitrary, as one wonders how another time stream could both arise and flow in a different direction if based on another time stream. Fortunately, we could always say a timeless God undergirds both time streams.

To reiterate, division into temporal and timeless persons will not tell us the exact mechanism of coexisting free will and foreknowledge. If the temporal God, like the timeless God, possesses foreknowledge, he might rely on Molinism, soft facts, anti-PAP, or something else. We can be agnostic on the particulars. However, our model potentially shed light on metaphysical riddles underlying certain foreknowledge theories. This is a nice bonus to the model's primary goal of supporting the trilemma.

Modalism, Bi-Theism, or Binity?

Before closing, we may need to revisit our picture of God that we've sketched out so far. We've explored potential traits, but why might we consider these beings one God with two separate persons? While this discussion neither excludes nor requires Christian theology, discussions on the Christian Trinity can apply here for our "binity". We need to avoid the traps of bi-theism, with each person a God, in addition to modalism, where we are just dealing with modes of one God. The following is a sketch of how our our model could fit into different Trinitiarian conceptions.

For our first mode, we can follow Leftow (2004), who analogizes a potential "Latin Trinity" to a Rockette dancer line. Perhaps there is single entity (a dancer named Jane) who through time travel is able to be multiple dancers in our present. There is one Jane on her timeline, but her timeline touches ours at multiple points. We can extend the analogy to a timeless God, if desired, positing a causal relation analogous to Jane jumping forward in time.

Extending to our two persons, the timeless deity through his single thought may "cause" our temporal God. Depending on whether this causing transfers foreknowledge,

the temporal God could match an early Jane not knowing future events or a later Jane knowing actions of the other Janes. Whether foreknowledge is transferred or not, the one-way static timeless causation lessens bi-theism charges, as we do not have two distinct wills talking to each other. Further, different experiences of time lessen modalism charges as we cannot combine the atemporal and temporal into one perspective. Potential limitations on timeless-God omnipotence and temporal-God omniscience also contribute in differentiating the perspectives.

If not favoring Latin models, we might use a Social Trinitiarian one starting from the interrelatedness of separate divine persons and relationships and focusing on how they are one deity (Leftow 2010). For example, our temporal and timeless God may have separate wills instead of potentially one will, not causally linked, and have more Social than Latin relationships. The causality relationship between timeless and temporal may be less clear, but this covers more panentheistic situations where disentangling which person comes first is difficult. The two divine wills, along with differing views of time, may just manifest independently. This clean separation minimizes modalism at least.

We will not delve too deeply into criticisms Social models invite, but if our binity is social, we can sidestep one concern. For example, Leftow questions what a divine person not knowing every existing fact says about omniscience (2010). This particular criticism arguably does not apply in our case, as we have at least one omniscient timeless person, and the other can follow biblical examples where one person does not know all (Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32 NIV). Each person can maximally manifest different divine attributes.

As for charges of bi-theism, if avoiding the Latin option, and if two separate wills are problematic, what else can we work with? Binity divisions abjuring wills are less helpful as we posit different experiences of agency and perhaps foreknowledge. Wills are a nice proxy for this separation, although it is possible an adjacent division fits best.

However we divide the shared and personal traits, including wills, we might follow Aquinas on another topic as he affirms the separation between existence and essence, where one can comprehend items that may or may not occur (Nelson 2020). The temporal person may lack freedom if we think of the persons' wills as having different essences that need communication to align their actions, as might be the case with two different polytheistic gods. However, it is better to regard these wills as two existences of the same divine will essence. These existences do not need communication to align their desires. There is a difference between the existences in that just one is temporally bound, perhaps lacking foreknowledge, but they otherwise align. Each person is thus unconstrained while playing the same sheet of music.

This analogy supports Social models in that wills might be duplicated in multiple existences. It also supports Latin models as communication between the persons is optional. However divided, one should note that this existence / essence analogy smooths over any concerns that we are just pushing the trilemma up a level, leaving us to deal with it at the level of divine persons. Even if the timeless God possesses foreknowledge of the temporal God's plans, the temporal God's agency is still libertarian. Vice versa also applies in whatever sense the timeless God acts atemporally. If they were two separate deities with differ-

ent essences, it might be possible for one person to lack agency as this entity is forced to do what a being of a different essence desires. Yet, for a given context, the timeless God will never desire one thing and the temporal god something else. They will always desire the same thing because they share the same essence.

Whether binity model best fits, I wish to note a potential temptation when positing wills for the persons. "If separate wills, then we must have bi-theism, even if they share every other trait. If a single will, then we must have modalism, as any other trait division between the persons is just an arbitrary grouping, or mode." If something is to thread the needle, we must be charitable and posit that some traits can be shared by different persons of one God. Temporal and foreknowledge experiences might be two such.

Conclusion

Libertarian free will, divine foreknowledge, and divine agency at first appear incompatible. However, we should fully consider God's nature when combining the three. Using our model of divine personhood, we can assign timelessness and temporality to each of two separate persons. One person would be timeless, handling fundamental necessities. Another would experience time, manifesting time's arrow and allowing for divine agency with a give and take between free human partners.

This model is only one hypothesis of many. However, even if preferring another, we should challenge any implicit assumption that God regards each trilemma point simultaneously. Just as one might say the universe is what it is when describing some strange anthropic theory or coincidence, we can apply the same approach to God. We may just have to accept a little complexity. Our separate divine personhood scenario at a high level smooths over trilemma concerns, and thus should be a strong contender for God's ontology.

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Taking God Out of Context:
Bevans' Typological Models of Religious Life

Abstract: Beginning with a brief historical sketch founded upon the seminal work of Coe and then Bevans, this essay attempts to provide an exploratory biblical critique of contextual theology mainly as applied to missiology. This brief historical review is followed by an outline and critique of the essential components of Bevans' typological model of contextual theology as well as general theological views, focusing mainly on underlying assumptions contained in his methodology. Serious questions are then raised about the appropriateness of applying a 'typological model' methodology to theology, an approach originally developed in the natural sciences to study physical phenomena in a laboratory setting. The essay argues that the belief or claim there is nothing but 'contextual theology' as an imperative is profoundly unbiblical. To claim or to imply that everything is only 'contextual' means that everything is dependently material and physical. In turn, this denies the independent existence and input of divine providence and Holy Spirit and/or reduces them strictly to material interactions.

Keywords: theology, contextual theology, sociopolitical context, worship, inculturation, indigenization, three-self principle of mission, theological method and orientation, typological models, methodological, regulative principle, normative principle.

Introduction

Before providing a general description of the seminal theological work of Stephen B. Bevans, "Models of Contextual Theology", we need to outline a brief historical sketch of the author himself and the concept of "contextual theology". With this information in hand, we can hopefully better understand the key role that this concept plays in contemporary theological methodology and Christian missiology. Ultimately, Bevans' methodological approach helps us better understand the Christian tradition or Christian faith system both in relation to itself and in relation to culture over time.

After this brief historical review and background information, we will discuss what it means to assert that contextual theology is a theological imperative and what are some of the central issues and questions dealt with in contextual theology as compared to classical theology. Lastly, we will conclude by pointing out some of the costs and benefits of employing a typological "models" approach to assess and evaluate different ministries, pastoral activities, liturgical styles, and religious life.

Contextual Theology

When we review the history of the concept "contextual theology", the name Shoki Coe inevitably pops up as the primary reference point especially in relation to its employment in missiology. Coe was a minister of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, principal of Tainan Theological Seminary, and director of the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches (Wheeler, 2002). Through his position in the latter, he became widely known for coining the idea of "contextualizing theology", meaning that theology needed to respond to sociopolitical factors operating within the local context within which Christianity was being introduced (Coe, 1973, 1974)[1].

Coe used this notion of contextualizing theology in a concerted attempt to counter the highly abstract and psychologistic notion of "three-self principle" which had been previously developed by high-ranking officials in the Church Missionary Society (Henry Venn) and in the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Rufus Anderson) from 1841 to 1873, and it was still being used at the time that Coe was involved in missionary work.

As it later came to be known, the Venn-Anderson three-self-principles formula had been initially developed as a plan to provide a stable focus and organizing principle for conducting missionary work by establishing indigenous churches. Indigenization simply referred to missionary activities aimed at bringing church activities under the control or influence of people native to the area in which they are being introduced[2], not necessarily sharing administrative power.

The three-self-principles approach to Christian missionary was known as self-governance, self-support (financial independence from foreigners), and self-propagation (indigenous missionary work). Coe argued that the three-self-principles approach to missionary work was inadequate for addressing the historical sociopolitical context of native Taiwan. As such, Coe's missionary approach was viewed at the time as a strictly liberal theological approach to understanding missions although it soon became widespread among conservative evangelicals and Roman Catholics (Wu, 2015; Bevans, 2002).

Many scholars and theologians view contextual theology as incorporating all the principal features of both indigenization and inculturation, and much more[3]. Most con-

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1 A Short time later, this concept came to be better known by its short-hand as a distinctive type of theology, namely, "contextual theology". Over time, it was also broadened in meaning to refer to theology which has responded to the dynamics of a particular context. Since individuals may derive from a variety of different cultural worldviews, such as Western, European, Slavic, Oriental, Asian, Arabic, or Hebraic, or any combination thereof, for that matter, they may be facing a complex mix of sociopolitical influences both unique to their particular cultural situation while at the same time sharing some features with other cultures. The result would be contextualized theologies like Latin American theology, Indian Dali theology, and African theology.

2 In Christianity, inculturation can be viewed as the adaptation of the way church teachings are presented to other, mostly non-Christian, cultures and, in turn, the influence of those cultures on the evolution of these teachings. It is a term generally used by Catholics, the WCC, and some Protestants; other Protestants prefer to use the term "contextual theology".

3 For example, see what the systematic theologian Regunt Yesurathnam has to say about the nature of contextual theology (C.E. Van Engen, 2005, p. 194).

textual theological writings explicitly or at least implicitly incorporate consideration of some essential aspects and trends of contemporary society such as the adverse impacts of technology on human labor, the relationship between economic activity and ecological degradation, and the struggle for human justice[4].

This is where the American missiologist and professor at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Stephen Bevans, fits into the historical picture of the emergence and development of contextual theology. Along these same lines of thinking, Bevans draws out what he considers to be an essential implication partially deriving from Coe's central concept, namely, that there is no such thing as normative theology.

Enter Bevans Theology

To adequately comprehend Bevans' theological point of view, we need to take into consideration the historical principles of worship generally observed under Christianity prior to the advent of contextual theology and Bevans' theological work. The central tenet of the normative principle of worship propounds that it can entail elements not explicitly prohibited by Scripture. As an everyday operating principle for missionary work, that means that such worship must be in agreement with general Church practice AND must contain no explicit prohibition from Scripture in any part of the worship from beginning to end. In other words, whatever is not prohibited in the Bible is permitted in worship, as long as the peace and unity of the Church is maintained and supported.

The normative principle of worship is often contrasted with the much stricter regulative principle of worship in Christianity. This latter worship principle argues that only those Christian practices or elements are allowable in Christian worship which are explicitly commanded or modelled in the Bible. A simple example of announcing notices in church (i.e. upcoming events, church news, and so forth) will suffice to demonstrate the essential difference between these two very different forms of Christian worship and why they are crucial considerations in discussions about Christian missionary work.

Since this activity is not explicitly prohibited in the Bible, and since such announcements may benefit involvement in Church activities and the congregation in general, the

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4 Many well-known scholars and theologians would at least include serious consideration of secularization in this list of distinctive features characterizing modern societies. Generally speaking, secularization is the process by which all the institutions of a society, country, or culture move away from orienting conduct and decision-making primarily on the basis of religion or religious values or spirituality in general over time. For example, in the U.S. many colleges were initially established as religious institutions such as Harvard University, for example, until the control and influence of religion was removed from all aspects of university life. So, then, when something in a society or country or culture changes from being influenced or controlled by religion to operating without being influenced or controlled by religion, this change can be understood as a process called secularization. The fuel that appears to motor the secularization process forward is the gradual replacement of religious values (whatever religion it may be) with nonreligious values in peoples' everyday life. Most scholars agree that Max Weber's treatment of the sociology of the law represents the germ of the secularization thesis which argues that modern society is becoming progressively 'disenchanted' due largely to advances in science, technology, law, economy, government, and education. Probably the best contemporary representative of this secularization thesis is Peter Berger, but there are many notable others.

normative principle of worship would permit this practice. It is a form of worship that makes possible the entrance of worship elements foreign to or outside of the Christian faith and the Christian worship format so long as not expressly prohibited by neither Bible nor general Church practices. This is the generally accepted approach to worship which is practiced by Anglicans, Lutherans, Evangelicals, and Methodists, among others (Barber, 2006; Maxwell, 1936; Marshall, 2004; Driscoll, 2009).

Contrariwise, the regulative principle of worship would expressly forbid such activity from taking place because no explicit example of announcing notices can be found in the Bible. The latter is a Christian doctrine of worship initially held by some Calvinists and Anabaptists who believed that God commands churches to conduct public services of worship employing ONLY certain distinct elements affirmatively found in the Bible AND that God prohibits any and all other practices in public worship.

It is clear, therefore, that the regulative principle of worship views worship as obedience to God, recognizes specific integral elements in the Bible that make up this obedient worship, and excludes other practices as being fundamentally disobedient in nature. It is a worship principle upheld, practiced, and steadfastly supported by conservative Reformed churches, the Restoration Movement, and other conservative Protestant denominations (Beker, 1992; Davies, 1997; Smith, 2011).

When Bevans claims that there is no such thing as normative theology, it becomes very clear on which side of the fence he sits in terms of worship principles, with all its necessary logical implications for other explicit biblically founded Christian teachings and principles. In the opening paragraph of his book, he states categorically that doing contextual theology is "not an option" because it is a human activity which can only take place within a "particular context" (Bevans, 2002, p. 15).

"Theology" as such not only can never exist but, more profoundly, never existed. What existed, and what exists now, are different types of contextual theology such as black theology, feminist theology, queer theology, African theology, and so forth. Scripture and tradition move over, we have a new theological horse in town called "present human experience – or context" as another "valid source for theological expression" (Bevans, ibid.).

Bevans notes that the previous missionary language of indigenization to describe the local social situation and particular human culture within which Christianity is introduced incorporates a narrow conception of culture. The concept of contextualization is a much better term for theological purposes, he says, because it contains a broader understanding of culture "to include social, political, and economic questions", while indigenization severely restricts the focus to purely cultural aspects of human experience (Ibid.). Further, Bevans claims that indigenization tends to view both the domestic culture and the foreign culture as essentially good, while the contextualization approach tends to treat both cultures more critically.

Lastly, and most importantly for our purposes here, the contextualization concept strongly suggests the imperative requirement of theology to interact and dialogue with social factors, processes, and pressures endemic to contemporary society, not only with traditional cultural values. Understandably, these social factors are many, varied, and

complex, altogether influencing the environment within which theology takes place. To name just a few: rapidly occurring social change, newly emerging ethnic and other identities, general dissatisfaction with classical or traditional theological and missionary approaches, the oppressive nature of older theological approaches, growing demands by local cultures for their own truly contextual theology, contemporary social scientific empirical understandings of culture rooted in human experiences within that particular culture as opposed to classical understandings of culture as universal and monolithic, globalization, and more.

All of these social factors and more are vigorously present in the contemporary theological environment, and these "external" modern societal features directly confront the great variety of peoples of the world (ibid., pp 15-24). These external pressures towards a contextual theology are complimented by "internal factors" within Christianity itself that also underscore "contextualization as a theological imperative" such as the incarnational nature of Christianity, the sacramental nature of reality (God being revealed in concrete reality), and divine revelation working within contextual theology, the catholicity or all-embracing, all-inclusive nature of Christian community (unity through diversity, universality through diversity), and the trinitarian doctrine understood as God working for salvation in the midst of the diversity of the human context. O

Ostensibly, this is why Bevans proclaims that contextual theology is a "theological imperative" in order to truly understand modern theology as opposed to classical or traditional theology. Again, Scripture, tradition, and present-day human experience (context) has always been and is still the theological order of the day. However, now there's a new theological sheriff in town, so to speak.

Contextual Theology: Some Issues and Questions

Because contextual theology is a radically new way of doing theology and, by extension, the Christian mission, at least as compared with its classical counterpart, the theologian is faced with resolving several issues and problems that weren't really debatable under the previous traditional Christian model. Bevans states that these issues or problems cluster into four fundamental categories: questions involving *theological method*; questions related to basic *theological orientation*; issues associated with the criteria employed to characterize *orthodoxy*; and issues concerning local versus dominant *cultural identity* in the context of *social change*.

In regards to *theological method*, the question which contextual theology brings forward applies to what should be the most appropriate form theology should take in a given local context. Whereas theology was previously a formal discursive effort related mainly to the university or seminary, largely the product of a Western literate culture. But theology need not only be done in this form in order to qualify as theology.

Great theology of the past has also been expressed in hymns or poems, sermons or homilies, embodied in ritual, even in non-verbal art works like Michelangelo's sculpture and paintings on catacomb walls. The point that Bevans wants to emphasize is that theology as conceived here is a bit wider than Western academic scholarship although schol-

arship is a crucially important theological consideration. Different cultures have different ways of articulating faith quite beyond the expressive mode of scholarship.

Who does the theologizing is just as important as the *form* it

takes. In the past, it was mainly the *academic scholar* who theologized because it required tremendous reflection on a complex array of bewildering documents which required a great deal of background knowledge and skill to adequately comprehend. But when contextual theology shifts the focus from complex ancient documents to contemporary human subjective experience of one's faith, it becomes the cultural subjects who speak rather than the professional theologians.

A related question which arises on this issue is to what extent are *people in everyday life* within their own cultures the real theologians? Is theology done by "*experts*" in formal academic settings to be trickled down to local people for their consumption. Contextual theology views it the opposite way, as something formulated and articulated at the ground level by subjects of local culture, bottom-up theologizing, if you will.

Another related methodological issue which emerges here is the question of whether a *nonparticipant in a particular context* can make a contextual theological contribution. For example, can a white male contribute to Black theology? Can a Black male contribute to a feminist theology? Can an American contribute to an East Asian theology? Can a heterosexual theologian contribute to a queer theology? and so forth.

From one point of view, Bevans argues, the unequivocal answer is no. This is believed to be because the contributor is foreign to the particular context of that theology. So therefore, they do not share the life experiences of members of that theological or contextual community. Of course, non-contextual participants can sympathize or empathize with the life experiences of contextual participants. However, inevitably, they must import into that context to some degree their own feelings, perceptions, experiences, and political-economic privileges which could operate or function unintentionally to distort the particular local contextual theology.

However, people not fully sharing the life experiences of the contextual participant can contribute significantly to a higher-level understanding of that local theology. They can provide a fresher broader perspective than members mired in the everyday muck of that theological culture. In doing so, the nonparticipant may stimulate participants of a local theological culture to do their own thinking for themselves rather than simply robotically repeat the theological programs of the local culture.

In terms of basic theological orientation, two of them appear to have particular relevance to contextual theology: a creation-centered versus a fundamentally redemption-centered theological perspective. The *creation-centered* theological orientation basically views human experience as good, meaning that 'context' is good as well. Human nature is good, and everything created by God is good.

As such, then, the world or creation is sacramental because it was created by God. Therefore, the created world is the place where God is revealed. Revelation does not happen in strange holy places set apart from the world in some kind of otherworldly dimension of time and space. Rather, it happens inside the world, in the daily life and ordi-

nary words of ordinary people. Yes, there is sin, but sin is an aberration from the good of God's creation.

By contrast, a *redemption-centered* theological orientation believes that culture and human experience need to be radically transformed or totally replaced. Why? Because human nature is sinful or corrupt, and that means that God's grace cannot build upon it something better. Corrupt human nature distorts God and rebels against Him. Here culture is not already holy containing the presence of God. On the contrary, God must be brought into the culture to transform it, to save it. God and humanity are separate due to corrupted human nature. God can only reach the world by breaking into it.

In terms of problems surrounding the criteria for determining orthodoxy, Bevans sees a real danger of compromising or betraying Christianity. The basic point here is that a Christianity that takes culture too seriously as a driving theological motivating principle in both theory and praxis can easily because internally syncretized without its participants even understanding how that organic process takes place.

All faith systems, let alone Christianity, do not wish to have the content of their faith impaired or mutilated or otherwise compromised by theological expressions emanating from differential cultural, social, ethnic, or political-economic realities. Yes, liberal-democratic philosophical trends of pluralism and diversity are modern realties. But the fact that they are realities does not necessarily make them genuinely Christian in essence.

How do we decide when a contextual theological expression is authentically Christian or not? By the same token, how can we be sure that our understanding of our own Christian faith is faithful to the Judeo-Christian tradition? One criterion we could look at is if the particular theological expression un-Christian behavioral practices. Another criterion that could also be used is if the particular theological expression is well-received by faithful Christians. Yet another criterion to look at is if the particular theological expression is internally consistent with existing beliefs and values within Christianity. Again, these criteria all relate to preventive measures that could be taken to ensure the continued organic integrity of the Christian faith system.

A second criterion that could be used to determine if a particular contextual theological expression is genuinely Christian in nature is its applicability in worship practices. That is, can it be translated into worship? The belief here is that the way we ray reflects what we believe. What happens to the praying community when foreign forms of prayer are introduced into it? We can also ask to what extent an emerging contextual theological expression is open to criticism from other theological systems.

If a theology is consistently open to any and all criticisms from other theologies, does this mean that that particular contextual theology is authentically Christian? On the other hand, if a theology tends to be defensive and closed in on itself in protective fashion, does that automatically mean it is not an authentic expression of Christianity? Lastly, should the literal strength of a particular theology to challenge other theological expressions within a positive dialogue also be an important criterion used to decide the authenticity of Christian faith?

Lastly, according to Bevans, the emergence and development of contextual theologies has also forced upon the center stage of consideration central issues concerning cultural identity and social change. In the past, the narrowness of formal theology and the culturally insensitive implementation of colonial political-economic structures have operated to suppress or ignore local cultural identities in the quest for dominant cultural theological superiority. Today, however, local cultural identity has emerged to determine the contours of a local contextual theology. Culture as a theological source is a valid way of doing theology, to be sure, says Bevans.

One of the main dangers here is to base a local culture's theology on romantic notions of a culture that existed prior to colonialism, for example, rather than as it exists now at present. If a theology is to be truly contextual, then, it must reflect a culture as it exists in the present. Yes, there has been contact with other parts of the world, but that doesn't mean by definition that other-cultural contact precludes a contextual theology from developing.

Another danger that could arise for a theology that places too much emphasis on cultural identity is potential conflict with popular forms of religiosity. For example, the Filipino are unlikely to feel comfortable in terms of cultural identity by substituting Filipino palm wine and rice cakes for the traditional Spanish introduction of bread and wine for the Eucharist celebration. It is possible that at least some of the colonial and cultural structures of domination imposed by the Spanish over the Filipinos became so much an integral part of Filipino cultural identity that it would be virtually counter-culturally productive to remove them.

Perhaps from a modern point of view, it is foolish to think that all colonial structures of domination were 100% anti-cultural in nature and in function. Perhaps modern theologians shouldn't be so quick to demonize foreign power structures and yet so blind to power structures operating within their own local theological context. If we are as Christians truly believing the Christian faith system as a coherent organic system of ideas, values, principles, and practices, then perhaps we should admit that power structures are an inherent constitutive part of human existence.

The Notion and Use of Typological Methodology

Now that we have provided a brief historical sketch of contextual theology, identified some of the major reasons for its emergence, and surveyed several issues, problems, and questions it raises for so-called 'doing' theology, we are now in a much more propitious position to provide some critical reflections about the method of typology that Bevans uses to classify the different modes of contextual theologizing expressed over time than would have otherwise been the case. The notion of applying a specifically typological or 'model approach' to understand various aspects or features of religious life is not entirely new, as Bevans makes clear. Several thinkers and scholars have previously engaged this type of methodology to make statements about models of contextual theologizing.

Schineller (1976) proposed four models of Christology and ecclesiology. O'Meara (1978) identified several models of philosophical thought employed to understand the

Christian church. Tracy (1975) developed five models of theological reflection. McFague (1987) recognized three models of speaking to God. The Catholic Dulles (1975, 1983) developed five models of the church each of which he claimed revealed a different way of understanding the mystery of the church.

At the time, Dulles stated that the inspiration for his use of a typological methodological approach to understand Christian religious life derived from Niebuhr's book entitled, Christ and Culture, first published in 1951. Niebuhr, in turn, claimed to claimed to have been influenced in the use of typological methodology by many others before him including, very significantly, some well-known scholars using the model approach in the natural sciences from which it was, in fact, imported into theological discourse (Barbour, 1974; Ramsey, 1964; Black, 1962).

Bevans realizes that all methodological approaches have their weaknesses and strengths, regardless of where they are derived from and how they are applied. Rightfully so, he expresses these misgivings forthrightly in his book. He begins this exercise in methodological reflexivity by stating that the most important point to remember about the use of models is that they are "constructions" (Bevans, ibid., p. 35); they are emphatically "not mirrors of reality" but, rather, "logically constructed theoretical positions" (Ibid.). It affirms something that is real, but it never really totally captures that reality. It participates in the metaphorical nature of language. However, they are not fictional versions of reality either. They can and do reveal actual features of that reality under examination.

So, then, even though they are not the whole picture of that reality under examination, for example the reality of Christian religious life or contextual theological praxis, they do provide a vision of that reality from an angle, so to speak. They provide ways that we can know some part of the richness and complexity of a reality. But again, that knowledge is always partial and inadequate. In addition to this particular partial aspect or dimension of the 'models' approach, it possesses other features which demand scrupulous scholarly attention such as exclusivity (or systematic) versus complementarity (or descriptive).

If a typological model contains the feature of exclusivity, it likely means that it contains a paradigm or worldview, a way of seeing the world and a set of commitments or positions, that cannot be easily related to others nor easily discarded or muted. The theoretical position and claims of complementary or descriptive typological models convey a much more tentative outlook than models oriented by exclusivity. Bevans emphasizes these features imply that certain typological models illuminate specific parts of the reality under examination, while other models illuminate other aspects of that particular reality.

Perhaps genuflecting to modern pluralism, this approach appear to imply that a variety of models must be applied to any particular reality to capture as much of the complexity of that reality as possible. No one particular model can account fully and completely for any particular reality under examination. All typological models need to be supplemented by others in order to capture as much of a particular reality under examination as possible. Curiously enough, though, as it applies to theological discourse this probably means that all typological models are equally valid in the sense that they are all limited or partial images or mirrors of reality. No one model can wholly, fully, and completely account for a theo-

logical position or doctrine or even a component contained within it, exactly how a typological model would be expected to operate in a scientific laboratory, incidentally.

At most, it is a simplistic but useful reflection of a complex reality. It does, however, "yield true knowledge" of that reality, asserts Bevans. It is evident that the assumption that is never critically examined here is to what extent it is appropriate to use a methodological approach in the study of theology that was initially developed and applied in the natural sciences to understand varying aspects of the physical world, not the human world.

It is questionable to a large extent how far theologians can legitimately employ methodologies that were initially developed to identify and understand patterns in the behavior of physical phenomena such as the nature of light waves or the behavior of atoms, and then extended and applied to human behavior, in this case human theological or contextual theological behavior. Certainly, there are several problems associated with the uncritical use of such methodologies especially in the field of Theology, not the least of which are the philosophical and ideological assumptions it contains about human nature, culture, society and social structure, government, and other aspects of social reality.

Typological Models of Religious Life: Some Methodological Shortcomings

Despite the obvious benefits of using a typological 'model approach' to understand religious life in its various dimensions over time within the Christian faith system, there are some notable additional shortcomings. As Bevans himself makes clear about his approach to understanding religious life, faith and the expression of faith is a product of context, and nothing but context. Therefore, every religious belief and creed, every religious idea, every thought, everything must be placed in context.

Christian 'faith', like any other religious faith, and everything related to it, can only be seen and adequately understood through context. In other words, all human beings are products of culture and context, Bevans proclaims. So, then, the Bible is wholly and irremediably a cultural product having little or nothing to do with the Holy Spirit working through the medium of human beings, for example, even having less to do with acknowledging the independent existence of spirituality. It was written within a context, for a context or culture, and from a specific historical context. Surely, then, to call such an approach contextually deterministic would not be an over-statement.

Keeping Bevans' previous reductionistic statements regarding the concepts 'context' and 'culture' firmly into consideration, it appears that contextual theology a la Bevans contains within it the philosophical foundational principle of materialism, that is, the doctrine which claims that all facts are causally the result of physical processes, or even reducible to them including mind, mental states, consciousness, and psychological states, let alone spiritual entities or spiritual thoughts and behaviors. Mind and consciousness, and all manifestations thereof, are fully direct by-products or epiphenomena of physical material processes without which they cannot exist. They are all just second-order, secondary realities resulting from physical matter, while material interactions are first-order realities. Obvi-

ously, the, as such it pointedly and expressly denies the independent existence of the spiritual in all its forms, shapes, sizes, or manners of being.

Another major problem with Bevans' models of "contextual theology" as applied over wide expanses of time is that they themselves appear to be a-contextually constructed, that is, not constructed from within the particular theological context under examination but, rather, constructed from components selected from outside of that local context to form a new recontextualized but abstract theological context. In that sense, they can be considered thoroughly modern fabrications. The local and ordered set of models which Bevans constructs and systematizes from components selected from outside those theological contexts appears to contradict Bevans' own primary claim at the beginning of his book that all theology is contextual theology.

Since each of his contextual theological models was a methodological construction by a process of abstraction, they can be viewed as being decontextualized. Not only are they decontextualized methodologically from their original contexts, they are also decontextualized from the original motivations that gave rise to them (economic, political, religious, cultural, and so forth). In this way, the presuppositions contained within the abstract model then operate to provide the new 'context'.

Another serious methodological problem is Bevans' claim that his 'contextual theology' is something 'radically new' yet traditional. In other words, theology has always been contextual. Idiot theologians are finally waking up to this fact in modern times, Bevans implies. However, to claim a priori that theology has always been contextual is to a priori formulate a theoretical construct which already contains within itself the principle of 'theological imperative'. If everything is 'contextual' and all theologies are 'contextual', then how can the concept of 'contextual theology' itself really be employed to help us identify distinctive theologies that only partially reflect actual specific realities and that can be evaluated according to independent criteria of any kind?

This problem is implied in Schreiter's Foreword when he refers to contextual theologies as "both those that are consciously contextual and those that are best understood from their contexts" (Ibid., p. 8). This is a much more profound methodological problem than what first appears to be the case. If everything is contextual theology, then what exactly is contextual theology? How do we know it, how can we understand it, unless we know what is NOT contextual theology?

This methodological vagueness leads to the much more serious question of how Bevans decided what specific theological models would be included in his typological system of contextual theologies and which ones wouldn't? So, then, do the examples Bevans provides for each of his models help us to explain the 'models', OR do the models help us to understand the examples? It very much seems like the 'examples' themselves ARE the models, which lends a glaring aura of selectivity and artificiality to Bevans' typology of contextual theology.

Lastly, perhaps the most perplexing albeit damning methodological deficiency contained in Bevans' typology of contextual theologies is the fact that it doesn't appear to permit any independent divine role or God role in the contextualization process itself. Every-

thing is contextual and employed methodologically to mean everything is dependently material and physical, while the independent existence and influence of spirit is denied and/or reduced to material interactions. On another related note, if that claim is not Marxist materialist determinism in another guise, then the phrase is simply incomprehensible. Under Bevans, contextualization is completely a human business with no independent divine input whatsoever.

Even given these misgivings, remarkably Bevans goes on to develop five models of contextual theology originally and then actually adds yet another model later, providing a figure or sketch that supposedly functions like a map intended to aid our understanding of how Bevans approaches and intends to use these models: anthropological, praxis, synthetic, translation, countercultural, and transcendental. Surely, at this point it goes without saying that Bevans' 'contextual theology' is thoroughly secular and anything but biblically sound. It could very well be argued that what contextual theology permits is the bit-by-bit importation of Marxian-socialist philosophical assumptions into the core body of Christian doctrine gradually but effectively converting it over time into its atheistic mirror image, namely, Marxianity.

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Quietude in Plato and Plotinus – an Essay

Abstract: Modernity comes with inherent disquiet that can arguably be contained at the material level. But at mental-spiritual levels, where it is an existential threat, this disquiet is harder to overcome. This essay begins with a brief delineation of spiritual quietude – as that which draws mounting unity from receding multiplicity and growing ineffability. At the highest level, a pristine ineffability implies absence of multiplicity, with the ineffable One, the originary-origin of pure silence. Hence, quietude grows, the higher we ascend towards the One – and recedes, the lower we descend into the worldliness of the empirical world. The purpose of this essay is to explore spiritual quietude in Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* (*Republic*, Book VII, 514a-521d) and Plotinus' scattered references (direct or implied) to quietude in his *Enneads*. Plato implies growing quietude in the released prisoner's ascent (inside and outside the cave) – a cumulative stillness that culminates with his vision of the Good. Applying Bonaventure's tripartite ascent (outward-inward-upward) to Plato's ascension reveals differences between the two thinkers, but also similarities. Plotinus delineates hierarchies of multiplicity and quietude – with the lower, an image of its archetype. Moreover, he has a range of quietude, from the highest silence of the One, to quietude in nature. Intellect and hypostasis soul retain *some* quietude, but not the perfect silence of the One. For they garner entitative multiplicity, with soul acquiring further multiplicity through its progenitive acts. Plotinus also speaks of the disquiet of *tolma* and the *polupragmatic* soul. This essay, therefore, has three parts – (1) Two Faces of inner Quietude: receding Multiplicity, growing Ineffability; (2) Quietude in Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*; and (3) Quietude in Plotinus' *Enneads*.

*Keywords***:** quietude, multiplicity, ineffability, ascent, Plato, Plotinus.

In this essay, the theme of spiritual quietude is explored in Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* and Plotinus' *Enneads*. Given the intricate historical relationship between Plato (ca. 429-347 B.C.E.) and Plotinus (ca. 204/5-270 A.D.), they should belong in the same essay.[1] After all, Plotinus thought of himself "simply as a disciple of Plato."[2] However, a question might arise about the appropriateness of associating a mere fragment of Plato's works – the *Alle-*

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[1] The dates for Plato are from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed July 23, 2023, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato/. According to Rist, Plotinus' date of birth is somewhat unreliable. Armstrong dates it at A.D. 205. J. M. Rist, *Plotinus. The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 3; Plotinus, *Ennead I*, trans. A.H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 7 (note 1).

[2] L. P. Gerson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3.

gory of the Cave (*Republic*, Book VII, 514a-517a)**3** – with multiple tractates from Plotinus's grand opus (the *Enneads*). Given their differences in size, variety, and range of themes, do they belong in the same essay?

Yes – because a subtle association binds these dissimilar works at the highest level. To understand this, we must recall Plotinus' edifying closing words about the life of "gods and of godlike and blessed men" that takes "no delight in the things of this world"**4** – an ideal life of "escape in solitude to the solitary" (VI.9.11, 345), commonly translated as a "flight of the alone to the Alone."**5** Besides being a living testament to the relationship between the numinous and the political, Plato's *Allegory* is a graphic miniature portrait of this solitary flight. Moreover, growing quietude is of essence to the mystical ascent in both works. Hence, despite their differences, they belong in the same essay.

Plato does not directly speak of quietude, but implies it in the growing maturation of the ascending prisoner-pilgrim (inside and outside the cave) – a cumulative stillness that culminates in his vision of the Good (the heart and essence of quietude). Plato's ascent is, perhaps, best understood through a very different voice – that of the medieval Christian saint, Bonaventure (ca. 1217/1221-1274 A.D.). Both Plato and Bonaventure have a tripartite ascent, but with this difference. Where Bonaventure's ascent is outward-inward-upward, the ascent inside Plato's cave is outward-upward-inward, while that outside loses the empirical-outward to become inward-upward. For, the upward inside the cave differs from that outside.

Unlike Plato, Plotinus uses "quietude" (*hêsuchia*) directly. For Plotinus, there are hierarchies of multiplicity and quietude, at different levels of the "word" – with the lower, an image of its archetype. Moreover, Plotinus has a range of quietude, from the highest silence of the One, to quietude in nature. Intellect and hypostasis soul garner greater multiplicity than the One. Soul garners further multiplicity through its progenitive acts. Hence, the two lower hypostases cannot retain the perfect silence of the One. But loss in quietude is not the same as disquiet, which Plotinus addresses in reference to *tolma* and the *polupragmatic* soul.

This essay, therefore, has three parts – (1) Two Faces of inner Quietude: receding Multiplicity, growing Ineffability; (2) Quietude in Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*; and (3) Quietude in Plotinus' *Enneads*.

1. Two Faces of inner Quietude: receding Multiplicity, growing Ineffability

To understand the essence of quietude, we must first consider its contrary, which is material and spiritual disquiet – especially that of modernity.**6** In terms of material disquiet, the

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3 Plato, "Republic," Book VII, in *The Dialogues of Plato*, 4th ed., trans. B. Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), 2: 163-499. For subsequent in-text references, Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* is shortened to *Allegory*, with in-text citations by Stephanus numbers and footnote citations by page numbers.

4 In this essay, in-text citations from the *Enneads* include page numbers in parentheses but exclude chronological order. Thus, III.7.11 replaces III.7(45).11. Full citations (without chronological order) are in footnotes.

5 Plotinus, *Ennead VII*, trans. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 344 (note 2).

6 I use "modernity" loosely, to signify both the postmodern mindset and our contemporary worldview, for which, we have no name as yet. I do not use "modernity" in its strict technical or historical sense.

sterile sounds of mechanical devices – like the whir and hum of machines – pollute the majestic sounds of nature – like the rush of a waterfall or the whisper of a breeze. If mechanical sounds are planned, regulated, mechanical, insentient, predictable, and humdrum – then natural sounds are organic, original, wild, untamable, contingent, and alive. In terms of spiritual disquiet, the deracinating passions rob us ontologically, leaving fatal footprints of finitude, cynicism, and nihilism that cause the inner disquiet of modernity. An existential threat to all sentient beings – not just our planet – this disquiet drowns the celestial sound of the divine *Logos*, which Heraclitus urges us to hearken (Fr. 50).[7]

Thus, although the burning need of the hour, silence seems to elude modernity. Yet, material quietude is always attainable – by switching off audible devices and machines, using sound-proof rooms, etc. Simultaneous worldwide silence may be infeasible. But asynchronous patches of material quietude are not only desirable, but feasible – even under modernity. However, mental, and spiritual quietude are more challenging because they presuppose dispassion. Rising like a phoenix from the ashes of the passions, this inner quietude means tranquility amidst the greatest existential storm.

More than mere inaudibility, spiritual quietude manifests itself in the stillness of the "word" within the individual soul – a "word" that measures and signifies the moral-ontological quality of the soul's inwardness.[8] Ranging from ordinary discursive chatter to the immanent aspect of the part-immanent-part-transcendental enlivened-expiatory "sacred word" at the helm, this "word" grows quieter, the higher it rises. Inner quietude has two distinct, but related sources – receding multiplicity and growing ineffability – with both signifying growing unity.[9] For, as Plotinus says, "the contemplation is quieter, in that it unifies more, and what knows ... comes into unity with what is known" (III.8.6, 379).[10]

As two sides of the same coin, these sources of inner quietude imply one another, with multiplicity growing (hence, ineffability receding), the further we are from the divine One – and multiplicity receding (hence, ineffability growing), the closer we are to the One. Whether the soul is quiet, or unquiet depends on the object of its propinquity and the direction it faces, which, at its extremes, is twofold[11] – either the inmost wordless Word (which, for Plato and Plotinus, is the Good *qua* One), or the empirical world. The closer the "word" approaches the divine One (or the more it renounces the empirical

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7 For Fragment 50, see G. S. Kirk, ed., *Heraclitus, The Cosmic Fragments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), 65.

8 I use "word" (lower case), to distinguish it from the highest *logos* or universal trans-discursive wordless Word (upper case), which is the One within all beings. The "word" culminates in the enlivened-expiatory discursive "sacred word" – a harbinger and neighbor of the Word. Although in its higher aspects, "word" signifies the soul's degree of wisdom or grasp of the highest *logos*, it is immanent compared to the wordless Word – with the part-immanent-part-transcendental "sacred word" a bridge between the two.

9 Not just Plato's *Allegory* or Plotinus' *Enneads*, but all credible numinous experiences worldwide manifest this inner stillness – notwithstanding their theological and doctrinal differences. In Hindu mysticism, we see this ineffability in the highest numinous experiences of Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886).

10 Plotinus, *Ennead III*, trans. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967).

11 Inasmuch as the two directions are opposed, each implies the absence of the other.

world), the quieter it gets – culminating in its direct experience of the all-shining word-less Word within us. For, propinquity to the One entails transcending the cacophony of the corporeal sphere (including body-consciousness) and its accompanying worldliness. Conversely, the more the "word" descends from the One towards the empirical world, the more it gathers the dust of worldly disquiet. Thus, every point in between the world and the One – up to the precinct of the One – is marred by a degree of disquiet that dissipates, the higher we ascend.

By contrast, the One is inescapably quiet – because it is simple (or lacks multiplicity), ineffable (or defies language), and supra-ontological (or beyond being). Plotinus tells us that the One transcends the being it generates. In V.2.1 (59), "... the One is not being, but the generator of being."[12] In V.4.1-2 (141, 149) the One is "beyond being," and in VI.8.14 (277), it is "primarily self and self beyond being." Inasmuch as it is thus supra-ontological, the One not only transcends the opposites of multiplicity-ineffability, but incarnates the highest ineffability. This means its ineffability is not the mere obverse of multiplicity, but something pristine that stands alone. For the One is the originary-origin of the purest silence. Up to a point in the ascent to the One, multiplicity and ineffability are (as already stated), two sides of the same coin. This means multiplicity and ineffability are distinct – although they imply one another. However, in the immediate halo of the One, its pristine divine ineffability should shine forth as an originary archetype that implies by its very presence, a total absence of multiplicity.

The more we transcend the penumbra of the phenomenal world to ascend towards the divine One, the quieter we should grow. For, the higher the "word" rises, the more sealed, or unexposed it becomes. The closer it is to the Hearth of the One, the more ineffable it should be – its receding multiplicity implying growing continence and quietude up to a point, after which, pure ineffability takes over, as multiplicity vanishes.

Although below the One, transcendental verities, like the moral law, echo the One by being beyond human control. As a result, they defy reification through material-lingual-sonic tools immersed in discursiveness and time. Like the One, they therefore possess inherent (hence, innate) quietude or ineffability. Moreover, like the One, which, despite ineffability, lends itself to sacred discursive speech (like theological reasoning) – transcendental verities (like the moral law) also lend themselves to sacred discourses and edifying speech.

Rooted in truth, spiritual quietude belongs to the neighborhood of the One. It belongs to thinking that aligns itself with the hidden flow of trans-discursive contemplation ever present in the deep mind, from which, the surface discursive mind may alienate itself.[13] Forged by moral purification, which unfurls the soul, actualizing its hidden potential for immortality, spiritual quietude is the hallmark of true philosophical understanding. When the ascending soul quietens itself spiritually, through the truth-force inherent in di-

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12 Plotinus, *Ennead V*, trans. A. H. Armstrong (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).
13 In this essay, I use both "mind" and "soul" as distinct from each other. Of the two, "soul" is the greater category, with "mind" an aspect of "soul."

alectic – and higher still, through absorption in the trans-discursive numinous sphere beyond dialectic – it arrives at the very throne of quietude, which is the One.

Often, the moral quality and spiritual timbre of human speech serve as foremost signifiers of the speaker's inner quietude. Truthfulness confers quietude upon speech, enabling its mystical ascent – starting from the terrestrial level to full divinization, or immersion in Truth.[14] Launching out of the discursive to reach the trans-discursive state, this ascent is an escape from propositional unto trans-propositional thinking – leading ultimately, to transcendence of thought itself, as the "word" vanishes in the pure silence of the wordless Word (the One).

2. Quietude in Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*[15]

Described by commentators as man's pilgrimage from the sphere of the immanent to that of the transcendent[16] – Plato's *Allegory* qualifies as a *metaphysical* ascent, because it is a ladder of growing awareness of reality that implies growing quietude. Plato starts by saying (through Socrates), "… let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened…" (514a).[17] One measure of enlightenment is our degree of metaphysical realism and quietude. The higher the released prisoner ascends towards the Good, the more he grows in metaphysical realism *qua* truthfulness, which reduces multiplicity, thus enhancing ineffability and quietude.

At the lowest level of this ladder (inside the cave), the prisoners suffer a double enchainment – incarcerated by literal physical chains, but also by what these chains represent – ignorance, or the incarcerating delusion that the moving shadows on the cave wall constitute the fullest reality or truth (515a-c). When Plato says, "To them [the prisoners] … the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images" (515c)[18] – he is not relativizing truth, but distinguishing different levels, with shadows of images the least truthful. The delusion lies, not in seeing shadows as such, but in interpreting shadows to be the fullest sonic reality. Yet even this highest ignorance is limited, for even shadows possess a trace of truth.

Starting from these depths of ignorance, a lone prisoner is singled out for freedom by an unnamed guide, who releases him, dragging him upward, first educating him inside

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14 In this essay, I use the eastern notion of two truths (inner and outer) – with "Truth" designating the higher interior truth, and "truth," the lower exterior correspondence notion of truth. Moreover, both are to be distinguished from truthfulness.

15 Portions of this section are from D. Majumdar, "Mysticism and the Political: Stairway to the Good in Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*," *Philotheos: International Journal for Philosophy and Theology* 7(2007): 144-159.

16 For Raven, Plato's *Allegory* is an "imaginative and all-embracing picture of the pilgrimage of man," from "total illusion to total enlightenment." Plato's purpose is to tell us how to rise from a grasp of the "particular and incessantly changing objects of opinion" to the "eventual apprehension of the constant objects of knowledge." For Murdoch, Plato depicts human life as a "pilgrimage from appearance to reality." J. E. Raven, *Plato's Thought in the Making: A Study of the Development of his Metaphysics* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 166-167, 175; I. Murdoch, *The fire & the sun: Why Plato banished the artists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 2.

17 Plato, 376.

18 Plato, 377.

the cave, then thrusting him out (515c-e) – finally forcing him "into the presence of the sun himself ..." (515e).[19] Inside the cave, the gaze of the released prisoner is necessarily outward. For his guide forces him to seek growing *empirical* realism with respect to the facticity of the visible world (represented by the cave) – making him name the "objects" the puppeteers used to cast shadows on the cave wall (515d). Inasmuch as realism (*qua* truthfulness) reduces multiplicity, he should experience growing quietude even inside the cave. Moreover, inasmuch as even shadows come with a trace of reality – even his former consciousness as a prisoner should have had a trace of quietude.

This comprehensive ascent – from its nadir, at the lowest point in the cave, to its zenith, with the vision of the Good (represented by the sun) – has two hierarchical-sequential phases – with the lower inside the cave, and the higher, outside. Applying Plato's quadripartite "divided line" (*Republic*, Book VI, 509d–511e) to his *Allegory*, comes with its own problems.[20] But as Ross suggests, a limited application allows us to draw just two parallels – those between the upper and lower worlds (in the "divided line") with the realms outside and inside the cave respectively (in the *Allegory*).[21] Poetic in his symbolism, Plato uses the underground cave to represent the visible phenomenal world (below the "divided line"), apprehended by the senses – and the realm outside the cave, to represent the intelligible world (above the "divided line") that houses the forms – "... the prison-house [underground cave] is the world of sight [the immanent visible world of copies] ... the journey upwards ... the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world [which contains the forms] ..." (517b).[22]

Beginning with the lowest freedom (from chains), and the lower knowledge and realism this literal freedom brings inside the cave – the ascent ends with an ultimate liberty outside the cave – a far greater (hence quieter) numinous freedom that culminates at the summit, with the released prisoner's vision of the Good. The two phases differ in their types and levels of freedom, realism, and knowledge – with freedom inside the cave, both literal (freedom from shackles) and moral (freedom from delusion), and freedom outside, increasingly metaphysical and numinous. Although radically different, the two phases of the ascent should share spiritual maturation in common (albeit, at different levels), and the chief sign thereof – growing realism, which should imbue both phases with growing quietude. For, in both, the pilgrim's increasing awareness of reality should reduce multiplicity, and hence, enhance quietude.

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19 Plato, 377. For Clay, this guide is the "anonymous" philosopher. D. Clay, *Platonic Questions: Dialogues with the Silent Philosopher* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 239. For why coercion is necessary, see Majumdar, 154.

20 See Majumdar, 150-151, for the difficulties that arise with drawing parallels between Plato's "Divided Line" and his *Allegory*.

21 Ross notes that although there is no distinct reference to the divided line in Plato's *Allegory*, by identifying the cave with the visible world and the upper world with the intelligible, Plato indirectly identifies the cave with the lower section of the line, and the upper world with the higher. For he is explicit that the lower and the higher sections of the line represent the visible and the intelligible respectively (509 d 8, Plato, 372). Yet, Ross also points to differences. See Majumdar, 150-151 and D. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 71-72, 76.

22 Plato, 379.

As the released prisoner ascends, he should experience in himself the ineffability that comes from reduced multiplicity, the two being two sides of the same coin – but also anticipate the highest ineffability of the Good. With growing propinquity to the Good (the heart and essence of silence), the released prisoner should anticipate an added pristine ineffability that shines forth directly from the Good. A halo of the Good, this new ineffability should confer upon the prisoner-pilgrim, the possibility of vanquishing multiplicity altogether – in contradistinction with receding multiplicity at lower levels of the ascent. As the pilgrim approaches the Good, he should experience this alteration in himself – from lower multiplicity and greater ineffability mutually implying each other, to a new radiant ineffability (received directly from the Good) now leading and vanquishing all his lingering multiplicity.

As already stated, the most basic similitude between the two phases lies in the fact that each has its overarching cumulative quietude (or ineffability) and the receding multiplicity inherent in the prisoner-pilgrim's growing realism and maturation – but with this difference. Applying Plato's "divided line" to his *Allegory* means the visible world (inside the cave) contains copies of the forms in the intellectual world (outside the cave). But the quietude inside the cave is not a copy of that outside. Likewise, the realism, or truth inside the cave is not a copy of that outside. Given its empiricism, realism inside the cave presupposes truthfulness at the lower level – defined by the correspondence notion of truth, which matches statement with fact.[23] At best, a dilution of the deeper quietude outside, quietude inside the cave is premised on this lower truth, with that outside governed by a higher interior Truth.

Moreover, even this lower truth (inside the cave) comes in degrees. It is not as if the objects seen are growing in reality. For the shadows and their images remain what they are. Nor is the released prisoner becoming more objective. If at first he saw shadows with objectivity, he now sees their archetypal images with equal objectivity. All that has changed is his awareness of reality. He now realizes that the former shadows are not the fullest reality – that there are, in fact, degrees of reality. It is this growing awareness of gradations of reality that implies a gradient of truthfulness. That the released prisoner's ascent is *reluctant* (515e) proves our natural human predilection for torpor rather than truthfulness. As neophytes, we are weighed down by torpor, which prefers delusion to the quietude of truth. This means, we struggle even with the lower correspondence notion of truth.

Likewise, the objects beheld outside the cave are not growing in reality. Nor is the pilgrim less objective when beholding shadows, as opposed to reflections, etc. But his awareness of reality is growing. Moreover, his gradient of truth is now still steeper. For it leads from shadows, through reflections (which are more real than shadows), to objects themselves (which are more real than their reflections) to heavenly bodies (516a) – and finally, to the highest ever reality, which is the Good (represented by the sun) (516b). The ascent outside therefore involves deeper introspection, and accordingly, a more truthful eye. But this calls for something more powerful than the exteriorized and empirical correspon-

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23 Citing the view commonest among philosophers – Russell says truth is "some form of correspondence between belief and fact." B. Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1912), 190.

dence notion of truth – namely, the unvarying universal Truth (the fountainhead of truthfulness) within us, which, for Plato, has the Good for its source (517c).[24]

Unlike things in the visible world, which are copies of their matching forms in the intellectual world, the correspondence notion of truth is not a copy of this higher, interior Truth. For, this latter is not a match between statement and fact. In fact, the two truths demand opposite orientations, with the lower exteriorized truth, entailing outwardness, and the higher interior Truth entailing the deepest ever inward turn. As already stated, the growing stillness inside the cave cannot be a copy of that outside – for the two levels of quietude are premised on two different truths, with that outside, higher, and thus progenitive of a deeper, superior quietude in the ascending pilgrim. Yet, inasmuch as the Good is the "supreme source" of the higher inward Truth (517c), it must also be the "source" of the lower empirical truth.[25] Hence, notwithstanding these differences, the Good should harmonize both truths in the ascending pilgrim, and accordingly, both levels of quietude. Although the growing quietude inside the cave is not a copy of that outside, both should be bestowed by the Good.

The exit from the cave entails shedding empiricism and outwardness, through a preliminary inward turn that swivels the prisoner-pilgrim's gaze from a tripartite trajectory (inside the cave) – namely, outward-upward-inward – to a bipartite trajectory (outside the cave) – namely, inward-upward. Accordingly, this exit should imply a sudden reduction in multiplicity or abrupt rise in ineffability (quietude). Moreover, this inward turn should mean an ontological somersault – from the correspondence notion of truth to the higher, inner Truth – a motion that should enhance the teleological impetus embedded in Plato's ascent. But in the hallowed precinct of the One, the prisoner-pilgrim should experience a still higher and deeper inward turn – a quantum leap that intensifies his power of vision, so as to make it worthy of its hallowed object – namely, the ultimate reality of the Good. Accordingly, this propinquity to the Good should mean a further leap from ordinary spiritual quietude to something closer to the stillness the Good irradiates through the higher interior Truth, but not identical with it. Compared to the pure silence of the Good, even this highest human stillness should be penultimate.

Our understanding of the significance of this spellbinding somersault (from exterior to interior truth) in Plato, is perhaps enriched by comparing it with a very different voice – that of Bonaventure:

> That we may arrive at an understanding of the First Principle, which is most spiritual and eternal and above us, we ought to proceed through the traces which are corporeal and temporal and outside us; and this is to be led into the way of God. We ought next to enter into our minds, which are the eternal image of God, spiritual and internal; and this is to walk in the truth of God. We ought finally to pass over into that which is eternal, most spiritual, and above us, looking to the First Principle; and this is to rejoice in the knowledge of God and in the reverence of His majesty.[26]

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[24] Plato, 379.

[25] Plato, 379.

[26] Bonaventure, "The Mind's Road to God," in *Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy*, 6th ed., ed. F. E. Baird (Boston: Prentice Hall, 2011), 278. In the following comparisons between Plato and Bonaventure, all quotations (except part of footnote 28) are from this block quotation.

Before pointing to similarities between Plato and Bonaventure, it helps to discern their differences:

4. Although both subscribe to dualistic (not monistic) theologies – with man and God separate (but mystically connected) – for Plato, our minds are not made in the "eternal image of God," as they are for Bonaventure. As a result, the incipient introspection implied in his ascent, even outside the cave (at the base of the upper intelligible world in the "divided line" – below the forms) differs from that in Bonaventure – which is to "enter into our minds, which are the eternal image of God."

5. Like Bonaventure, Plato too uses mimesis – but differently. Plato's dualism is more extensive – because his phenomenal world contains *temporized* copies of eternal intelligible forms. Bonaventure's corporeal and temporal terrestrial "traces" are not copies of eternal exemplars. Only our minds are in the *eternal* image of God.

6. Plato and Bonaventure differ in the sequence within their tripartite trajectories of ascent. The sequence in Plato's ascent inside the cave is empirically outward-upward, with inwardness implied – whereas that in the comparable terrestrial-empirical phase of Bonaventure's ascent begins with an empirical-outward that implies (in the second phase), an inwardness that is *ontologically* upward. There is no empirical-upward in Bonaventure. This is because they differ in what they mean by the "upward" – a term neither uses directly. The empirical-upward inside Plato's cave is metaphorical.[27] The prisoner-pilgrim's growing realism should deepen his inwardness, thus pushing him interiorly and ontologically upward, even as he ascends empirically (and metaphorically) upward. But for Bonaventure, there is no empirical or metaphorical upward, in his first phase. Instead, the empirical-outward (in his first phase) leads (in his second phase) to an inwardness that is ontologically upward – with this latter enhanced further, in his third phase.

7. In Plato, the inward alters by the phase of the ascent. The released prisoner's growing empirical realism inside the cave bestows upon his inwardness, the lower gradient of non-transcendental *phenomenal* immanence. Upon exiting the cave, he sheds the empirical-outward, to experience an inward turn that puts him at the base of the intelligible world (above the "divided line"), where a gradient of higher immanence takes over – beginning with a not-yet-transcendental, but intelligible immanence – and reaching a transcendental-immanence at the zenith, with the vision of the Good. But in Bonaventure, the lowest phenomenal immanence implied in his terrestrial first phase gives way to an inwardness in his second phase that is already transcendental – inasmuch as it entails entering a mind that is made in the "eternal image of God." If its eternality makes this mind transcendental, then its mimetic quality makes it immanent. There is, therefore, no non-transcendental intelligible immanence in Bonaventure. Of his three phases, only the first is empirically immanent, with the two higher being transcendent *and* immanent.

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27 Going by the "divided line," ascent within Plato's cave should be a metaphor for growing realism in the visible phenomenal world.

8. If the first encounter with eternity happens (by implication) in Plato's ascent at the level of the forms in the intelligible world (above the cave), then it happens in Bonaventure, in his second phase of entering our minds made in the eternal image of God. Of the two, Bonaventure's should be less potent, because it entails entering an eternal *image* of God – not that which is essentially eternal (as are Plato's forms).

9. Inasmuch as Plato's Good transcends the eternal forms, it transcends eternity. But Bonaventure's First Principle is eternal.

Yet, despite these differences, there are similarities:

1. For Plato, who precedes Bonaventure by more than a millennium, the ascent is a ladder of growing realism that starts from the underground cave (514a), which represents the visible world. For Bonaventure, as well, the empirical world, which contains "traces" that are "corporeal and temporal and outside us," is "a ladder for ascending to God."[28] For both, therefore, the visible world serves as the starting point of the ascent.

2. In Plato, the released prisoner's empirical objects of vision inside the cave compare with Bonaventure's "corporeal and temporal" traces "outside us." In both, this objective grasp of the visible world happens (by implication) in accordance with the correspondence notion of truth. Both imply a corporeal immanence.

3. There is no room in either Plato or Bonaventure for morally reprehensible forms of subjectivity or inwardness (like the occult).

4. For Plato, once the prisoner-pilgrim exits the cave to transcend the visible world and rise to the intelligible, he sheds the empirical-outward. Likewise, Bonaventure drops the empirical-outward at the end of his first terrestrial phase of ascent. Plato's exit to the upper world spurs an inward turn that evokes a non-empirical, cumulative, ontological, and interior upwardness. The same may be said of Bonaventure's inward turn in his second phase, which leads to an interior ontological-upwardness.

5. Unlike Plato, Bonaventure does not mention an interior Truth. But if his First Principle is Truth, then ascent towards this God is ascent towards Truth. For Plato (as already stated), the exit from the cave is a somersault from exterior to inner Truth – a swiveling that vivifies the *telos* of the Good, which imbues his ascent with meaning and purpose, because it is the source of both truths. For Bonaventure, as well, the transition from the first to the second phase, is an inward turn that should somersault from exterior to the deeper inner Truth. Proceeding through temporal and corporeal traces (in the first phase) executes an unstated correspondence notion of truth, which, therefore means, being "led into the way of God."

6. Thus, for both Plato and Bonaventure, this first outward correspondence truthfulness purifies the mind enough, so that it can afford the inward turn that leads ontologically upward towards the First Principle, which, for Plato, is the Good, and for Bonaventure, God. In both, the mind must first purify itself, in order to be capable of this somersault from exterior truth to the highest interior Truth.

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28 Bonaventure, 278.

7. In Bonaventure's third and highest phase, looking at the resplendent and eternal First Principle implies ascending from the lower transcendental-immanent mind in his second phase, to the highest transcendental level that yet remains immanent – because it falls short of the fullest oneness of *unio mystica*. For the same reason, Plato's highest stage of the vision of the Good, and lower levels of encountering the eternal forms should be transcendent-immanent.

8. If Plato's overall ascent culminates in the prisoner-pilgrim's numinous vision of the Good – then Bonaventure's ascent culminates in beholding the First Principle – which is to "rejoice in the knowledge of God and in the reverence of His majesty." Inasmuch as both are dualistic visions, both fall short of *unio mystica*.

9. In both Plato and Bonaventure, the phases of ascent imply gradients of growing quietude – which should culminate, at the highest, with a penultimate stillness below the perfect silence of the First Principle.

Quietude in Plato's *Allegory* is implied in at least two ways. First, a noetic gradient of quietude is inherent in both phases (inside and outside the cave) of the ascent. Unlike truth, which changes from the lower to the higher phase, by somersaulting from the outer to the inner, quietude in both phases is contiguous, cumulative, and gradual. For the noetic strength needed for the final numinous vision of the Good is acquired gradually and cumulatively. Second, Plato's ascent implies at least three levels of quietude – with that of the Good (the essence of quietude), the highest – followed at a penultimate level, by the acme of quietude inherent in the pilgrim's noetic power and beatific vision of the Good. Given Plato's inherent dualism – with the prisoner-pilgrim experiencing a mere vision, and not the fullest *unio mystica* – the quietude inherent in his noetic vision has to be lower than the supernal and exemplary stillness of the Good – even though he derives this quietude from his propinquity to the Good. Finally, at lower levels, Plato implies a gradient of quietude to match his gradient of reality – with multiplicity receding and ineffability or quietude growing, the more the prisoner-pilgrim becomes aware of reality. Yet, all levels of quietude should be gifts of the Good, drawn in direct proportion to noetic propinquity to the Good.

Entailing a gradual overcoming of the empirical, through ascent in truth and realism, the cumulative noetic power of the ascending pilgrim is therefore a force of quietening that reaches its acme with his vision of the Good. Moreover, this culminating penultimate quietude (inherent in the noetic power he uses to behold the Good), is a full flowering of the gradual quietening accumulated through the entire gradient of his ascent. Beginning with the rudimentary objectivity of knowing shadows on the cave wall to be shadows, the prisoner-pilgrim transcends sensory realism (inside the cave) to gain a supra-sensory metaphysical realism (in the upper reaches outside the cave), plus noetic powers that reach their acme in the vision of the highest reality (the Idea of the Good), which, therefore, appears "last of all" (517b).[29]

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29 Plato, 379.

This final vision of the Good, Plato tells us, happens with *effort* – "... in the world of knowledge the Idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort" (517b).[30] That the prisoner-pilgrim needs *effort* – notwithstanding the cumulative gradient of his *noesis*, and despite his gradual gathering of numinous strength – should not surprise us, given the rarefied and lofty object of his vision. For, the noetic strength he needs to behold the Good, must be worthy of the magnificence of the Good.[31] Moreover, the quietude of his noetic strength, although unequal, must be worthy of the superior quietude of the Good.

Using solar theology, Plato represents the Good by the metaphor of the sun outside the cave (516b). The prisoner-pilgrim's noetic ascent culminates with his *direct* (unmediated) vision and contemplation of the Good – "Last of all he will be able to see the sun [the Good], not turning aside to the illusory reflections of him in the water, but gazing directly at him in his own proper place, and contemplating him as he is" (516b).[32] Compared to more vicarious secondary discursive contemplations of the Good – such as reading about it, or even reflecting mentally on the nature of the Good – this higher direct trans-discursive numinous contemplation, although less quiet than the Good itself, has to be quieter than all three forms of sacred speech (thought- speech-writing).

The result of this *living* contemplation, is a *living* theology – reported discursively. For, when *seen* (not read about, nor debated) – the Good is "inferred" to be the "universal author of all things beautiful and right," and the "parent" or source of the physical sun ("parent of light and of the lord of light in the visible world") (517c).[33] Moreover, the Good is also the "immediate and supreme source of reason and truth in the intellectual" (the highest human intelligence) (517c).[34] That Plato does not equate the two, but makes the Good the "immediate and supreme source" (517c) of this highest *interior* Truth – means that even Truth is less quiet than the Good.[35] Inasmuch as the Good transcends language altogether – it serves as the very heart of ineffability and quietude.

Even if reported in discursive terms, the prisoner-pilgrim's direct vision and contemplation of the Good is a trans-discursive experience. Like the ineffable Good, but at a lower level, his rarefied vision is ineffable – and hence quiet. His discursive reflections on the nature of the Good, are still lower and hence, still less quiet. What the disquiet of language expresses are the mere conclusions the pilgrim draws about the nature of the Good, after beholding it – not the direct experience of the vision itself. At this pinnacle of the ascent, the prisoner-pilgrim, therefore, occupies three levels below the Good – at the highest, his vision of the Good, at the second, his contemplation of the Good, and at the third and lowest, the theological discourse he draws from this vision. First, his culminating beatific

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30 Plato, 379.

31 In this section, "power" is strength – not the desire to dominate others.

32 Plato, 378.

33 Plato, 379.

34 Plato, 379.

35 Plato, 379.

vision of the Good, should reach beyond his awareness of inner Truth (below the Good). Accordingly, his numinous contemplation of the Good should possess a penultimate and secondary quietude (compared to that of his vision of the Good), still drawn from propinquity to the Good. Finally, his post-vision discursive discourse on the Good, and its attendant quietude, should be still lower and tertiary.

3. Quietude in Plotinus' *Enneads*

Plotinus uses quietude (*hêsuchia*) to imply greater unity, which, in turn, should imply lower multiplicity or greater ineffability. Thus, in III.8.6 (379), Plotinus speaks of contemplation being *quieter* in the sense of greater unity between knower and known – "... in proportion as the confidence [of contemplation in possessing] is clearer, the contemplation is quieter, in that it unifies more, and what knows ... comes into unity with what is known." Moreover, that which is less quiet is an image of that which is quieter, as Plotinus suggests in V.1.3 (19), where he uses the analogy of two speeches (*logoi*)[36] – the thought-expressed, as the image of the thought-in-soul (its superior) – to illustrate the divine soul, as the "expressed thought" of Intellect – "just as a thought in its utterance is an image of the thought in soul, so soul itself is the expressed thought of Intellect ..." Here it is noteworthy that mimesis happens *despite* differences in quietude between archetype and image. For, the quietude of soul does not copy that of Intellect. If anything, their difference in quietude signifies the entitative gulf between image and archetype.

In I.2.3 (137), Plotinus ties three levels together in a tripartite hierarchy – namely, the word uttered, the word-in-soul, and the word-in-Intellect. Imbuing the lower level with greater multiplicity (hence lower quietude and unity), which fragments it, he says:

> As the spoken word is an imitation of that in the soul, so the word in the soul is an imitation of that in something else: as the uttered word, then, is broken up into parts as compared with that in the soul, so is that in the soul as compared with that before it [Intellect], which it interprets.

In this mimetic hierarchy, multiplicity increases as the level declines – with the spoken word (at the lowest) imperfect enough to be incapable of interpreting its superior, thus marring its mimesis of its archetype and superior (the word-in-soul). Not merely a distended image (with greater multiplicity) of its superior (the word-in-Intellect), but the word-in-soul is also its *interpreter*. Although fragmented ("broken up into parts") – with greater multiplicity and disquiet than its superior (the word-in-Intellect) – the word-in-soul is less fragmented than the spoken word and can therefore still *interpret* the word-in-Intellect. By contrast, uttered speech is merely a distended image of the word-in-soul, but not its interpreter – perhaps because having garnered still greater multiplicity, by being more fragmented than its archetype, it can no longer interpret this superior word-in-soul – thus marring its mimesis. From this we may conclude that the archetype is always quieter than its image – so that the word-in-Intellect is the quietest, with the word-in-soul less quiet, and the spoken word the least quiet.

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36 As Armstrong points out, this distinction between thought-in-mind and thought-expressed first appears in Stoic logic. See *Ennead V*, 19 (note 3).

Besides these hierarchies of multiplicity and implied quietude at different levels of the word, Plotinus uses quietude in myriad other ways – sometimes directly and sometimes by implication. Thus, in V.1.2 (15) and III.7.11 (339), Plotinus uses quietude directly – while in V.3.13 (117), he ascribes ineffability to the One, to imply a silence so absolute that it defies effability. Moreover, stillness comes at varying levels, beginning at the lowest, with literal material quietude. Thus, in V.1.2 (15), Plotinus gives us this beautiful rendition of quietude in nature:

> Let not only its [referring to the purified soul freed from deceit, etc., and "established in quietude"] encompassing body and the body's raging sea be quiet, but all its environment: the earth quiet, and the sea and air quiet, and the heaven itself at peace.[37]

If this lowest immanent quietude (stated directly) belongs to nature, then the highest quietude (implied) belongs to the One. In VI.8.16 (281) and III.9.4 (413) Plotinus tells us that the One is both "everywhere" (immanent) and "nowhere" (transcendent), and in V.2.1 (59) that it is "all things and not a single one of them." That the One is quiet in its immanence may not be immediately obvious. Yet, inasmuch as its omnipresence "everywhere" is materially invisible, it cannot help but be quiet. By contrast, the ultimate quietude of the One that transcends by being "nowhere," is obvious. Thus, Plotinus begins V.3.13 (117) with these words about the transcendent One that draws an unstated, but implied quietude, from its purest and highest ineffability:

> It [the "absolute One"] is, therefore, truly ineffable: for whatever you say about it, you will always be speaking of a "something". But "beyond all things and beyond the supreme majesty of Intellect" is the only one of all the ways of speaking of it which is true; it is not its name, but says that it is not one of all things and "has no name", because we can say nothing of it: we only try … to make signs to ourselves about it.

Here, the One's quietude *qua* ineffability has three sources – its supreme transcendence, its namelessness, and our inability to say anything about it. Adding to these sources, we have the One's simplicity or lack of multiplicity, which contributes further quietude. For, as Plotinus says in V.2.1 (59), "the One … is simple and has in it no diverse variety, or any sort of doubleness …" Moreover, it is "simple before all things … outside all coincidence and composition" (V.4.1, 141). Finally, in VI.9.5 (321), Plotinus tells us that the One is "simple and the principle of all things." That this highest quietude belongs to the One is therefore justified by its highest ineffability and perfect simplicity. In V.3.12 (115), Plotinus says that "in order that anything else may exist, it is necessary that the One should keep absolutely quiet by itself." For, otherwise it will "move before there is movement," and "think before there is thinking …"

Besides the One and nature (not matter) – the two extremes Plotinus ascribes quietude to – he also imputes quietude to other entities in between. The range that bridges these two extremes comprises varying degrees of multiplicity that lead from the many to the One. It is also a range in quietude – from nature's stillness at the lowest, to the supreme

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[37] As Armstrong says, this passage made a "deep impression" on both St. Basil and St. Augustine. *Ennead V*, 14-15 (note 2).

ineffability of the One at the highest. Caluori points to a different pair of extremes, noting that things that are one-and-many must be distinguished from those that are "*simpliciter* one" (which applies only to Plotinus' One) – and those that are "pure multiplicities" (like a "heap"). In between, "one can think of many things with varying degrees of unity" [and accordingly, varying degrees of multiplicity and quietude] – which is why they may be called "one and many in some sense."[38]

In between the two extremes of nature and the One, Plotinus applies quietude to many entities – like Intellect and its making, hypostasis soul, time, the analogy of the seed, etc. As Schürmann points out, strictly speaking, the One is not a hypostasis, insofar as this term implies gradations. Yet it is *the* hypostasis for it stands under everything else.[39] The two lower hypostases cannot sustain the One's pure and perfect quietude, because they garner multiplicity. Thus, Intellect is "not simple but many" (V.4 2, 145) – for, if "... there is something else after the First, it cannot still be simple: it will therefore be a One-Many" (V.4.1, 143). Already fragmented by multiplicity, Intellect is "One-Many." In V.3.11 (109), Plotinus speaks of "multiple Intellect," as "sight not yet seeing," seeking to apprehend the One, but receiving merely itself as a multiple image of the One. Hypostasis soul garners still greater multiplicity, for it is one-and-many and a "ghost of Intellect," with an "obscure" expression (V.1.6, 33).

Nevertheless, Intellect and hypostasis soul retain *some* unity and hence, *some* quietude. Thus, Armstrong refers to the "quiet unity of Intellect"[40] – and Plotinus begins III.7.11 (337), by pointing to the "quiet life" resting in eternity – referring to the "disposition which ... existed in eternity, to that quiet life, all a single whole, still unbounded, altogether without declination, resting in and directed towards eternity." In III.8.6 (381), Plotinus tells us that the soul "sees" quietly what it utters, and that it is quieter than nature because it is more contained – "... because the soul possesses its content more completely it is quieter than nature ..." Moreover, the soul is quiet when sated with contemplation – "For the soul keeps quiet then, and seeks nothing because it is filled ..." (III.8.6, 379).

The One and Intellect are quiet not only in themselves, but also in their progenitive aspects and acts. Thus, in V.3.12 (115), Plotinus tells us that "in order that anything else may exist, it is necessary that the One should keep absolutely quiet by itself." Moreover, in V.1.6 (31), Plotinus speaks of the One not moving in its generative act – "... what comes into being from the One does so without the One being moved ..." In V.2.1 (61), Plotinus tells us that both the One and Intellect abide "unchanged" in generating their progeny – "... Soul ... comes to be this while Intellect abides unchanged: for Intellect too comes into being while that which is before it abides unchanged." Being unmoved or abiding unchanged should

38 D. Caluori, *Plotinus on the Soul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 70.

39 R. Schürmann, "The Philosophy of Plotinus: Doctor Reiner Schürmann's Course Lectures," inventory established by P. Adler (New York: The New School for Social Research, Dept. of Philosophy, 1994, photocopied), 53; D. Majumdar, *Plotinus on the Appearance of Time and the World of Sense: A Pantomime* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 3.

40 Armstrong's Synopsis, *Ennead III*, 295.

imply unity and quietude. Thus, in III.2.2 (47, 49), Plotinus tells us that "Intellect, by giving something of itself to matter, made all things in unperturbed quietness."

Yet, although Intellect thus resembles the One both in its inherent entitative quietude and in its quiet generation of hypostasis soul, its quietude (entitative and progenitive) has to be inferior and imperfect compared to that of the One. Its innate quietude is inferior on account of its multiplicity – because it is One-Many. Although Plotinus is clear that Intellect resembles the One in its progenitive act – "Resembling the One thus, Intellect produces in the same way, pouring forth a multiple power—this is a likeness of it—just as that which was before it poured it forth" (V.2.1, 59, 61) – its progenitive quietude too has to be inferior to that of the One, if nothing else, because the power it pours forth has greater multiplicity than that which the One emanated.

Plotinus also applies quietude to other entities and contexts, below the three hypostases. Thus, in III.7.12 (343), he speaks of the quietude of time – the "extent of life" that "goes forward in even and uniform changes progressing quietly ..." He also ponders on how time would cease, giving way to eternity, if "this part of the soul" returned (hypothetically) to "the intelligible world and to eternity, and rested quietly there." Inasmuch as time is a copy of eternity, the quietude innate to time has to be inferior to that of the soul's hypothetical rest in Intellect and eternity. Moreover, this quietude that Plotinus anticipates for soul, were it to return to intellect, is to be expected. For, given its noetic status, the unfallen soul in Intellect (in V.2.1, 61, and V.3.6, 91) is quiet, as Strange recognizes in V.3.6 (91).[41]

Plotinus also ascribes quietude to the *logoi spermatikoi* – seeds containing the rational formative principles (V.3.8, 97 and V.9.6, 303). Inasmuch as they are denizens of Intellect, these seeds and their contents (the rational formative principles) should possess inherent quietude. Thus in III.8.6 (379), Plotinus refers to the "silent rational form." Moreover, as Schürmann points out, for Plotinus, the metaphor of the seed describes the process of exteriorization, suggesting "a unity that bears in it possible multiplicity."[42] Thus in III.2.2 (49), Plotinus uses the analogy of the formative principle in a seed, pointing to its inner integrity (which should imply quietude), to explain the rising of the All (multiplicity) from Intellect, "which is one" – "... just as in the formative principle in a seed all the parts are together and in the same place ... then something comes to be in bulk ... so from Intellect which is one, and the formative principle which proceeds from it, this All has risen ..."

Finally, Plotinus speaks not only of varying degrees of quietude, but also of receding quietude and disquiet, which should be distinct from one another – with loss in quietude superior to disquiet.[43] In V.2.1 (61), Plotinus tells us that in contrast to its superiors (the One and Intellect) – hypostasis soul "does not abide unchanged when it produces." Instead,

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41 S. K. Strange, "Plotinus on the Nature of Eternity and Time," in *Aristotle in Late Antiquity*, ed. L.P. Schrenk, (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 48 (footnote 71).

42 Schürmann, 49.

43 Portions of this section are from D. Majumdar, "Is *Tolma* the Cause of First Otherness for Plotinus?" *Dionysius* XXIII (December 2005): 31-48.

"it is moved and so brings forth an image." This movement should reduce the original quietude of hypostasis soul.

In III.7.11 (339), Plotinus uses the same analogy of the seed (as in III.2.2, 49) – but in the opposite context of squandering unity (or destroying quietude) – to demonstrate how Soul makes the world of sense:

> ... as from a quiet seed the formative principle, unfolding itself, advances, as it thinks, to largeness, but does away with the largeness by division and, instead of keeping its unity in itself, squanders it outside itself and so goes forward to a weaker extension ... in the same way Soul, making the world of sense ...

Unlike the seed, which is multiplicity-in-potentiality, the One is truly ineffable and wholly devoid of multiplicity. In V.3.15 (127), Plotinus tells us that the One is the "potency of all things," but not in the way of passive matter, which is "said to be in potency, because it receives." Moreover, potency (which applies to the One) is entirely distinct from potentiality (which applies to the seed). Although "what comes from the One is certainly not one" (V.3.15, 127) – but multiplicity that starts with the incipient one-many of Intellect – yet this descent of the many from the One is entirely different from the multiplicity that arises from the quiet seed in III.7.11 (339). Unlike the seed, which loses quietude when engendering multiplicity, the One remains quiet despite engendering multiplicity.

Besides their progenitive acts, the stark otherness between the hypostases should add to the otherness between their levels of quietude, which should decline, the lower one descends. Given his two disparate ways of accounting for plurality, Plotinus complicates the generation of otherness "by and from the One." In his negative account, generation results from an audacious act of *tolma*. But in his positive, account, emanation results from the One's plenitude. Merlan, who considers Plotinian emanation to be an alliance between these pessimistic and optimistic accounts, respectively, sums them up as: (1) "the "falling away" from the One, implying voluntarism, and (2) the "overflowing" of the One, implying the involuntary and necessary.[44] Regardless of which motion (voluntary or involuntary) we consider, otherness should imply greater multiplicity in the inferior progeny – hence, lower quietude (not disquiet).

For Plotinus, perhaps the paramount cause of disquiet is *tolma* (comparable with Augustine's *superbia*, which is the "beginning of all sin").[45] As Torchia notes, *superbia* and *tolma* both cause "a spirit of inquietude which stands in opposition to a contemplative mode of existence."[46] Besides causing "inquietude" or disquiet, *tolma* also reduces quietude. Plotinus points to a *tolmatic* spirit even in Intellect – given its volitional desire for autonomy from the One (directly or by inference):[47]

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[44] P. Merlan, *From Platonism to Neoplatonism* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1953), 114. Torchia, 41, says, "... in order to generate at all, the One must produce something *other than itself*. However, that which is other than the One must be inferior and limited in relation to its source." See N. J. Torchia, *Plotinus, Tolma, and the Descent of Being* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 41.

[45] Torchia, 139.

[46] Torchia, 146-147.

[47] As Torchia, 49, notes, Plotinus does not use "*tolma*-language" directly in III.8.8 and V.8.13, but the arrogance implied in the motion away from the One hints at a *tolmatic* spirit.

1. **V.1.7 (35)**: "There is One here also, but the One is the productive power of all things. The things, then, of which it is the productive power are those which Intellect observes, in a way cutting itself off from the power; otherwise it would not be Intellect."

2. **VI.9.5 (321)**: Here Plotinus uses the verb form of *tolma*, saying, "… its nearness after the One has kept it [Intellect] from dividing itself, though it did somehow dare to stand away from the One …"

3. **III.8.8 (387)**: "For when it [Intellect] contemplates the One, it does not contemplate it as one: otherwise it would not become Intellect. But beginning as one it did not stay as it began, but, without noticing it, became many, as if heavy [with drunken sleep], and unrolled itself because it wanted to possess everything …"

4. **V.8.13 (279)**: "… he comes to be between the two, by the otherness of his severance from what is above, and by the bond which keeps him from what comes after him on the lower side …"

In each quotation (1-4), Intellect's voluntary self-severance from the One and the cause of this volition – namely, *tolma* – should add to its multiplicity (hence reduce its quietude) and otherness, beyond what it gains by being below the One.

If *tolma* afflicts even Intellect, how much more must it afflict hypostasis soul in its self-extruding progenitive acts? *Tolma* afflicts the lower soul that is in vegetal life (V.2.2, 61) – "When therefore soul comes to exist in a plant, what is in the plant is … the most audacious and stupid part of it." Here *tolma* is direct audacity, rather than the metaphysical *tolma* implied in self-severance from a superior progenitor (as with Intellect). Hence, it should produce disquiet, rather than lower quietude.

In III.7.11 (339), Plotinus refers to the "unquiet" power of hypostasis soul, which "wanted to keep on transferring what it saw there to something else …" In III.7.11 (339), Plotinus also speaks of the hypostasis soul's *polupragmatic* ("restlessly active") nature[48] – a source of disquiet that Torchia identifies with its "unquiet power" and associates with *tolma*, with which, he says, it "displays a kinship."[49] Strange suggests that soul's "unquiet power" is its faculty of desire, associating the "fall" of soul from the intelligible realm with its desire to rule itself.[50] Yet, the cause of soul's unquiet power may precede even its *polupragmatic* nature. Unlike the indissoluble one-many of Intellect, the hypostasis soul's balance of the same and the other has "dissolved" into the separate one-*and*-many.[51] It is perhaps this exculpable pre-*tolmatic* metaphysical imbalance that accounts for soul's "unquiet pow-

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[48] A *polupragmatic* nature connotes wrongful curiosity and *ennui* rather than *tolmatic* audacity. Despite this difference, the two are related asymmetrically. A *tolmatic* nature need not be *polupragmatic*. But a *polupragmatic* nature expresses the willful exteriorization characteristic of *tolma*. As Schürmann, 49, notes, the principle of exteriorization bears different names in Plotinus – not just the curiosity characteristic of the *polupragmatic* nature, but also boldness (*tolma*), self-determination (*autexousion*), and "first otherness" (*prôtè heterotês*).

[49] Torchia, 78.

[50] Strange, 48.

[51] D. Nikulin, "Plotinus on Eternity," in *Le Timée de Platon*, ed. A. Neschke-Hentschke (Louvain-Paris: Éditions Peeters, 2000), 29.

er" more than its *polupragmatic* disquiet, which stands in stark contrast with the quietude inherent in the toil-free mastery characteristic of Intellect's making.

Finally, in V.1.1 (11, 13), Plotinus points to an incipient progenitive metaphysical *tolma* in individual souls that constitutes the "beginning of evil" and hence, a concrete disquiet, followed by a bewildering worldliness that produces further disquiet:

> What is it ... which has made the souls forget their father, God, and be ignorant of themselves and him, even though they are parts which come from his higher world and altogether belong to it? The beginning of evil for them was audacity [*tolma*] and coming to birth and the first otherness and the wishing to belong to themselves. Since they were clearly delighted with their own independence, and made great use of self-movement, running the opposite course and getting as far away as possible, they were ignorant even that they themselves came from that world ... Since they do not any more see their father or themselves, they despise themselves through ignorance of their birth and honour other things, admiring everything rather than themselves, and, astonished and delighted by and dependent on these [earthly] things, they broke themselves loose as far as they could in contempt of that from which they turned away; so that their honour for these things here and their contempt for themselves in the cause of their utter ignorance of God.

Here, souls fall for two reasons – first because of their metaphysical *tolma* and first otherness, and second, because of their worldliness, which makes them self-contemptuous and idolatrous – no longer seeing "their father [God] or themselves," and as a result, despising themselves and "admiring everything rather than themselves ... astonished and delighted by and dependent on these [earthly] things ..." (V.1.1, 11, 13). The second, culpable reason of this fall causes perhaps greater disquiet than that caused by the first (the souls' metaphysical *tolma* and first otherness), because this latter is exculpable. That disquiet is graver than mere reduction in quietude is evident in its destructive impacts – in the souls' spiritual amnesia (their oblivion of God and of their own higher moorings) and in their delight in falling down and away from "that world" (V.1.1, 11).

4. Conclusion

It was never the purpose of this essay to compare Plato's *Allegory* with Plotinus' *Enneads*, but rather, to explore quietude (stated or implied) in each. Hence, a fitting conclusion cannot lie in seeking similarities and differences between the two works – but in drawing lessons from both to understand the terrible disquiet of our current historical moment – an extraordinary "now" that stands at the cusp between two ages. Disquiet reaches its peak, as we transition from one macro-cycle of world history to the next – manifesting itself through myriad crises, both external (wars, political upheavals, the climate crisis, etc.) and internal (moral, psychological, ontological, etc.). Signifying a worldwide dredging of iniquities (collective and individual), this rush of concentrated crises is really a purification that is preparing us for the next macro-cycle of history.

How would Plato and Plotinus understand our contemporary tide of disquiet? Very likely, they would take this historical turbulence as a sign of our collective transitioning – from the self-exteriorization of the retching soul characteristic of modernity, to a grand inward turn that returns us to our perennial anchor in the highest interior Truth. Moreover, they would see this transition as a collective ontological somersault – from the out-

ward gaze of the scientific spirit to the inwardness of contemplation. To prepare us for this collective ascent, they would exhort us to return to the discipline of dispassion – by longing for the teleological One within ourselves, so we can hasten our ascent towards pure silence. Finally, they would wean us away from excessive preoccupation with the outer, by reminding us that once we embark on our interior ascent, we will naturally imbue the external world with sublimity, reorienting it in the direction of greater altruism, dispassion, and spiritual quietude.

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A Modest Proposal for a Systems Philosophy of Hermeneutics as Applied to the Composition & Transmission of the Four Gospels

Abstract: This paper briefly recapitulates the history of higher criticism, and after a summary critique of its methodologies and philosophical presuppositions suggests that modern New Testament criticism is hermeneutically 'stuck' both as an academic and practical theological enterprise. It proposes not that criticism be abandoned, for there is simply no going back to a *pre-critical* time of reading the biblical text. Rather what is posited here is that by adopting a less linear way of considering any given text in favor of a nonlinear systems approach it should be possible to free biblical criticism from its 'stuckness.' Specifically, what is proposed is a system with at least three main components: (1) The oral tradition of The Gospels. (2) The written Gospels as rough, unfinished notes or memoranda (Greek *hypomnemata* or Latin *commentarii*), as Matthew Larsen proposes in his *Gospels Before the Book.* (3) The Gospels as 'eyewitness' testimony as presented in Richard Bauckham's *Jesus and the Eyewitness*. Interpreting the Gospels, indeed the entire canon, in this way may make it possible to traverse the theological and philosophical desert of modern criticism to a *postcritical* hermeneutic of the Bible and the Jesus narratives that is '*restorative*;' and, therefore pastorally vital and verdant rather than reductionistic[1]–barren and sterile.

Keywords: Biblical, criticism, Gospels, systems, hermeneutics, *hypomnemata*, *commentarii*, interpretation, historical-critical, redaction, form, eyewitnesses

Criticism Reprised

In the seventeenth century Thomas Hobbes (1558-1679) and Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) drew up long lists of what they believed to be inconsistencies, contradictions, and anachronisms in the Pentateuch, and then used them to argue that Moses could not have been the author of the five books of the Torah. The brilliant French physician and medical professor at Paris University, Jean Astruc (1684-1766), was disturbed by what he considered 'this sickness of the last century,' and in 1753, determined to refute Hobbes and Spinoza, published, a defense of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Translated into English the rather unwieldy title was *Conjectures on the original documents that Moses appears to have used in composing the Book of Genesis.*

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[1] Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil,* trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon, 1967), 349.

Astruc believed that the modern eighteenth century literary methods that had been developed in the study of the classics could be used in assessing the authorship of Genesis. He drew up parallel columns and assigned verses to each of them according to what he saw as the defining features of the text; for instance, whether a verse used 'YHWH' or 'Elohim' in referring to God, or whether it had a doublet (two accounts of the same event, such as the creation narrative or of Sarah and the king). Astruc identified four documents in Genesis which he believed mirrored the Four Gospels He arranged his results in four columns, declaring that this was how Moses had originally written Genesis, which later had been combined into a single book. This explained, he argued, the repetitions and inconsistencies which Hobbes and Spinoza had noted.

Astruc's work was taken up and further developed by a succession of German scholars who saw Astruc's method of analysis logically leading to an entirely different set of conclusions than those he had reached.[2] Among the philosophers, theologians, and Bible scholars in this long line who continued to refine and apply this new methodology of 'higher criticism' as it came to be known, or the 'historical-critical' method as it is now more commonly identified, were: Johann Semler (1725-1792) who rejected the inspiration and correctness of both the Old and New Testaments; Johann Eichhorn (1752-1827), who in his adaptation of this methodology saw the entire Bible as having been written by many hands, and all supernatural events related in the Old and New Testaments as attributable to superstitious beliefs; Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), for whom the task of hermeneutics was to understand the thoughts of the author by discovering in works of a similar genre and, in balance with the grammatical interpretation, why a work had been produced in the first place; Ferdinand Baur (1792-1860), who argued that second century Christianity was a synthesis of Gentile and Jewish Christian thought; Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), who interpreted religion and Scripture primarily in anthropological terms; David Strauss (1808-1874) who distinguished between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history and interpreted the ideas of Christianity as myths; and, Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) who is most famous for the documentary hypothesis––the argument that the Pentateuch had its origins in a redaction of four originally independent texts identified as JEDP.[3]

The three primary types of 'Higher Criticism' as it eventually developed from Astruc's work are: literary, form, and redaction criticism. Literary criticism attempts to understand the various strata, or layers of meaning, in a text. The first layer concerns the

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2 Eugene F. Klug argues in his Forward to Maier, 'Historical-critical methodology cannot be claimed as a neutral discipline.' Whether we begin with Hobbes and Spinoza, or Semler its origins and continued development, with 'its endless chain of perplexities and inner contradictions,' represents not scientific objectivity but a negative prejudgment of the Biblical text. Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical-Critical Method*, trans. Edwin W. Leverenz and Rudolph F. Norden ((St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1977; Eugene, Or: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 8, 11.

3 For a contrary perspective see: U. Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis: Eight Lectures*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Press, 1941, English Edition reprinted 1972 by Oxford University Press).

meaning and elements which are on or near the surface. Many of these can be answered by such questions as: Why? Who? What? Where? and How? However, most stories seek to communicate something both subtler and more significant than what is easily discovered in their literal content. Marcus Borg was correct, 'The Bible always means more than it says.' The second strata of meaning has to do with identifying the mood and emotional content through an analysis of imagery, language, and style. Through a study of the author's diction, phrasing, and selection of detail, it is thought, a third level establishing the attitude of the author toward the audience, characters, settings, and subject matter can be discovered. The analysis of the fourth layer is an attempt to interpret the author's intent in light of what has been learned from examining the first three strata.[4]

Specifically, the literary critic seeks to identify various phenomenon found in the text, such as: (1) Doublets (stories that occur twice and how they compare or contrast). (2) Commentary (a comment made on a text that has been incorporated into the text itself). (3) Stylistic Differences (stylistic and vocabulary differences that might indicate a different authorial hand). (4) Chronological varia (the insertion of a newer word in place of an obsolete term).

Historical criticism, or the *historical-critical method*, investigates the origins, social, cultural, literary, source and historical elements, of ancient texts in an attempt to understand the writer's beliefs and intentions.

Redaction criticism studies the collection, arrangement, editing and modification of sources. It frequently tries to reconstruct the thinking and values of the 'community' it imagines gave rise to a document or piece of writing and the purpose of the author, or authors, in writing a particular text. Source criticism refers to the effort to establish the sources used by authors and redactors in composing or editing a text. 'Q' is one such source widely assumed by scholars. Unfortunately sources are much easier to imagine than to factually discover in reality.[5] Form criticism also seeks to determine a unit's original form and its historical context by classifying units of scripture according to literary patterns.

Historical-Critical Method and Jesus Studies

Norman Perrin in *What is Redaction Criticism?* provided something of a summary to the above and an introduction to the development of the historical-critical method as practiced in Jesus Studies.

> The purpose of form criticism has been to get behind the sources which literary criticism might identify and to describe what was happening as the tradition about Jesus was handed on orally from person to person and from community to community. Form criticism has been especially concerned with the modifications which the life and thought of the church––both Jewish-Christian and Gentile-Christian have introduced into the tradition, and form critics have

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4 For a specific, clear, and practical critique see: C.S. Lewis, *Fern-seed and Elephants: And Other Essays on Christianity* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1975), 86-105.

5 For a discussion on whether 'Q' was an actual source for the synoptics or more of a scholarly fiction see: Mark Goodacre and Nicholas Perrin, *Questioning Q: A Multidimensional Critique,* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004).

worked out criteria for distinguishing these strata in the Gospels which reflect the concerns of the church from the stratum that might be thought to go back to the historical Jesus. . . . Redaction criticism is the most recent of the three disciplines to have become a self-conscious method of inquiry. It grew out of form criticism, and it presupposes and continues the procedures of the earlier discipline while extending and intensifying certain aspects of them. The redaction critic... is especially interested in the formation of the Gospels as finished products.[6]

Gerhard Maier, the imminent German theologian and Scripture scholar at Tübingen, described redaction criticism as: 'A theory which holds that the writers of the Gospels were not historians but theologians. To develop their own respective theologies,' explained Maier, 'they (the writers of the Gospels) ascribed to Jesus words He never spoke and they credited him with things He never did. These "inventions" were necessary in order to have a basis for the theology the writers wanted to develop.'[7] Higher Criticism, or what has become known as the 'historical-critical method' is, then, a theological and hermeneutical perspective with its own lengthening history. Indeed, it has been engaged in this meticulous, fragmenting, speculative, atomizing analysis, and secularization of the Bible for nearly three-hundred years now—depending on one's starting point.

Albert Schweitzer famously dated the origins of the quest for the historical Jesus from H. S. Reimarus (1694–1768),[8] but Reimarus himself was, of course, actually representative of the whole Enlightenment critical orientation. The Bible, Reimarus insisted, is to be studied like any other book, and the life of Jesus is to be found in the Gospels by means of critically sifting and weighing their contents. Reimarus, then, sought to discover through 'logical analysis' of the Gospels, and by careful attention to problems of relative credibility, who Jesus was as an actual historical figure.[9] Reimarus's conclusion was that Jesus was a mortal Jewish prophet, and the apostles founded Christianity as a religion separate from Jesus's own ministry.

Adolf von Harnack (1851-1931) sought to demonstrate the dependence of ancient Christology on non-Christian sources for its concepts and terminology as a way of arguing that Christianity had to get back beyond the Christ of dogma to what he thought to be the 'essence of Christianity;' specifically, to the teachings of Jesus about the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

William Wrede (1859-1906), known for his now abandoned investigation of the so-called 'messianic secret' in the Gospel of Mark, suggested Jesus's instructions to keep his identity hidden in Mark was a literary and apologetic device by which early Christians could explain away what Wrede thought the absence of any clear claim of Jesus to be the Messiah. And, Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1976), famous for his program of demythologization in which what he labeled as mythological elements in the New Testament were interpreted existentially, contended that only faith in the *kerygma,* or proclamation, of the

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6   Norman Perrin, *What Is Redaction Criticism?* ed. Dan O. Via Jr. (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2002)), vi.

7   Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical-Critical Method*, 108.

8   Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus,* trans. W. Montgomery (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2005, first English publication 1911 London by Adam and Charles Black).

9   Schweitzer ended his study with Wrede.

New Testament, rather than any particular facts regarding the historical Jesus, was necessary for Christian faith.

Paradigm Christologies

These attempts to discover through literary analysis of the Gospels who Jesus was as an actual historical figure have resulted in numerous manifestations of what the American neo-evangelical scholar Bernard Ramm referred to as 'paradigm Christologies;' that is, Christologies that point to something unique, 'special' is perhaps a better word, about Jesus which constitutes some higher ideal to which human beings may aspire.[10] It might be said, for instance, that 'Jesus was truly the person for others,' especially, the poor, the outcasts, and the oppressed, that 'Jesus loved as no other has loved,' or that 'Jesus was a completely authentic existential person.'

For Schleiermacher, who was in a very real sense the father of paradigm Christology, Jesus represented the perfect God-consciousness which he said is in us all. The essence of the Christian religion, he argued, is the feeling of 'absolute dependence' on the Father that Jesus felt. This, thought Schleiermacher, was the pattern to be followed in living the Christian faith. Since Reimarus and Schleiermacher, historical-criticism in its unending permutations and in its number of paradigm Christologies has proliferated. Marcus Borg's portrayal of Jesus as sage, mystic (or spirit person) and political activist is one contemporary example.

Developing Criteria of Authenticity

Enchanted by the hopeful beginnings of the Enlightenment, those scholars instrumental in the development of historical-critical methodology thought they would be able to develop the tools necessary for the scientific investigation of the Bible. This hope was pursued enthusiastically throughout the modern era as if it were a real possibility already achieved. However, historical-critical methodology is now itself increasingly called into question. For one thing its notions of what science is and does is built on the supporting pillars of nineteenth century perspectives and logic. Its imagination and thought process continues to be shaped by Baconian methodology and Newtonian physics rather than that of quantum mechanics or nonlinear systems thinking. For example, the historical-critical method has a religious-like faith in the Enlightenment dictum that the solution to any problem comes through applying formal logic and the scientific method with total objectivity. Consequently, one frequently hears New Testament scholars, especially those engaged in a close scrutiny of the Gospels, asserting radical skepticism as an essential principle of biblical criticism as if that were the same thing as objectivity.

However, postmodern thinking regarding objectivity is changing. It begins with the recognition that there is no such thing as the sort of absolute objectivity that the children of the Enlightenment thought possible. Paul Ricoeur noted that, the illusion is not in look-

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10 Bernard Ramm, An *Evangelical Christology: Ecumenic and Historic* (Nashville ● Camden ● New York, 1985), 177-179.

ing for a point of departure, but in looking for it without presuppositions. 'There is no philosophy,' he said, 'without presuppositions.'[11] Ricoeur went on to say: 'Consequently, it (understanding) is never without presuppositions; that is to say, it is always directed by a prior understanding of the things about which it interrogates the text.'[12] In developing his theory of tacit knowledge Michael Polanyi, poly-mathematician, chemist, social scientist, and philosopher, argued that the belief that the exact sciences are characterized by complete objectivity is a 'delusion.'[13] This is true not only because of our distorting prejudices and presuppositions, but also because every experience we have ever had influences the very questions we raise. We cannot escape our own total involvement in formulating what we know—or think we know. If this is true even in the exact sciences, how much more is it true in biblical and historical studies? And speaking of the exact sciences, or even just the disciplines of research psychology and sociology, no one who has ever had even an introductory course in research design and statistical analysis would mistake biblical or historical studies for 'real science.' McKnight asserts in a simple and most straight forward manner, 'Contemporary literary criticism lacks a universally accepted set of principles and methods.'[14] The reality is there are multiple ways of knowing,[15] and knowledge itself is a complex system.[16]

Abraham Maslow, one of the most frequently quoted psychologists of the twentieth century, suggested, based on his own research, an alternate path to 'scientific objectivism,' one which he believed would render more accurate perceptions and deeper understanding:

> My finding is that which you love you are prepared to leave alone.... We make no demands upon it. We do not wish it to be other than it is. We can be passive and receptive before it. Which is all to say we then can see it more truly as it is in its own nature rather than as we would like it to be or fear it to be or hope it to be. Approving of its existence, approving of the way it is, as it is, permits us to be nonintrusive, nondemanding, nonhoping, nonimproving, to that extent do we achieve this particular kind of objectivity.[17]

What Karl Barth, who thought historical criticism 'both necessary and justified,' says of Adolf Jülicher's work on Romans is as pertinent to our hermeneutical situation as it was to his own.

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[11] Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 348.

[12] Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil*, 351.

[13] Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 18.

[14] Edgar V. McKnight, 'Contours in Literary Criticism and Methods' in *Orientation By Disorientation: Studies in Literary Criticism and Biblical Literary Criticism, Presented in Honor of William Beardslee*, ed. by Richard A. Spencer (Pittsburg: Pickwick, 1980), 53-70.

[15] Glenn F. Chestnut, *God and Spirituality: Philosophical Essays* (New York: iUniverse, 2010). Also: Larry Hart, *The Annunciation: A New Evangelization and Apologetic for Mainline Protestants and Progressive Catholics in Postmodern North America* (Eugene Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2017), 165-173.

[16] Patricia M. King and Karen Strom Kitchener, *Developing Reflective Judgment: Understanding and Promoting Intellectual Growth and Critical Thinking in Adolescents and Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994).

[17] Abraham H. Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (New York: Viking Press, 1971, Penguin 1993), 16 –17.

> We observe how closely Jülicher keeps to the mere deciphering of words as though they were runes. But when all is done, they remain still largely unintelligible. How quickly he is. without any real struggling with the raw material of the Epistle, to dismiss this or that difficult passage as simply a peculiar doctrine or opinion of Paul! . . .attributing what Paul has said to his 'personality,' to the experience on the road to Damascus, (an episode which seems capable of providing at any moment an explanation of every impossibility), to later Judaism, Hellenism, or, in fact, to any exegetical semi-divinity of the ancient world.[18]

If Barth's criticism of criticism seems a little harsh to us, it must be remembered that he wrote his commentary on Romans as he listened to the exploding artillery shells of World War I and sought in his reading of Paul what might be of substantial and intelligible pastoral help to the people of his congregation rather than what was merely critical and speculative.

Erosion of the Criteria

The criteria of dissimilarity, which argues that a saying attributed to Jesus must be distinguishable from both first century Judaism and early Christianity in order to be considered genuine, has been the primary test of the authenticity of Jesus's sayings.[19] And the tools of form criticism and redaction methodology have provided the necessary support for the criteria of dissimilarity. For instance, form criticism asserts that only those traditions about Jesus were retained that reflected the interests of the early church. However, the criteria of dissimilarity, and form criticism itself, are beginning to erode both because they defy common sense and lack appropriate academic rigor. As Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter note in their *Quest for the Plausible Jesus*: 'First with regard to the erosion of the criteria of dissimilarity... Objections were raised that separating Jesus from Judaism and early Christianity overlooked the continuity between Judaism, Jesus and early Christianity, a continuity that doubtless was present.'[20]

The simple hard fact is that the criteria of authenticity are fraught with problems:

- Jesus is cut off from Jewish culture which renders him, as a historical figure, unintelligible.[21]
- There is a failure to recognize that what any given exegete finds embarrassing may say more about what that particular interpreter thinks should be embarrassing than what the early followers of Jesus, or later the church, actually found embarrassing.
- Quite puzzling questions are left unanswered, for instance: If the Church wrote its answers to later issues into the text at a later date, why are not such matters as cir-

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18 Karl Barth, 'Preface to the Second Edition,' *The Epistle to the Romans,* trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford University Press, 1933, Sixth edition 1968), 7-8.

19 For a critique of this and other criteria as used by the Jesus Seminar see: William R. Herzog II, *Jesus, Justice, and the Reign of God: A Ministry of Liberation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000).

20 Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *Quest for the Plausible Jesus*: *The Question of Criteria*, trans. Eugene Boring (Louisville & London: Westminster: John Knox Press, 2002), 6.

21 See: N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God, Volume Two,* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

cumcision, or what foods are kosher, emotional and contentious topics in the early church, not dealt with definitively in the Gospels?

- There seems to be no awareness of the fact that if the answer itself is correct the question is nearly irrelevant.

- There is no real recognition that we simply do not know all we want to know or need to know; and, therefore, cannot account for unknown variables such as the elements of coincidence, or chance. Surely, hermeneutics in the twenty-first century cannot ignore the philosophical implications of Heisenberg or the emerging theory among quantum scientists that an event may be both cause and effect.

- The assumption that the Gospels were written from a community rather than to a community seems increasingly unwarranted. The only evidence given for the existence of Matthew's Jewish community, or for Mark's, Luke's, or the Johannine community comes from the inventive imagination of scholars. William A. Johnson argues, 'The text does not merely serve or reflect its readers...but actively seeks to create the ideal reading community to which the writing aspires.' He contends that texts are constructed in such a way as to guide speech, thought, and behavior. Communities, then, were the recipients and not the source of biblical texts.[22] This obviously leads to a radically different way of reading the Gospels than that of form criticism.

- Complicating matters enormously for scholars following the linear historical-critical method, is the discovery that the work of ancient story tellers and historians was characterized by both *fixity* and *flexibility––stability* and d*iversity*. In both the oral and written tradition of the first century Mediterranean World there is characteristically a *teaching,* or *tradition,* to be treasured, but it is formulated variously depending on the emphasis the teller might want to bring out for a particular audience or occasion. The story might be told by different, or even the same storyteller with different emphases, in a different order and with embellishments as long as the teller remained faithful to the core truth. This also means that there is no event or saying which can be traced back linear step by linear step, peeled back layer by layer, until the scholar comes to the pristine *original*. There is, rather, only the *witness* to the event.[23]

There are just two more difficulties among the many problems with the methodology of higher criticism and the criteria of authenticity that I will note here. The first is a question which is actually rooted in scientific inquiry. It is a question often raised but generally ignored: 'Why is it that those using the same methodology come up with such different, even contradictory, results?'[24] The mark of reliable science is that work done

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22 William Johnson, 'Constructing Elite Reading Communities in the High Empires,' in *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome*, ed. William A. Johnson and Holt N. Parker, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 328-329.

23 D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Gospels*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2011), 38-39.

24 Still worth reading in this regard is: C. S. Lewis, *Fern-seed and Elephants*, 90-99.

(experiments performed) in a prescribed manner have a common outcome. Finally, the historical-critical method is built on the premise that the Gospels are the result of quite a lengthy process; indeed, such an incremental evolution is essential to the entire enterprise of higher criticism. However, more convincing is Larry Hurtado's argument that the Jesus story, with its accompanying adoration and devotion, is better described and explained as exploding into the first century world rather than evolving.[25]

Given all this, Morna D. Hooker writes in the foreword to *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity* edited by Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne:

> Contributors to this volume are divided between those who think these 'tools' (tools for determining the authenticity of Jesus's words and deeds) still have a modest role, and those who are determined that they must be put aside altogether. Perhaps however, the time has come to abandon the whole enterprise of trying to discover 'the real historical Jesus.'[26]

There is much more but this should be sufficient to provide some understanding of why I am convinced that the historical-critical method is intellectually stuck and has left Scripture with little to say that is relevant or intelligible to a world with its back against the wall.[27] Maier, therefore wrote: 'The higher-critical method, for all practical purposes, has arrived at the end of a blind alley, we are faced with the responsibility of finding a different method of Biblical inquiry and scholarly study––one better suited to its subject. . . that the prospects are poor should not keep us from finding a better method.'[28]

Nevertheless, there is a simple, if difficult, way out. I say difficult, because while understanding systems theory presents no great problem to any reasonably intelligent person, becoming a systems thinker involves a personal cognitive shift that is not easily made.

A Way Out

As already indicated, the way out being posited here is that of systems thinking. Systems thinking, at least in its formal sense, is a little less than seventy-years-old. After 1955 the continuously accelerating speed and complexity with which computers calculated, organized, stored, and retrieved information required a more efficient way for the human mind itself to manage and understand the vast quantities of information now available. General systems thinking was the scientific response to this need.[29] In systems philosophy the focus is more on how information is organized than on content––process rather than content. In order to understand an organized whole, it is thought, we must identify not only a system's individual parts, but the relation between them as well. A crucial tenet of systems thinking is: 'The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.' A fully assembled automobile

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25 Larry Hurtado, *How On Earth Did Jesus Become God? Historical Questions About Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids / Cambridge, U K: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 25-30.
26 Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne eds., *Jesus Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity* (London: T. and T. Clark International, 2012), xiv.
27 Hart, *The Annunciation*, 138-191.
28 Gerhard Maier, *The End of the Historical-Critical Method*, 48.
29 Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1901-1972) is recognized as one of the earliest figures in the development of general systems thinking.

engine has a power and greater functionality (is something more) than all its component parts lying in orderly but disconnected arrangement on a garage floor. A family, a church, a hospital, a nation, the Bible are all greater than the sum of their parts and must be understood holistically.

Another major difference between systems and non-systems thinking is how cause and effect are understood. Systems thinking is nonlinear. Linear thinking is driven more by the older concept of simple cause and effect in which one cause has one effect––A causes B which then causes C and so on.[30] The historical-critical method invariably assumes it has correctly identified A and therefore thoroughly understands B and everything that follows. Systems thinking on the other hand has to do with seeing a whole field of causes and effects in which each cause itself becomes an effect and each effect a cause. Strange as this may sound, even scientists now question the traditional concept of cause and effect. For example, physicists now think that at the quantum level gravity may be both cause and effect. Moreover, in systems thinking as A affects B its strength and manner of doing so changes as B in turn affects A. This means that Scripture must be understood holistically and with an appreciation for the fact that we never apprehend all the relational variables.

Michael Patrick Gillespie's book, *The Aesthetics of Chaos: Nonlinear Thinking and Contemporary Literary Criticism,* although itself sometimes a rather linear presentation that leaves one wondering about Gillespie's own process, is well worth reading. Gillespie, who is Professor of English at Marquette University, notes that in linear Newtonian thinking, which still determines the work of literary critics, one idea or observation creates the facts that become the basis from which successive ideas or observations are derived. 'This approach,' he argues, 'produces interpretations far too narrow to accommodate the full potential of literary expression.'[31] John Ciardi's cogent argument for how poetry is be read is fully applicable here. Ciardi asserts that the first question is not what does a poem mean, but how does it mean? 'Why does it build itself into a form out of images, ideas, rhythms? How do these elements become the meaning?'[32] 'Literary critics,' says Gillespie, 'have become so used to the inconsistencies resulting from linear thinking that they simply ignore those particulars that do not fit its assumptions––what Newtonian scientists, upon encountering such irregularities, call 'white noise.' Gillespie sees quantum mechanics and chaos theory as providing a way of configuring literary studies 'by finding connections in antinomies that commonplace Cartesian thinkers see only as contradictions; and, through this accommodation to ambiguity. . . move toward recognizing an order in the universe that scientists following Newtonian methods cannot hope to discern.'[33]

One of the underlying principles in chaos theory, which is included in systems thinking, is the notion that there is an order that emerges out of chaos, that there is a relationship

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30 Circular thinking is not nonlinear thinking. It is merely a line of cause and effect with the ends tied together.
31 Michael Patrick Gillespie, *The Aesthetics of Chaos: Nonlinear Thinking and Contemporary Literary Criticism* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2003), 3,16.
32 John Ciardi, Herbert Barrows, Hubert Heffner, and Wallace Douglas, *How Does a Poem Mean? Part Three of an Introduction to Literature,* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), 668, 663-670.
33 Gillespie, *The Aesthetics of Chaos*, 3,16.

between the two, and that everything is interrelated––every particular is part of a larger pattern. This interrelatedness and interdependency of each part of a system means that looking at the components of a system in isolation without seeing the whole not only distorts and confuses our understanding but may even collapse the system.[34] Edwin H. Friedman, rabbi, and pioneer in applying systems thinking to family therapy, therefore observed:

> Each component, rather than having its own discreet identity or input, operates as part of a whole. *The components do not function according to their 'nature' but according to their position in the network. . . .* To take one part of the whole and analyse its 'nature' will give misleading results, first, because *each part will function differently outside the system,* and second, because even its functioning inside the system will be different depending on *where it is placed in relation to the others.* In fact, the very notion of effect becomes relative.[35]

From a slightly different angle, it might be noted that linear thinking with its philosophical and theological atomization easily falls prey to what Alfred North Whitehead called 'the fallacy of misplace concreteness.' The more specialized students and scholars of an academic discipline become; that is, the more socialized in a particular discipline's abstractions and methodology, the more elaborate the abstractions themselves become with the end result that the abstractions themselves become detached from reality.[36]

In transitioning now to the composition and transmission system of the Gospels, by which I mean the four canonical Gospels, I will issue one important reminder and make one paradoxical observation regarding the nature of systems thinking. First, systems thinking is just that, it is a way of thinking. It is not particularly difficult to teach a student the concept of nonlinear thinking, it is a great deal of difficulty for them to learn to actually think in a nonlinear. fashion. Second, and I think this particularly significant for Biblical studies, with systems theory 'it no longer becomes necessary to know all about something, a text for instance, in order to comprehend it.'[37]

Systems Components of the Gospels

As noted in the abstract above, the focus in this essay is primarily on three components of the composition and transmission of the four Gospels. (1) The oral tradition, (2) the written Gospels as rough, unfinished notes or memoranda (*hypomnemata* or *commentarii*) and, (3) The Gospels as 'eyewitness' testimony. However, it must be kept in mind that there are many other elements of the system as well––accident, opportunity, necessity, the *sensus divinitas,* and that grace which the historian and philosopher Glenn Chestnut described as 'the mysterious X factor.'[38] Certainly the nature of the Gospels as a system can

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34 Charissa P. Cordon, 'System Theories: An Overview of Various System Theories and Its Application in Healthcare,' *American Journal of Systems Science*, Vol. 2 No. 1, (2013): 13-22.

35 Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York and London: Guilford Press, 1985), 15.

36 Herman Daly and John Cobb, *For the Common Good: Redirecting the Economy Toward Community, the Environment and a Sustainable* Future (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), *25, 122.*

37 Edwin H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation,* 15.

38 Chestnut, *God and Spirituality: Philosophical Essays*, 1-22.

be more easily seen if, with John A.T. Robinson, we conceive the writing of the synoptics as having been composed in parallel (I would say interactively and interdependently) rather than in a rigidly sequential process. The question, then, becomes: What if the whole process by which the Four Gospels came to be was far more fluid and dynamic than supposed, occurring not only within the context of a continuous oral exchange but also a sharing of written notes?

Robinson, who did not think the synoptic question entirely resolved, stated in *Redating the New Testament*, 'Rather I believe that there was a written (as well as oral) tradition underlying each of them (the synoptics) . . . The gospels as we have them are to be seen as parallel, though by no means isolated, developments of common material. . .' [39] Matthew Larsen's proposal, it seems to me, meshes quite nicely with Robinson's more fluid and dynamic image of interplay or 'parallelism.'

In his *Gospels Before the Book* which offers a way of reading the Gospels that could totally upend Jesus studies. Matthew Larsen maintains that the Gospels are *hypomnemata* (Greek) or *commentarii* (Latin). While the two words share the same wide range of meaning––public records, rough drafts, lists, announcements, commentary, memoranda, and notes––their most common feature is that they represent an unfinished, unpolished, writing project. They were, even if extensive, essentially notes which might be written by anyone. They could be written, for example, not only by the highly educated or elite, but by doctors, soldiers, builders, and other lower status worker––or even slaves.

The narcissistic Cicero, the Roman statesman, philosopher, and consul, as well as one of Rome's most highly regarded poets, orators, and prose stylists, worried over how future generations would know how great he was. His answer was that a book would have to be written in his praise. However, this created a dilemma. He didn't want to be seen as praising himself; but he thought no one could write such a book, actually any book, better than he could. The solution wasn't difficult to find. Write detailed but unfinished notes and have Herodes Atticus, a notable Greek scholar and writer himself, edit and publish the notes (*hypomnemata* or *commentarii*) as a book authored by Atticus.[40] One of Larsen's key emphases is that *hypomnemata* (notes) are just that–– a brief record of facts, topics, or thoughts, written down as an aid to memory––rather like Pascal's *Pensées*. They may serve as the basis for a book, but they are not intended as the finished literary product itself.

In *Theaetetus*, observes Larsen, Socrates tells Eucleides about a conversation he had with Theaetetus. As soon as Eucleides arrived back home in Megara he wrote *hypomnemata* (made notes) of his conversation with Socrates as he remembered it. Later he wrote everything he remembered in the style of the conversation itself.[41] After that he made frequent trips to Athens to ask Socrates what remained unclear or forgotten to him. He would then return home to Megara and correct his notes about this prior conversation about a con-

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39 John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 94.

40 Matthew D. C. Larsen, *Gospels Before the Book* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 12.

41 Notice Eucleides did not have a stenographic verbatim he worked from, but from memory wrote notes in the style of the conversation.

versation.[42] Larsen goes on to explain by quoting Lucian's *How to Write History:* 'After the writer has collected everything, let the writer first weave together from them a rough draft (*hypomnema ti sunuphaineto*) and make a text that is still unadorned and disjointed. Then, after the writer has put it in proper arrangement (*ten taxin),* let the writer bring in beauty, give it a touch of style, shape it, and bring it to order.'[43] This is the process Larsen believes is especially evident in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark; that is, he sees the Gospel According to Mark as a collection of unfinished notes, a rough draft, and Matthew as the further refinement of that draft––the very thing scholars have thought unlikely. In Luke's prologue with its reference to the attempts of others to set in order an account of the Jesus narrative and his own intention to provide a more careful account, along with the prologues more elevated and sophisticated style, seems to support Larsen's hypothesis. *The Acts of Timothy*, late fifth century, includes a tradition of the earliest gospel texts as disorganized notes. When the disciples of John came to Ephesus, according to this tradition, they had with them a loose collection of notes which John reworked and arranged as the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John then wrote another Gospel, the Fourth Gospel, to cover what he thought had been left out of the first three.[44]

Larsen wants to emphasize that the Gospels were not regarded as closed texts by early Christian readers, but as unfinished stories and sayings of a tradition that remained fluid and open to expansion and revision. Just how that fits with the early stabilization of the Christ narrative I am not quite certain.

One of Larsen's many intriguing examples is Artemidorus Daldianus, a second century soothsayer famous for his five-volume work on interpreting dreams. Artemidorus gathered material, notes, for his books from other diviners during his extensive travels through Greece and Italy. Larsen's interest in Artemidorus is principally in Artemidorus's worry that others will steal his ideas or alter his books. Larsen's argument is that the Gospels in their early form were unfinished and open books susceptible to alterations. However, it is also worth observing that according to Larsen, Artemidorus sought to 'head off' or at least mitigate the effects of such efforts: 'I ask those who read my books,' he wrote, 'not to add or remove anything from their contents.'[45] We might note that Artemidorus faced problems in this regard that the writers of the Gospels did not. For one thing his sources were more private and not easily accessed; whereas the Gospels were more public, open, easily accessible; and, therefore, more amenable to verification. To this might be added the overall continuity of the canon.

However, what is exciting is the notion of each of the Gospels as a 'notebook' somewhere on the route to becoming a finished literary product, but never quite entirely refined or achieving the sort of literary elegance defined by the Greco-Roman world—either because that was not their intended purpose or because their original recorders and custodians were not from the learned elite who possessed those literary skills.

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42 Larsen, *Before the Book*, 19.

43 Larsen, *Before the Book,* 107.

44 Larsen, *Before the Book*, 150-151.

45 Larsen, *Before the Book,* 100.

Notes of Oral Witness Testimony

Jesus and the Eyewitnesses by Richard Bauckham provides another element of the systemic composition and transmission of the Gospels. What I am suggesting, or perhaps asking, is: 'What if the Gospels are not formal histories or bibliographies, but more like notebooks or memoranda—notes of multiple and varied observations, conversations, events, experiences, impressions? How does one, using the methodology of form or redaction criticism, sort out such notes, on any subject, contained in someone's composition book?' By doubling down on the application of 'modern literary methods?' I am not certain after reading *Gospels Before the Book*, that even Larsen quite grasps how problematic his thesis is for source, form, and redaction criticism. But what if Richard Bauckham is correct? What if the Gospels are essentially eyewitness accounts, and what, we might further ask, if more or less in parallel with these oral eyewitness accounts rough notes were written–– memoranda of what Jesus's Palestinian contemporaries, especially family, friends, disciples, and recipients of his kindness, heard, saw, and thought of him or felt in his presence? Surely, the earliest friends and followers of Jesus must have talked frequently with others in synagogue, at work, in the marketplace, at the village and town gates, and in the temple precincts of what they knew of Jesus both before and after Easter. This is all part of the system.

It is not within the scope of this paper to recapitulate Bauckham's rather lengthy and through discussion of the Gospel's as eyewitness testimony; or, to explore his definition of 'eyewitness.' However, it is possible and worthwhile to note the following from his book:

> This directness of relationship between the eyewitnesses and the Gospel text requires a different picture of the way the Gospel traditions were transmitted from that which most New Testament scholars and students have inherited from the early twentieth-century movement in New Testament scholarship known as form criticism. . . . it has bequeathed one enormously influential legacy. This is the assumption that the traditions about Jesus, his acts, and his words, passed through a long process of oral tradition in the early Christian communities and reached the writers of the Gospels only at a late stage of this process. . . The Gospels embody their (the eyewitnesses) testimony only in a rather remote way. . . There is a very simple and obvious objection to this picture that has often been made but rarely taken very seriously. . . . Vincent Taylor wrote that 'If the Form-Critics are right, the disciples must have been translated to heaven immediately after the Resurrection.' He went on to point out that many eyewitness participants in the events of the Gospel narratives 'did not go into permanent retirement; for a generation they moved among the young Palestinian communities, and through preaching and fellowship their recollections were at the disposal of those who sought information.'[46]

It seems to me that a piece that is enormously helpful to Bauckham's entire theory is the probability that those who first told the Jesus story (the disciples, apostles, and earliest believers) had not only their own first-hand experiences of the Messiah, as well as the oral stories of what others said they had experienced to pass on as verbal memorizations, but also *hypomnemata, commentarii,* memoranda, notes of events, conversations, and experi-

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[46] Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Second Edition, 2017), 6-7.

ences as resources to share.[47] What must be seem is a first century setting in which infor-mal conversations, discourses, and the writing of notes and memories were all taking place simultaneously, interactively, interdependently.[48]

Concluding Remarks

What has been suggested here, is that modern criticism is 'stuck'––stuck in a philosophy of analysis that is largely conjectural, that frequently begs the question, that is severely limited by linear thinking, that is sadly debilitated by professional ambitions; and is, therefore, gen-erally inconsequential when it comes to pastoral care or spiritual formation.[49] Neither has the textual analysis of the historical-critical method (linear thinking), as represented in the criteria of authenticity, served the study of the Gospels or of Christian origins all that well. What is needed is a systems perspective which sees the composition and transmission of the canonical Gospels holistically, interactively, and interdependently. Such an approach will include many elements in its field of vision; including, but not limited to: (1) The original orality of the Gospels as 'eyewitness' testimony shared generously within the Christian com-munity (churches), as well as with outsiders. (2) The probability that the Gospels represent notes, rough drafts, outlines, or memoranda of this testimony more than they do finished books of history or polished literary forms––notes which may, like all notes, seem disorder-ly and confusing; but, nevertheless, represent eyewitness reports of what Jesus of Nazareth said and did, and of how he was perceived by his contemporaries. (3) That the inscribing of these notes seems to have begun very early,[50] openly, publicly, and somewhat in 'parallel,' even interactively, with one another and certainly in conjunction with oral tradition. If all the actions and responses of each element in the gospel composition and transmission sys-tem were diagramed and portrayed graphically things would look much wilder (like the graphics of fractals on a computer screen), but they would also be both more explanatory and beautiful than any visualization provided by the historical-critical linear model.

Obviously, we may argue the accuracy of the observations of the earliest Christians or even doubt their truthfulness as we might with all witnesses providing testimony about an event. But in the end what these people thought and said of Jesus, and reported of their encounters with him as told in the canonical *hypomnemata* is all we have.[51] Well, that, and

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47 Imagine this possibility: A wealthy woman in Jerusalem witnesses a healing of Jesus and pays a scribe to write about it in a letter she sends to her chronically ill sister in Damascus. Or a rabbi having heard the beati-tudes goes home and writes them down as he remembers them.

48 Dunn, *Jesus Paul and the Gospels, 22-44.*

49 Anyone who doubts this should read in its entirety: Ariel Sabar, *Veritas: A Harvard Professor, a Con Man and the Gospel of Jesus's Wife* (New York: Doubleday, 2020).

50 Robinson made a convincing argument for the composition of the entire New Testament occurring prior to 70 C.E. At the very least we know the Gospel had a stable core no later than 40 C.E, but probably six years earlier. See: John A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament,* 1979. Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ,* 2005 edition.

51 Dunn therefore notes that the question we should ask is not what Jesus originally said or did, but what did Jesus most *characteristically* say and do. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul, and the Gospels,11,*40.

the sacred oral tradition that is both ancient and continuous and of sufficient power for those who live in the aura of its meaning to discover, in the words of Paul Ricoeur: 'A time of criticism. . . that is no longer reductive but restorative.'[52]

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52 Paul Ricoeur, *Symbolism of Evil,* 350.

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False Information and Libel: The Common Thread between Censure in the Book of Psalms and Contemporary Research

Abstract: The article offers an intertextual encounter between the book of Psalms and contemporary research concerning the conduct of the media and social networks and presents the critical relevance of the Psalm poet's ancient critiques to the contemporary world. In this respect, the encounters between the book of Psalms and contemporary research reflect a common denominator between then and now in the spirit of "there is no new thing under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9 [KJV]). Specifically, the use of libel and false information in both cases gives rise to conscious distortions and mental harms to the extent of losing the ability to distinguish between imagination and reality, and causes hysteria, depression, the abuse of medication and drugs, paranoia, shaming, and suicide, as well as the establishment of distorted social perceptions and the exertion of adverse effects on decision makers on both the societal and state levels.

Key Words: Cognitive bias, Evildoing, False news, Gossip, Libel, Media, Psalms, Shaming

Introduction

The book of Psalms is replete with censorious statements on libel, gossip, and lies, which are occasionally passed by word of mouth and occasionally passed in the town square (the media). The descriptions offered by the Psalms poet are severe and stress the harmful outcomes of these practices. A close reading of these Psalms cannot ignore a sense of déjà vu with respect to this phenomenon as it appears in the contemporary press and in the electronic and online media.

Within its long series of "thou shalt not" precepts, the Pentateuch (Torah) stresses that "…Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people…" (Leviticus 19:16 [KJV]). This relates to what the Pentateuch perceives as one of the severest of transgressions, as is evident by its use of the phrase "go up and down" (*telekh* in the original Hebrew). This "going up and down" (an inaccurate translation in the KJV, as the original Hebrew is derived from the stem *hlkh* which refers to walking) is the most severe of the transgressions listed at the very beginning of the book of Psalms: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Psalms 1:1 [KJV]). Martin Buber (1968: 140) stresses that the severity of the transgression decreases according to the level of wickedness: from the wick-

ed person's "walketh" to the sinner's "standeth," to the scornful person's "sitteth." The pro-
hibition inherent in "...Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people..."
prohibits wickedness at the very highest degree of severity, that of "walketh." In this spirit,
the *Torah Anthology* (Kuli 1968: 205) considers this transgression as tantamount to incest
and bloodshed: "We find that those who speak libel—God forbid—are in fact apostates.
Moreover, libel can lead to bloodshed. As a whole, libel causes one thing to lead to another,
and some person to say so-and-so said thus-and-thus about you, and this gives rise to un-
founded hatred and causes one person to spill the blood of another."[1]

The present article is not concerned with the religious aspects of the book of Psalms
or with its place in Judaism and Christianity. It is also not concerned with the issue of who
wrote the Psalms, how many people wrote the Psalms, and when the Psalms were written.
The present study treats the entire book of Psalms as a single unit that was edited at a cer-
tain time and in its present state and considers the ethical significance of its censure of the
aforementioned phenomena.

People reading the book of Psalms will notice many dozens of verses and statements
that position the issue of lies and libel as the focus of the discussion and as a central com-
ponent of the concept of evil when it expresses messages which are relevant to our contem-
porary reality insofar as the routes of information conveyance and the content we are pres-
ently exposed to are concerned.

A close reading of the book of Psalms also raises a number of questions concerning
the "what," that is, what a certain verse or statement actually means.

For example, let us consider "For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their in-
ward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their
tongue" (5:9 [KJV]). What does the Psalms poet mean with this metaphor of the mouths
and throats of libellers being the equivalent of a sepulcher?

Another example is "For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side:
while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life" (31:13
[KJV]). Do slander and lies cause fear in the public sphere? In this respect, it should be
noted that (1) the original Hebrew is *magor*, which goes beyond mere fear, and that oth-
er English translations of the bible use "terror," which is more accurate, and (2) the present
author has used the KJV in this article on account of its popularity and accessibility rath-
er than its accuracy.

A third example is "Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen vio-
lence and strife in the city [...] is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her
streets" (55:9-11 [KJV]). What does the author mean by using the plural in 'streets'?

The answer to these questions creates an intertextual encounter with contemporary
research in the sense of having a contemporarily relevant perspective in antiquity. In his
commentary on Psalm 12, Martin Buber (1968: 144) states that the Psalms poet uses the
negativity and denouncement of lies in this psalm to foresee the future. The poet's future is

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1 Translated and paraphrased by the present author from Rabbi Shmuel Yerushalmi's Hebrew translation of
the original Ladino.

our present, the present described by Liraz Margalit (2021) with respect to the engineering of consciousness through technological means that enslave our attention and to the brain mechanisms that allow this. These descriptions relate to our life on social media and to the manner in which the latter affect every aspect of our lives quite considerably. According to Margalit (2021), the social networks, and—to a great extent—the media too, have blurred the difference between reality and fiction to the extent that we have no way of distinguishing between what we are and what we are prescribed to be by network diktats.

Liu Chang (2021) makes a distinction between the harmful libel of defamation and content or denouncements that are not false and that are occasionally ambiguous but contain some kind of disparagement that belittles its subject but is not considered harmful content, and occasionally even appears in the form of a hidden subtext that does not constitute an offence in and of itself. Chang (2021) bases his distinction between these two forms on the premises of two manners of harmful speech. It could be that the intention behind disparaging speech is stupidity, recklessness, or condescension. On the other hand, deliberate defamations are more serious in their intent and involve criminal lies. In any case, and despite his distinction between the two cases, Chang too believes that both forms are types of libel. Following the book of Psalms, and in the present author's opinion, stupidity and satisfying the need for attention as well as the pleasure of dopamine's effect on the brain (Schultz 1998) are also forms of libel.

The body of contemporary research literature is full of studies that express critical opinions on the press, the media, and social networks. The following close reading of the book of Psalms focuses on discourses: monologues, dialogues, and symposia (i.e. a discourse involving more than two parties). Any punctuation refers to the original text's use of the *etnach* cantillation mark (the mark that resembles a horseshoe under the letter *tav* in the following example: תָ), which is the biblical text's equivalent of a modern semicolon.

In addition, the comparative discussion which follows will engage in an examination of the warps and wefts of the encounter between the ancient text and contemporary research. Specifically, we shall begin with the text of a psalm which shall then be integrated into contemporary research in order to complement our explanatory construction.

An Analysis of Psalm 64

The poet devotes this entire psalm to a denunciation of libel and false speech:

[1] To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. [2] Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy. Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity:[2] [3] Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words: [4] That they may shoot

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2 The KJV translates the original Hebrew *rigshah* as 'insurrection.' It should be noted, however, that *rigshah* more accurately refers to an emotionally driven act. In addition, the prominent 19th Century German biblical scholar and commentator Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) interprets this as "from the clandestine advice they were given by way of gossip" (present author's translation from the Hebrew translation of the original German). See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Die Psalmen* (Mossad Ha'Rav Kook, 1962), 255.

in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not. [5] They encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them?**3** [6] They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep.**4** [7] But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded. [8] So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away. [9] And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing. [10] The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.

As can be seen, the psalm employs 15 different expressions related to language: speech, statement, voice, learning by rote, discourse, secret, a slip of the tongue, words in disguise, setting traps with language, telling stories, and praise.

Against False Speech

In the course of this psalm, the poet fights for the truth via the metaphorical description of the disguised expression "diligent search" (*chefes mechupas* in the original), the "evil matter," and the witty turns of phrase where libellers "whet their tongue like a sword" and "bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words" (bitter meaning poisoned in this context), arrows that are shot fearlessly from the shadows. Who do they shoot? They shoot upright people (*tam* in Hebrew; see Job 1:1). In the bible, upright people are resigned and naive; that is to say, resigned to themselves and to their God and conducting themselves in good faith and with no ill intent (Even Shoshan 1983: s.v. תָּם). The psalm speaks in the plural, makes a distinction between the discourse (the prayer) of an individual sheltering under God's protection and others', and also ends on an optimistic note whereby the wicked will get a taste of their own medicine when the poet states that "...God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly they shall be wounded" (64:7). The same poisoned arrow will return to harm those who speak lies and defamation. On the other hand, those that are wise will be happy and will rejoice in their righteousness.**5**

In the spirit of the Psalms poet in "from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity" (64:2 [KJV]), and as expressed by the verse "They

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3 In his commentary on this verse, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch notes that "they believe that libel is the most powerful and safest weapon they have, and use delation skillfully. By using an innocent conversation, they implant the snares which will trap the object of their libel in their listener's heart" (present author's translation from the Hebrew translation of the original German). See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Die Psalmen*, 255.

4 In his commentary on this verse, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch interprets the word 'iniquities' (*'avlot*) as meaning "it is possible to investigate and follow crimes, but a word which is uttered to set a trap cannot be found when others attempt to investigate the crime it has effected. A word leaves no traces, and even if found, the person who uttered it may claim he did so in good faith." Rabbi Hirsch further notes that "the blows that strike them like an arrow suddenly transform their tongue into a venomous arrow of speech" (ibid.) (present author's translation from the Hebrew translation of the original German). See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Die Psalmen*, 255.

5 The next psalm begins with the advantages of silence, prayer, and listening as things that bring people closer to God: "Praise waiteth for thee... O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come." (65:1 – 65:2 [KJV])

only consult to cast him down from his excellency: they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly…" (62:3 [KJV]), Lazer et al. (2018) paint a picture of what happens behind the scenes of our contemporary media. They state that the producers of fake news imitate the formats of professional news production but modify them through processes which associate the deceitful content with original and authentic news. The Psalms poet's description in "they accomplish a diligent search" (64:6 [KJV]) paints such a picture, which shows how a lie is disguised with partial truths (note that this is another case where the KJV translation is inaccurate, as the original Hebrew for 'diligent search' is *chefes mechupas*, which employs the stem meaning 'disguise' (*hps* or *hfs*)). In an era where most people consume their news on social networks, the leading cause of fake news is that it can be created and published online far more quickly and far more cheaply than via such traditional media as newspapers, radio, and television. The increasing popularity of social media also plays a role in creating confusion, vagueness, and a sense of helplessness when facing such a torrential assault on an individual's conscious mind. These distortions, in turn, are described by the Psalms poet in "they encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily…" (64:5 [KJV]).

Libel as Interest and Reward

The message expressed in "who whet their tongue like a sword…" (64:3 [KJV]) describes rote learning as repeating a lie (again, this is a case of an inaccuracy in the KJV. The original Hebrew for 'whet' is *shanenu*, which uses a stem (*snn*) that also means 'learning by rote'). In other words, we are concerned with a case of continuous indoctrination that will eventually be perceived by its recipient as credible. This phenomenon is also described by Martel et al. (2020), who state that it is often the case that the most common beliefs are those that are repeated, which is what makes them the most familiar to us. In other words, we tend to assume that familiarity implies credibility. Martel et al. (2020)'s research also showed that the more the news repeated itself, the more their participants found it difficult to distinguish between fake and real news. This statement with respect to familiarity and prominence, in turn, is also corroborated by the work of Tversky and Kahneman, and specifically by a bias they refer to as the Availability Heuristic (Kahneman 2011: 419-433).

Within the textual context of the present psalm, it should also be noted that Salazar (2020) has revealed that it is possible to identify that fake news refers to viral posts that are often published from fake accounts, but which seem to be normal and regular news reports. A series of studies published in 2017, in turn, have stated that fake news refers to fake news reports published deliberately with the intention of deceiving their readers for financial or ideological reasons (see, for example, the paper by Allcott and Gentzkow (2017))[6].

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6   In his commentary on Psalm 12, Martin Buber perceives lies as a special kind of evil human beings have introduced to nature: "evil-doing and violence is something that animals can do too, and it is humans that have developed these acts: that have perfected them through lies. Lies are an entirely human invention" (Buber, "Justice and Injustice", 143-144, present author's translation from Hebrew). Buber emphasizes the keywords that recur two or three times in Psalm 12, such as 'men,' 'lips,' 'flattering,' 'tongue,' 'speak,' and 'say' in order to emphasize the negative effect exerted on disintegrating speech by "flattering lips." In order to imbue their words

Libel as Reward and Interest

It does not require a great deal of effort to find the Psalms' censorious words on these linguistic phenomena. After all, the phenomena of gossip, libel, defamation, and lies have been part of humanity from time immemorial. In this respect, we are not only concerned with the advancement of political and financial interests but also with psychological interests. The custom of stepping on a stage and loudly proclaiming gossip and fake news has been known to have occurred as early as in Classical Greece, where it would have taken place in the *agora* (see, for example, Hunter 1990). Libellers enjoy the attention of their listener(s), as is well known from everyday life and from historical and biblical narratives, with the most prominent among them being the one relating to the prophetess Miriam. Insofar as the Psalms are concerned, traditional commentary associates such behavior with the events of Ziba and Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 16 [KJV]), Doeg the Edomite (1 Samuel 21 – 1 Samuel 22; Psalm 52 [KJV]), Keilah (1 Samuel 23 [KJV]), the Ziphites (1 Samuel 23 – 1 Samuel 24; Psalm 54 [KJV]) etc. Contemporary neuroscientific studies have also associated the physiological motivation for libel with a chemical known as dopamine, whose increased levels in the brain bring about a pleasurable sensation (Schultz 1998). The flow of this pleasuring chemical increases when we expect a reward, which, among other things, could be the attention of another party, and it is thus the dopamine that motivates both our positive as well as our negative behavior. Margalit (2021), in turn, analyzes the ways in which the media and technology companies make use of their control over consumers to engineer the latter's thinking such as to serve their commercial or political interests through fake news, gossip, etc.

Pride and Ridicule: On Liars' and Defamers' Sense of Superiority
The Men and Women of Virtue who Control the City Square

Both "lying lips" and a "deceitful tongue" (Psalm 120 [KJV]) are presently known as "fake news." The lion's share of interpersonal communication is presently conducted via SMS messages (texts), WhatsApp messages, Facebook, Twitter, and other digital services. Social events, business meetings, and interpersonal negotiations are also carried out online. The devices we carry in our pockets everywhere thus serve as communication and memory boxes that shape the way we think (Margalit 2021). The party who shapes the box or the interface can therefore control what we will see, what we will think about, what is true and what is false, and occasionally even what we will do, what we will buy, and what we will say. It is this capacity for manipulating the positions and customs of the masses that the Psalms poet refers to in "our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" (12:5 [KJV]), a statement made when referring to those who cunningly pull strings to create a hidden mechanism of control that makes them the true rulers of minds. The term 'fake news' can also be used for cases when certain critical reports by news organizations are defamed and referred to as 'fake

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with the semblance of truth, Buber continues, the liars establish a kind of special heart, a mechanism operating in an ostensibly natural manner and from which lies arise to become "flattering lips" (ibid., 145).

news.' Such cases not only involve efforts to indicate false information but also efforts to demonize traditional media organizations (Tandoc et al. 2018).

Elsewhere, the Psalms poet declaims "For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land. Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it" (35:20 - 35:21 [KJV]) as well as "They speak vanity every one with his neighbor: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. The Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things: Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?" (12:2 - 12:4 [KJV]).[7] Indeed, and in the spirit of these psalms, certain media personalities and network owners make considerable use of their "lying lips" and—given their control over their audience's minds—'rightfully' consider themselves as people of virtue, as better than their audience and as the lords of the land.[8] In this respect, psalm 12 ends with "The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted" (12:8 [KJV]).

It should be noted that this severe censure by the Psalms poet necessarily calls for a penalty of extirpation (*kareth*) ("...The Lord shall cut off [*yakhret* in the original Hebrew]..." (12:3) [KJV]) for the language of derision, condescension, and deceit referred to as "flattering lips." As the Psalms poet phrases it, "Let them not that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause. For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land. Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it." (35:19 – 35:21 [KJV]). In other words, lies and libel as components of evil are naturally associated by the Psalms poet with the pursuit of honor and with the sense of superiority accompanied by the pleasure of dopamine as described by contemporary neuroscientists.

Those Who Control Minds and Are Imprisoned by their Pride

Scheufele and Krause (2019) argue that, in the case of politicians and other political players who talk proudly in the sense of "with our tongues we prevail... who is lord over us" (12:4 [KJV]), we are concerned with a long history of disseminating false information and disinformation in order to shape public opinion in their favor. Salazar (2020), in turn, finds that fake news is also associated with conspiracy theories, as is the case with the 2016 presidential elections in the US (also see Allcott and Gentzkow (2017); Silverman (2016)) and with COVID-19 denialists. This condescension is a sin that the Psalms poet also expresses

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[7] Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch interprets the word 'vanity' (12:2 [KJV]) (*shav* in the original Hebrew) as meaning "the polar opposite of reliable speech," and "flattering lips" (12:3 [KJV]) (*siftey chalakot* in the original Hebrew) as meaning "polished words and expressions, hypocritically so" (present author's translation from the Hebrew translation of the original German). See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Die Psalmen*, 67.

[8] Martin Buber (1968) suggests that the Psalms poet is not complaining about individual liars in this Psalm but rather about a whole generation of lies, and Buber's commentary emphasizes how the Psalms poet uses the plural to make dire prophecies about the future. In other words, we might argue that Buber's commentary suggests that the Psalms could have been talking about contemporary social networks and media when they describe the phenomenon of widespread lies (Buber, "Justice and Injustice," passim.).

in the verse "For the sin of their mouth and the word of their lips let them ever be taken in their pride..." (59:12 [KJV]). The sense of condescension expressed by "in their pride," the pride of those who sell lies, is described as their own trap, seeing how they are imprisoned by their condescending pride with no option of exit—a notion that is supported by the dopamine discourse in contemporary neuroscience.

Psalm 73 also directs the reader's attention to the libellers' sense of superiority. From a contemporary perspective, the Psalm poet's words are directed toward those media personalities who pride themselves on such slogans as "we are the watchdogs of democracy" or "we are the protectors of free speech." This psalm begins with the difference between the upright and the evil doers: "They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth...And they say, How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the most High?" (73:9 – 73:11 [KJV]). In other words, the evil doers claim they are above God, and that their opinion is knowledge when God has no opinion.[9]

In Psalm 5, the Psalms poet associates those who speak lies and consider themselves above their fellows with despicable killers who deserve an open grave: "Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man" (5:6 [KJV]).[10] The poet then proceeds to state "For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue" (5:9 [KJV]). Psalm 101 also expresses the libellers' condescension when it states "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him I will cut off: him that hath a high look and a proud heart will not I suffer" (101:5 [KJV]).[11] In other words, the evildoing of liars and defamers becomes all the more severe when coupled with their condescension, and the Psalm poet's words speak for themselves in this respect.

Individual Statements: Rewards and Punishments
That Which is Worthy is Desirable

In Psalm 15, the Psalm poet lists the distinction between those worthy of God's house and those who are not. Among other things, the poet emphasizes that "He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour" (15:2 – 15:3 [KJV]).[12] Those who do so will be rewarded: "...He that doeth

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9 According to Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, such evildoers doubt God's leadership, condescend toward the heavens, and conduct themselves as the lords of the land. Their condescension, according to Hirsch, makes their sins of lies, defamation, and libel all the more severe. See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Die Psalmen*, 380.

10 Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch comments that the foundation of this evildoing lies in the evildoers' constant scheming. See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Die Psalmen*, 32.

11 Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch comments that people who attempt to belittle other people with slander will be cut off (by the Psalm poet). That is, will be silenced with a look such that they would never again dare to defame others in the Psalm poet's presence. See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Die Psalmen*, 33.

12 Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch interprets this as meaning "words exchanged in gossip." (present author's translation from the Hebrew translation of the original German). See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Die Psalmen*, 79.

these things shall never be moved" (15:5 [KJV]). Elsewhere, the Psalms poet associates the moral standard of guarding one's tongue with a question of life and death: "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it" (34:12 – 34:14 [KJV]). In this respect, it should also be noted that the term "backbiteth" (another inaccuracy in the KJV; the original Hebrew is *ragal*, which is derived from the stem *rgl*, meaning "to spy") is used in the sense of gossip, of gathering information like a spy and passing it along. Gossip alongside lies are causes of disgrace for their object, whom they also defame.

The reward those who avoid lies and libel can expect, in turn, has much to teach us about the severity of murder, theft, adultery etc., namely, that they are no less severe than lies, deceit, libel, and other forms of wickedness and evildoing associated with language and speech.

The Harm and its Outcomes

The phenomenon of 'shaming' on social networks has led to countless cases of both misery and mental harms, as well as to many suicides. Such outcomes are described by the Psalms poet as being the equivalent of swords, poisoned arrows, venomous snakes, and other causes of death in, for example, "Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords are in their lips: for who, say they, doth hear?" (59:7 [KJV]). Those who libel and lie on social media are not held accountable for their words, and their license to poison through fake news is theirs alone, and one which they can direct at other people, whether top politicians, physicians, professors, neighbors, or fellow students (if the libeler is a child or an adolescent) with no provocation from the object(s) and often without even being acquainted with the object(s) of their libel. The electronic and online media are the new city square and both private citizens, company directors, politicians, and leaders conduct themselves according to its whims.

The need for libel is part of human nature, not merely on the part of the libeller but also on the part of her or his audience, and it is this need that is abused by the networks through spying, data gathering, leaking, providing partial information, concealing information, 'blowing up' marginal affairs, and 'playing down' important affairs. Algorithms are not only used for decoding and collecting personal data and using it for commercial ends—selling it to whomsoever is willing to pay for the data—but also for promotion, for inflating the number of times an item is viewed, read, or listened to, and for attracting attention. In other words, we are concerned with a violent culture the Psalms poet refers to as "...fear...on every side..." (31:13 [KJV]). The culture of shaming is thus a form of violence for all intents and purposes, and is tantamount to lynch-mobbing a helpless victim. This culture does not permit a distinction between truth and lies, between compliments and harassment, between private and public, and even between life and death. The spreading of lies and libel in the methods described here blurs the difference between contradictory concepts, and their practical implications can and have cost human lives. Indeed, it is in this spirit that the Psalms poet's Song of Degrees implores "Deliver my soul, O Lord, from

lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue. What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?" (120:2 - 120:3 [KJV]).

Muteness and Deafness as Refuges from Libel

In Psalm 31, the Psalms poet describes the phenomenon in the first person and as a personal experience: "For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life" (31:13 [KJV]).[13] Indeed, such early planning and the use of software for shaping the mind and controlling consciousness can have but one meaning: "they devised to take away my life." Later on in the Psalm, the Psalms poet expresses a wish for these libelers' punishment: "Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous" (31:18 [KJV]).[14] The Psalms poet also describes another personal experience in Psalm 38: "They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long. But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth" (38:12 – 38:13 [KJV]).[15] For those who shelter in God, the Psalms poet implores God: "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues" (31:20 [KJV]).

The subsequent psalm, which also relates to personal experience, begins with a description of worthy conduct: "...I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue..." (39:1 – 39:3 [KJV]).

Psalm 41 also speaks of a personal encounter with the phenomenon: "All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt. An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth he shall rise up no more. Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (41:7 – 41:9 [KJV]).[16] The Psalms poet also describes such an experience again in a later Psalm: "...they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause..." (109:2 – 109:3 [KJV]).

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13 Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch interprets "the slander of many" as meaning popular assent with libel spread by an individual and the second part of the verse as adding those who hatch the darkest of schemes. See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Die Psalmen*, 147.

14 The original Hebrew for "be put to silence" is *te'alamnah*, which is derived from the stem *alm* or *elm*, which means "muteness" (among other things). In other words, the Psalms poet is wishing that the libelers become mute and will no longer be capable of speech.

15 In his commentary on these verses, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch joins the metaphor of a "a poisoned arrow which might hurt another person" with the "arrow of delation" (present author's translation from the Hebrew translation of the original German). See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Die Psalmen*, 149.

16 Traditional commentary interprets this saying as relating to Ahitophel (also spelled Achitophel) (1 Samuel 22 – 1 Samuel 23).

All these—whether deliberately or randomly—are especially hurtful to individuals who are "stained" by prejudice as a result of false libels or as a result of a negative stereotype and thus become groups which are ascribed opprobrious labels. The three main courses of research which focus on gossipy and fake items in news media have found that there is a theoretical distinction between three types of fake news (Conroy et al. 2015): (1) fabrications, that is to say, fake news items and defamations, events that did not take place, or gossipy information about celebrities, politicians, or innocent people who were implicated and labelled with no basis in fact but who were judged and found guilty by the media, by social media, and by public opinion; (2) pranks characterized by the conveyance of fake information such as via social media posts masquerading as being sourced from traditional news sources, via satire masquerading as good faith, or via allegedly humorous news items that present themselves as real news through irony and absurdity (Pérez-Rosas et al. 2017); (3) fake news manufactured or edited through the manipulation, publication, and propagandizing of events that never took place and which are ascribed to a person or a group. All these are evaluated via two metrics: alleged facts, and actual deception (Tandoc et al. 2018).

And it is in this spirit that the Psalms poet acts reprovingly in noting that "Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son..." (50:19 – 50:20 [KJV]).[17] The reproof comes a verse later: "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes..." (50:21 [KJV]). The Psalms poet also relates to a similar case in Psalm 55: "Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city. Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets. For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him:" (55:9 – 55:12 [KJV]).

Psalm 52 rebukes the libel ascribed to Doeg the Edomite: "Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? The goodness of God endureth continually. Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah. Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue. God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah." (52:1 – 52:5 [KJV]). The Psalms poet adds to this elsewhere: "...whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword..." (57:4 [KJV]). It is in this spirit that the Psalms poet also expresses censure with regard to the ungratefulness of the Zihpites' delation to Saul about David hiding in their territory: after David saved them, they reward him with evil for good through their delation (54:1 [KJV]).

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17 In his commentary on these verses, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains that a wicked person uses the same mouth for both prayer and for wickedness, abuse, and covert and invisible deception. See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Die Psalmen,* 218.

The Wickedness of Speech: Lies and Libel in one Utterance

The digitization of news has undermined the traditional definitions of what constitutes news. The Internet in particular has given rise to platforms which provide even non-journalists with platforms that allow them to reach a mass audience. The rise of citizen-journalists who report, document, and take pictures or records video as if they were a player in the news industry has subverted the important connection between the news and professional and honest journalists by letting non-journalists engage in the gathering of information and its dissemination, as well as in such journalistic activities as the production of news items (Robinson and DeShano 2011; Wall 2019).

The Psalm poet also begins Psalm 109 on a personal note: "...they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer..." (109:2 – 109:4 [KJV]). The Psalms poet later asks God to exact a severe punishment on "them that speak evil against my soul" (109:20 [KJV]).[18]

The link between speaking, libelling, condescension, and a sense of superiority and wickedness is clearly apparent throughout the Psalms. In this respect, the Psalms poet asks: "Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and speak hard things? And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless..." (94:3 – 94:6 [KJV]). These wicked people with their poisoned tongues do not fear and do not deny their thoughts, which they speak openly and impertinently (note that the KJV does not convey this, but the original Hebrew for "boast themselves" is *'atak yit'amru*, with the latter word being derived from the stem *amr*, which—among other things—means something high above; in other words, these boastful people place themselves high above others and use this perceived superiority as a license for uttering their wickedness). They also humiliate, abuse, kill widows, and murder orphans who cannot defend themselves.[19]

The Psalms poet asks God to "Deliver me, O Lord from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man; which imagine mischiefs in their heart; continually are they gathered together for war. They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips. Selah. Keep me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man; who have purposed to overthrow my goings. The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set gins for me. Selah" (140:1 – 140:5 [KJV]). The Psalms poet then proceeds in supplication, asking that "Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him" (140:11 [KJV]). Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1962) interprets the word "sharpened"

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18 In his commentary on these verses, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch identifies both libel and a mockery of the law of God (*torah*), as well as flattery and false pretenses: "the contents of their words have always been lies; they have always poisoned my environment with hateful words for no reason" (ibid.) (present author's translation from the Hebrew translation of the original German). See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Die Psalmen*, 436.
19 Paraphrasing Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's commentary on these verses (ibid.) (present author's translation from the Hebrew translation of the original German). See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Die Psalmen*, 374.

(*shananu* in the original Hebrew) as meaning the abuse of words. In other words, according to Rabbi Hirsch, it is the harmful use of facility in speech that shapes wicked character traits.

Earlier in our discussion, we familiarized ourselves with the Psalms poet's concrete metaphors of the phenomenon of libel and boastful speech as being the equivalent of a poisoned arrow, a sharp sword, and the venom of a snake, and as being so harmful as to cause the murder of widows and orphans and widespread mass demoralization, or, in the Psalms poet's words, "They break in pieces thy people, O Lord, and afflict thine heritage" (94:5 [KJV]). How can one person cause such widespread harms? In spite of the fact that there was no mass media nor social media at the time of the Pslams' creation, the Psalms poet witnessed—not imaginarily, but rather in actual everyday life—how rumors pass by word of mouth and poison the minds of the public in such a wide-ranging manner. In fact, the Psalms poet's words are corroborated empirically by the studies published by Martel et al. (2020), Scheufele and Krause (2019), and Salazar (2020), which investigated the connection between emotions and the agreement with and justification of fake news, and found that there is a strong relation between emotions and the tendency to believe fake news. More specifically, they found that—insofar as specific patterns and emotional standards are concerned—real time emotions have a predictive capacity that increased their respondents' acceptance of fake news and which voided their capacity to distinguish between truths and falsehoods. According to these scholars, the more people rely on their emotions rather than on reason or common sense, the greater their tendency to believe that fake news is true. Put differently, their emotional involvement in reading, watching, and listening to news clouds their capacity to distinguish between real and fake news. Conversely, people who rely on reason are capable of detecting fake news and explaining to themselves why fake news items are false. This is indeed a problem of our times. These scholars' conclusions clearly demonstrate how the more their respondents relied on their emotion rather than on reason, the more they perceived fake news items as more accurate. This capacity to blur the difference between truth and fiction is, according to the Psalms poet, to sharpen one's tongue (e.g. 140:3 [KJV]) like a sharp razor (52:2 [KJV]), to "speak leasing" (5:6 [KJV], 'leasing' being an archaic English word for lies derived from the Old English word *leas*, meaning 'false,' and thus according with the original Hebrew *kazav*), to hide snares (e.g. 140:5 [KJV]) etc. This, in turn, begs the question of how otherwise intelligent adults can become addicted to "likes" and "posts" in order to know the extent to which they are valued by other people, and how they perceive themselves as literal nothings without them (Margalit 2021: 72).

The Poetry of the Psalms and the Curse of the Media

In his Song of Degrees, the Psalms poet implores God to "Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue. What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?" (120:2 - 120:3 [KJV]).[20] Elsewhere, the poet asks the

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20 The renowned 20th Century Jewish scholar Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz (1937-2020) interprets this as follows: "what does a person gain by spreading lies and defamation about others? it is sometimes the case that libel can spread very widely and rapidly and cause harm to others without the people spreading it deriving

wicked "Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?" (58:1 [KJV]) and then states "Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth. The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely" (58:2 - 58:5 [KJV]) as well as "Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords are in their lips: for who, say they, doth hear" (59:7 [KJV]) and "For the sin of their mouth and the words of their lips let them even be taken in their pride: and for cursing and lying which they speak" (59:12 [KJV]). In spite of being imprisoned by their pursuit of honor and by their self- importance, the Psalms poet later refers to these wicked people as "the ends of the earth" (59:13 [KJV]) (*afsei ha'arets* in the original Hebrew, but, by way of comparison to Proverbs 30:4, and according to such commentators as Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra (1089 - 1167), this can also mean an edge with no foundation that will soon collapse) that are tantamount to a stray dog going to sleep without sating its hunger (59:6 - 59:15 [KJV]).[21]

The Rectification: Holding One's Tongue

The rectification of "Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man" (5:6 [KJV]) is expressed by the Psalms poet in "But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear I will worship toward thy holy temple..." (5:7 [KJV]). And who are those who are worthy of entering God's holy house? According to the Psalms poet, these would be "He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour" (15:2 - 15:3 [KJV]).[22] The Psalms poet further claims that "...He that doeth these things shall never be moved..." (15:5 [KJV]). In other words, the Psalms poet associates the moral standard of holding one's tongue with a choice between life and death. As the poet states elsewhere, "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it." (34:12 - 34:14 [KJV]). In a similar spirit, the Psalms poet implores God to "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties" (141:3 - 141:4 [KJV]).

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any benefit from accumulating lies about their fellows..." (517) (present author's translation from Hebrew). See Rabbi Adin-Even Israel Steinsaltz, *Koren Book of Psalms: Commentary, Art, Chassidic Pearls of Wisdom* (Koren, 2016) [In Hebrew].

21 According to Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, these verses refer to wicked people with a burning desire to work evil like a snake who—by its nature—is driven to bite by its inner desire to cause harm (238). See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Die Psalmen*, 241, 243.

22 Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch interprets "backbiteth not with his tongue" (*ragal 'al leshono* in the original Hebrew) as meaning "words exchanged in gossip" (present author's translation from the Hebrew translation of the original German). See See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Die Psalmen*, 79.

The Remedy: Glorification and Prayer

In Psalm 4, the Psalms poet censures those who spread lies when he states "O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? How long will ye love vanity and seek after leasing? Selah." (4:2 [KJV]). The poet then proceeds to state: "But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto him." (4:3 [KJV]). The poet's call to God is thus the polar opposite of the liars' path, and constitutes prayer rather than gossip, lies, and libel. A similar dynamic can be observed in Psalm 5, where the Psalms poet states: "For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue" (5:9 [KJV]), but then proceeds to state "But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee." (5:11 [KJV]). In this verse, "shout for joy" is *yerannenu* in the original Hebrew, which derives from the stem *rnn*, which—among other things—means singing (and praying) joyfully rather than shouting (another case of inaccuracy in the KJV), while "joyful in thee" is *ya'altsu* in the original Hebrew and refers to those who find shelter in God and refrain from flattery.

The Psalms poet begins Psalm 109 by noting that "...they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. For my love they are my adversaries..." (109:2 -109:4 [KJV]), but then states "...but I give myself unto prayer..." (109:4 [KJV]). Later on in the Psalm, the poet states "Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the Lord, and of them that speak evil against my soul" (109:20 [KJV]), followed by glorification and prayer: "Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle. I will greatly praise the Lord with my mouth; yea, I will praise him among the multitude..." (109:29 – 109:30 [KJV]).

In Psalm 144, the Psalms poet implores God to: "Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children; whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood. I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee. It is he that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword. Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood..." (144:7 - 144:11 [KJV]).

The Psalms poet ends the trenchant censure in Psalm 64 (discussed above) with a glorification of God: "The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory..." (64:10 [KJV]). He then begins the next psalm with "Praise waiteth for thee, O God...O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come..." (65:1 – 65:2 [KJV]). In other words, the Psalms poet believes that the proper response for lies and libel is prayer and the glorification of God. The Psalms poet also emphasizes the advantage of silence, prayer, and listening as bringing a person closer to God and as the proper moral model people should live by.

Afterword

The intertextual encounter presented in this article paints a picture of an ancient biblical text seeking to express one aspect of human wickedness through the use of extreme metaphors (poisoned arrows, swords, fear [in the KJV, terror is closer to the original Hebrew *magor*], and even death). The Psalms poet is well acquainted with the phenomenon (of lies and libel) from personal experience and from observing human beings and the way in which they conduct themselves. The contemporary body of scientific literature describes the same phenomenon based on a wide-ranging and in-depth review of the systemic and individual behaviors of powerful people, of groups, and of individuals. This contemporary censure accords with the ancient text, and the use of sophisticated technological means that did not exist when the Psalms were written does not change the motives, actions, and consequences (rewards or punishments) associated with this phenomenon in both cases.

In spite of the stylistic differences between the Psalms' biblical phrasing and the contemporary scientific writing style, the Psalms are still corroborated by contemporary research by virtue of the fact that scientific research is objective rather than based on the perspective of a single individual and thus does not require extreme metaphors in order to describe negative phenomena and in order to warn us against them.

In closing, it is possible to state that our contemporary scientific texts do in fact correspond closely with the Psalms' poetry. Both texts speak of the same phenomena rooted in human nature, with both the motives and the negative outcomes we are familiar with and even experience as a result of these phenomena being the same despite the passage of time and the onslaught of technological developments.

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A Comparative Analysis
of Upanishadic and Einsteinian Philosophy

Abstract: The Vedic and Upanishadic texts describe "Dharma" as a cosmic force transcending space and time. Following the path of virtue aligns one with Dharma, leading to ethical behavior. Such individuals perceive the universe as a unified entity, not limited by race, religion, species, or group. Rishis and Avatars are periodically born to uphold the spirit of Dharma. Despite diverse origins, these enlightened beings embody non-violence (ahimsa), kindness (daya), compassion (karuna), cosmic friendship (maitri), and equanimity (upeksha) in their pursuit of the ultimate truth. One notable genius, Prof. Albert Einstein, born on March 14, 1879,[1] in South West Germany, received the Nobel Prize in 1921 for his discovery of the Photoelectric effect.[2] Einstein is revered not only as the "Father of Modern Physics" but also as a profound philosopher. Regardless of his numerous discoveries, he regarded all beings in the cosmos as manifestations of the Supreme Spirit, displaying compassion and friendship towards humans, animals, and other sentient beings. This cosmic divinity and non-dual vision align with the foundation of the Upanishads. Reading Albert Einstein's letters reveals a striking resemblance to the verses of the Upanishads. This research paper aims to explore the parallels between Upanishadic and Einsteinian Philosophy, emphasizing that the attainment of wisdom leads to a realization of universal unity, non-violence, and a shared comradeship despite cultural differences.

Keywords: Albert Einstein, Indian Philosophy, Upanishads, Vedanta, Einsteinian Philosophy

Einstein's Paradigm Shift:
Embracing Spinoza's Supreme over Abrahamic God

Baruch Spinoza, a 17th-century philosopher, faced exile from the Jewish community at the age of 23 due to his controversial views on God. He challenged the prevailing notions of a dominant, commanding, and personal God embraced by both Jews and Christians. Spinoza argued that the entire cosmos emerges from God, making it impossible for God to exercise control over His own manifested Self. According to Spinoza, God is solitary, impersonal, and impartial towards all creatures. He considered God as the ultimate cause of the cosmos, which operates according to a cosmic order known as "Substance." In addition,

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1 The Nobel Foundation, *Nobel Prize in Physics 1921,* Sweden https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/physics/1921/einstein/biographical/
2 *Ibid.*

Spinoza rejected the idea of a pluralistic God and instead embraced the concept of a singular force that manifests itself as the cosmos.[3] Spinoza's concept of God is relevant to this discussion because it is referenced by Albert Einstein when he was questioned about his belief in God by Rabbi Herbert, a Jewish leader in New York,

> "I believe in Spinoza's God who reveals Himself in the lawful harmony of the creation. He is not concernedabout the fate and doing of mankind. To me all is in God; all lives and moves in God.[4] A God who rewards and punishes his creatures is unthinkable because all beings act as prompted by natural law, which is God itself. Thus, I reject the idea of a personal God that judges the acts of his creation.[5] I am fascinated by Spinoza's pantheism. He is the first philosopher to see the soul and body as one and not as two distinct entities.[6] I am not anatheist but I cannot accept God as an authority established by the church. I do not believe in fear of life, death and blind faith. I have no faith in the God of theology."[7]

Similar to Spinoza, Einstein also rejected the traditional notion of the Jewish and Christian God. He believed that God was non-dual, existing inseparably from His creation, and revealed Himself through the objects and phenomena of the universe. Einstein further expressed the view that God is the origin of both good and bad, yet remains indifferent to individual acts of right and wrong. He asserted that the structure of the universe could not have been different fromwhat it is currently.[8] Einstein later renounced his Jewish faith and German citizenship, ultimatelybecoming an American citizen in 1940.[9] Einstein found great fascination in Upanishadic philosophy, despite never having visited India. The Bhagvadgita was highly revered by Einstein as he stated,

> "When I read the Bhagvadgita and its theory of creation, everything else seemed superfluous."[10]

He nurtured close connections with Indian leaders and intellectuals, such as Indira Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Rabindranath Tagore. During his time in the United States, he had the opportunity to engage in discussions on profound philosophical concepts with Rabindranath Tagore. Remarkably, Einstein did not consider himself an atheist but rather described himself as a "Religious Non-believer." Therefore, he did believe in a cosmic power or universal order that expressed itself in its creation. He further propounded that the universe is a manifestation of the Cosmic Spirit, everything within it is inherently divine.

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3 This thought is similar to the Vedantic thought where Brahman (Supreme) manifests as the entire Jagat (World) andcan be seen in verses i.e., *eko vashi sarvabhutantaratma ekam rupam bahudha yah karoti* (*He indwells all beings as the very Self and He alone becomes manifold*) -Kathaopnishad Sankarabhashya, v.2.2.12; *Brahmopnishad,* v.17; *sarvam khalu idam brahma* (*All is the Brahman*) -Chandogyaopnishad, 3.4.1; *mahad brahma yena prananti virudhah (Brahman is the source of plants, herbs and all beings.)* -Atharvaveda, 1.32.1.

4 Isaacson Walter, *Einstein: His Life and Universe,* Simon and Schuster Ltd., London, 2008, pp.388-89

5 *Ibid,* p.387

6 Jammer Max, *Einstein and Religion*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1999, p.36

7 Isaacson Walter, pp.388-89

8 *Ibid.*, p.392

9 Liberary of Congress, *Declaration of Intention by Albert Einstein,*1936, United States,https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcwdl.wdl_02745/?r=-1.31,-0.058,3.62,1.446,0

10 Isaacson Walter, p.157

It must be noted that Einstein made it very clear that he was not an atheistic; rather, he referred to himself as "Religious Non-believer".[11] Therefore, he did believe in a cosmic poweror universal order that expressed itself in its creation and so for Einstein everything in the cosmos was divine.

The Philosophical Nexus: Schopenhauer, Upanishads, and Einstein

Arthur Schopenhauer, a prominent German philosopher of the 19th century, held great influence during his time. He was deeply influenced by the Upanishads, and their profound impact is evident in his writings. Albert Einstein, in turn, drew inspiration from Schopenhauer's ideas. As a result, Einstein himself became a determinist, influenced indirectly by the Upanishads through the philosophical lineage that passed from Schopenhauer to him.

Consequently, through Schopenhauer, the Upanishadic teachings reached Albert Einstein, influencing his beliefs. The idea of a Supreme Will governing the cosmic drama became the cornerstone of Einstein's life, philosophy, and scientific breakthroughs. This concept shaped his worldview and guided his exploration of the universe. The following statement by Einstein demonstrates the influence of Schopenhauer's ideas,

> "Schopenhauer's words "Man can do what he wills but he cannot will what he wills." have accompanied me throughout my life. His thoughts have consoled me while dealing with others, even with those who have caused pain. This recognition of the lack of freedom of will have helped me in avoiding taking myself and others too seriously and have protected me from losing my sense of humor."[12]

Determinism in Upanishadic and Einsteinian Philosophy

The Upanishads encompass discussions on both determinism and free will. Notably, the Rigveda stands as the world's first text to address determinism through the concept of "Rta,"[13] which denotes a mystical cosmic order that intricately governs the functioning of everything. It lays the foundation for the development of the Vedic concepts of "Dharma"[14]

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11 Isaacson Walter, *Einstein: His Life and Universe,* Simon and Schuster Ltd., London, 2008, p.390

12 Albert Einstein, *Mein Glaubensbekenntnis,* Audio Records, Online Yeshiva University Libraries, 1932, https://library.yu.edu/c.php?g=1073982&p=7880252 (Accessd on, April 22, 2023; 13:02)

13 Unchanging truth, unalterable codes of conduct, constant cosmic law, unweaving universal order, and cyclicalnatural occurrences like birth, death, ageing, and seasons etc.

14 Dharma encompasses various meanings and dimensions within its essence: 1. Svabhava: It refers to the inherent nature or characteristics of an entity, be it an object, animal, tree, or human. 2. Cosmic Order: Dharma represents thefixed and harmonious cosmic order (Rta) that governs the functioning of the universe. It signifies the consistent patterns and laws that ensure the sun rises and sets, and other cosmic phenomena occur predictably. 3. Duty and Responsibility: Dharma encompasses the idea of fulfilling one's duties and responsibilities in various contexts, such as manavdharma (duties as a human), patidharma (duties as a spouse), rashtradharma (duties as a citizen), and more.
4. Social Norms: Dharma includes adhering to social norms and codes of conduct, such as loyalty to one's partner, respecting authority figures like kings or leaders, and showing reverence for nature. 5. Purushartha: Dharma plays a role in the pursuit of Purushartha, the four-fold goals of life, which are Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth), Kama (desires), and Moksha (liberation). 6. Religion: Dharma can be understood as a religious path centered aroundethical codes that promote the well-being of all beings, transcending solely hu-

and "Satya."[15] The Shrimad Bhagavad Gita reflects determinism in its teachings. It emphasizes that individuals, under the influence of Avidya (ignorance), mistakenly perceive themselves as the sole doers of their actions. However, the Gita reveals that they are unaware that it is the Supreme, operating through them, orchestrating the intricate functioning of the cosmos. This highlights the underlying concept of determinism in the Bhagavad Gita's philosophy.[16] Further, when we refer to the Upanishads, we find thousands of verses that speak of determinism, i.e,

ekohambahushayamah[17]
(I am one and I become many).

In the above said, *Chandogyaopnishad* speaks about the predetermined divinity of all life forms.

yasmin sarvani bhutani atmaivabhud vijanatah|
tatra ko mohah kah shloka ekatvamanupashyatah||[18]

(When all beings have been realized as the 'Self', there remains no delusion and no sadness.)

The verse from the Ishavasya Upanishad suggests that the elimination of delusion and sorrow happens spontaneously when one strives to achieve a state of non-duality (Ekatmavada). Similarly, the Shvetashvatara Upanishad proclaims that everything is divine, implying that all beings are essentially the Supreme in disguise. These teachings imply a sense of predetermination, as the Upanishads convey that the true nature of all beings is rooted in the Supreme. It further eradicates the difference between the cause and the effect,

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man concerns. Hindu Dharma, Jaina Dharma, and Bauddha Dharma can be considered Dharmic religions in this sense, while Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are not typically classified under Dharma. 7. Virtue: Dharma also encompasses virtuous actions and behaviors, such as watering plants, feeding animals, and providing care for the sick and ailing, extending compassion and kindness to all sentient beings.

15 Satya represents the concept of truth in various aspects: 1. Acceptance: Satya entails accepting everything and every being in their natural form without attempting to forcefully alter or modify them. Forcing changes upon creatures mentally, physically, or genetically for personal pleasure is considered untruthful or Asatya. 2. Respect for Mother Nature: Satya involves refraining from taking away the resources of Mother Nature with the intention of accumulating them for personal gain. Taking fruits from a tree to satisfy one's natural hunger is an act of truthfulness(Satya), whereas doing so out of greed is considered untruthful (Asatya). 3. Expressions and Virtues: The concept ofSatya manifests as honesty, truthfulness, loyalty, calmness, acceptance, appreciation for everything and every being, compassion, kindness, and having an equanimous vision towards the entire cosmos. 4. Integration into Life: Satya is to be practiced in words, thoughts, actions, and as the foundational principle of life. Engaging in acts such as killing,altering someone or something, destruction, and causing harm for sensory pleasure or other reasons falls under the umbrella of Asatya or untruthfulness. In essence, Satya encompasses embracing truthfulness, honesty, and a deep respect for the natural order of the cosmos, fostering compassion and kindness towards all beings, and adhering to a life guided by these principles in all aspects.

16 *Shrimad Bhagvadgita*, v.18.16 (*tatraivam sati kartaramatmanam kevalam tu yah| pashyatyakitabuddhitvanna sa pashyati durmatih||*)

17 *Chandogyaopnishad,* v.6.2.3

18 *Ishavasyaopnishad,* v.6

purusha evedam sarvam yadbhūtam yacca bhavyam |
utamritatvasyeshano yadannenatirohati||[19]

(All this is nothing but the Supreme Being, the One that was. The One that is, and the One that will be. He manifestsas the world of material and remains the immortal one behind the mortal.)

Einsteinian philosophy is deeply rooted in the fundamental concept of determinism. It is worth highlighting that both Spinoza and Schopenhauer, who greatly influenced Einstein, were proponents of determinism themselves. Furthermore, Schopenhauer's own views were heavily shaped by the teachings of the Upanishads. These interconnected influences demonstrate the profound impact of determinism and the Upanishads on Einstein's philosophical framework. Einstine's determinism can be comprehended from the following,

> *"God Himself could not have arranged the cosmic connection in any other way than that as it exists."*[20]
> *"I do not believe in free will. Jews believe in free will. They believe that man can shape his own life. I reject this theory completely and in this respect, I am not a Jew. I am a determinist. Everything is determined, the beginningas well as the end, by forces over which we have no control. It is determined for the insect, stars, humans, vegetables, and cosmic dust. We all dance to a mysterious tune, intones in the distance by an invisible player."*[21]

Einstein held the belief that the functioning of everything in the cosmos is governed by a Supreme will. He considered the idea of individuals creating their own destiny as an egotistical folly. In this perspective, a clear parallel can be observed between the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and Einsteinian Philosophy. These philosophical frameworks all emphasize the existence ofa higher power or cosmic order that influences the events and workings of the universe, challenging the notion of individual control over destiny.

The Moral Conundrum:
Determinism and Einstein's Ethical Framework

It is widely believed that determinists like Einstein lack ethics. This misunderstanding is the result of a superficial comprehension of his perspective. Einstein has been criticized for beingA-ethical. He however made it clear that, philosophically, a person may not be accountable for his actions. However, at a worldly level, he must observe social customs, rules and laws. Einstein, thus states,

> *"I am compelled to act as if free will existed because if I wish to live in a civilized society, I must act responsibly. I may consider a murderer as not responsible for his acts on a philosophical level but at a mundane sphere I will prefer not to take tea with him"*[22]

Despite his belief in determinism, Einstein emphasizes the significance of ethics for maintaining social harmony. His view of determinism primarily pertains to larger cosmic phenomena, such as the predictable movements of the sun, the flow of water, or the nature of fire. However, he also acknowledges that ethics do not derive their authority from a Su-

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19 *Ishavasyaopnishad,* v.6

20 Isaacson Walter, *Einstein: His Life and Universe,* Simon and Schuster Ltd., London, 2008, p.392

21 *Ibid.,*pp.387; 392

22 *Ibid.,*pp.392; 393

preme power but are essential in the material world. This ethical perspective is evident in a suggestion Einstein gave to his daughters during his visit to Japan in 1922, wherein he stated,

*"If you wish for a happy life, use for yourself little, but give to others much"***23**

He further states at various occasions,

*"Only morality in our actions can give dignity to our life"***24**

*"Academic chairs are many but wise and noble teachers are few, lecture-rooms are large but the number of young people who thirst for truth and justice are small."***25**

*"I consider ethics to be an exclusively human concern with no superhuman authority behind it."***26**

While Einstein held a belief in determinism, he also recognized the importance of ethics in society. He emphasized that individuals must adhere to social customs, rules, and laws, even though he philosophically considered personal accountability to be influenced by determinism. Einstein's ethical stance highlights the significance of responsible behavior and the pursuit of morality for a civilized society. Therefore, it is incorrect to assume that determinism and ethics are incompatible in Einstein's perspective.

Reflections of Guilt: Einstein and the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Tragedy

Einstein, one of the key scientists involved in creating the atomic bomb, carried the weight of regret for the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II. He deeply lamented the immense devastation caused by these bombings, which remained a source of pain throughout his life. The development of the bomb was motivated by concerns over Germany's potential creation of a dangerous weapon, and Einstein's famous "energy-mass equation ($E=mc^2$)." played a role in its construction. However, the bomb was not deployed against Germany as the country had already surrendered to the Allies on May 7, 1945.**27** Following the bombing of Japan, Einstein expressed deep remorse and sorrow. In response to the tragedy, he uttered the words, "Woe is me." While advocating for peace, Einstein had written a letter along with other scientists to President Harry S. Truman on July 17, 1945, urging him not to proceed with the bombing. Despite their plea, the advice was disregarded, and the devastating event unfolded on August 6, 1945. Einstein's poignant statement reflects his anguish and the profound impact the bombings had on him. He further stated,

*"If I knew that the Germans would not succeed at making an atom-bomb, I would've done nothing."***28**

23 *Ibid.,*p.393

24 Isaacson Walter, *Einstein: His Life and Universe,* Simon and Schuster Ltd., London, 2008, p.353

25 Einstein Albert, *The World as I see it,* Filiqualian Publishing, Minnesota, 2005, p.8

26 Einstein Albert, *The Human Side,* Princeton University Press, New Jerssy, 1981, p.40

27 National Archives, *Surrender of Germany 1945,* United States, https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/surrender-of-germany

28 Newsweek*, The Man Who Started It All,* Online, 1947, https://time.com/5641891/einstein-szilard-letter.

Einstein's Plate of Compassion:
The Moral Imperative of Vegetarianism

It is true that Albert Einstein transitioned to a vegetarian lifestyle later in his life and expressed ethical reasons for his choice. While his digestive problems played a role in his decision, Einstein's words and beliefs suggest a broader perspective on the ethical implications ofconsuming animal products. He recognized the interconnectedness of all beings and the moral dilemma of deriving pleasure from causing pain to other creatures. In light of this understanding,Einstein's remarks indicate that if given the opportunity, he would have willingly embraced vegetarianism as a conscious ethical choice. Therefore, he states,

"I have always eaten animal flesh with a somewhat guilty conscience."[29]

"I am living without fats, without meat, without fish, but am feeling quite well this way. It always seems to methat man was not born to be a carnivore."[30]

"Besides agreeing with the aims of vegetarianism for aesthetic and moral reasons, it is my view that a vegetarian manner of living by its purely physical effect on the human temperament would most beneficially influence thelot of mankind."[31]

"What is the meaning of human life, or, for that matter, of the life of any creature? To know an answer to this question means to be religious. You ask: Does it make any sense, then, to pose this question? I answer: The man who regards his own life and that of his fellow creatures as meaningless is not merely unhappy but hardly fit for life."[32]

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us the "Universe," a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separate from the rest - a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.[33]

The concept of non-dualism, as emphasized in Upanishadic thought, provides a foundation for the importance of vegetarianism. The notion that everything is interconnected anddivine leads to the recognition that there is no inherent distinction between beings. In this perspective, the act of causing harm or inflicting pain upon any living creature becomes contradictory and goes against the understanding of the inherent unity of all existence. It further becomes important to take note of the lives of enlightened individuals. Those who realized the self in all and all in the self often reflect a profound connection to vegetarianism. Figures such asMahavira, Buddha, Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Mahatma Gandhi, Pythagoras, Empedocles, Plotinus, Rumi, Nicola Tesla, Leonardo da Vinci, Sir Isaac Newton, ThomasEdison, and many others recognized the fundamental sameness

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29 Einstein Albert, *The Quotable Einstein on Death,* Princeton University Press, 1910, Letter to Max Kariel, August *3, 1953*

30 *Ibid.,* Letter to Hans Muehsam, March 30, 1954

31 *Ibid,* Letter to Hermann Huth, December 27, 1930.

32 Einstein Albert, *Mein Weltbild*, Amsterdam: Querido Verlag, First ed, 1934

33 *New York Post,* 28 November 1972

and interconnectedness of all living beings. They understood that suffering is universal and does not discriminate based on size, name, or form.

The message of organic wholesomeness, cosmic divinity, compassion, kindness, and universal friendship, which finds mention in various Upanishadic texts, resonates with the ethical foundations of vegetarianism. It reflects the understanding that embracing a vegetarian lifestyle aligns with the principles of interconnectedness, compassion, and non-violence towards all livingbeings. This message of organic wholesomeness, cosmic divinity, compassion, kindness and universal friendship finds mention in various Upanishadic texts,

yacca kincit jagat sarvam drshyate shrooyate apivaa |
antar bahishca tatsarvam vyaapya naaraayanah sthithah ||[34]
(*Whatever in the universe is known through perception is pervaded and indwelled by Narayana*)

aham atma gudakesha sarva-bhutaśhaya-sthitah| aham
adish cha madhyam cha bhutanam anta eva cha||[35]
samoham sarvabhutesh na me dveshyosti na priyah| ye
bhajanti tu mam bhaktaya mayi te teshuchapyaham[36]
(*I exist as the atman in the hearts of all living creatures and I am the beginning, middle and end of all beings. I amthe indwelling essence of all creatures and I have no likes or aversions.*)

vo namo namo mrigyubhyash shvanibhyash cha|
vo namo namah shvabhyash shvapatibhyash cha vo namah||[37]
(*I bow to Rudra, the One who controls dogs, the one who Himself is the dog and the One who protects dogs*)

abhayam nah pashubhyah[38]
(*animals must live without any fear*)

tadaikshata bahu syam[39]
(*I am one and I become many*)

Accepting the Inevitable: Einstein's Philosophy on Death

Like many yogis, Einstein did not view death as a tragedy but rather as a natural and predetermined occurrence. During a conversation with a friend while out for a stroll, the topic of "death" arose. When his friend stated that death is both a fact and a mystery, Einstein added, "..and a relief too." This remark highlights Einstein's perspective that death is not something to be feared or mourned but rather a release from the burdens and limitations of life. It reflects his acceptance of death as a part of the cosmic order and a potential liberation from earthly existence.[40] Therefore, it can be inferred that Einstein had a positive outlook on death. As he grew older, he experienced various health issues and for the last

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34 *Yajurveda, Narayanasuktam,* v10.13.5

35 *Shrimad Bhagvadgita,* 10.20

36 *Ibid,* 9.29

37 *Yajurveda, Rudramsukta,* 4.5.4

38 *Yajurveda,* 36.22

39 *Chandogyopnishad,* 6.2.3

40 Ghatak Ajoy, *Albert Einstein: Glimpse of Life, Philosophy and Science,* Viva Books, New Delhi, 1911, p.133.

20 years of his life (1935– 1955),[41] he resided in Princeton, New Jersey. When faced with a ruptured blood vessel near his heart, doctors offered him the option of surgery. However, Einstein declined, saying,

> *"I want to go when I want to go. It is tasteless to prolong life artificially. I have done my share and it is time to go."*[42]

Einstein's words illuminate the Upanishadic concept of doing one's tasks in the mode of renunciation ("I have done my share") and not clinging to things, people, situations, or life ("it is time to go"). Additionally, the Shrimad Bhagvadgita declares,

> *"jatasya hi dhruvo mrityur dhruvam janma mritasya cha*
> *tasmad apariharye'rthe na tvam shochitum arhasi"*[43]
> (*Death is certain for the one born, and rebirth is destined for the one who died.*
> *Therefore, you shouldn't mournover the inevitable.*)

Albert Einstein's profound understanding of life and death stemmed from his journey from action to wisdom, body to self, material to the immaterial, and physical to the metaphysical.On April 18, 1955, at the age of seventy-six, Einstein departed from his material body. While he did not have faith in the concept of rebirth, he also did not see death as an end. His thoughts on the matter become clear from the following statements,

> *"I do not believe in immortality of the individual.*[44] *Our death is not an end if we have lived on in our childrenand the younger generation. For they are us; our bodies are only wilted leaves on the tree of life."*[45]

Conclusion

In conclusion, the parallels between the Upanishadic philosophy and Albert Einstein's worldview are indeed profound and striking. Both embrace the idea of a cosmic force or Supreme Spirit that transcends space and time, emphasizing the interconnectedness and inherent divinity of all beings. Einstein's rejection of a personal, commanding God aligns with the non- dual, pantheistic views found in the Upanishads and Spinoza's philosophy. Moreover, Einstein's recognition of a cosmic order and determinism in the universe reflects influences from Schopenhauer and the Upanishadic teachings. While he believed in determinism, Einstein also emphasized the importance of ethics and responsible behavior, echoing the concept of Dharma found in the Vedic and Upanishadic texts. Einstein's deep sense of regret and commitment to peace, particularly in the aftermath of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, further highlight his ethical concerns and his profound understanding of the interconnectedness of all life. His transition to vegetarianism demonstrates his recognition of the moral implications of causing harm to other creatures and the

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41 Wikipedia, 2018, *Albert_Einstein_House,* Online, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert_Einstein_House

42 Ghatak Ajoy, p.160

43 *Shirmad Bhagvadgita,*v.2.27.

44 Dukas Helen & Hoffmann Banesh, *Albert Einstein: The Human Side* (*New Glimpses From His Archives*), Princeton University Press, 1981, p.39

45 Einstein Albert, *The Quotable Einstein on Death,* Princeton University Press, 1910, p.91

positive impact of compassionate choices. Ultimately, the exploration of the philosophical nexus between the Upanishads, Einsteinian Philosophy, and the influences of thinkers like Spinoza and Schopenhauer invites us to embrace compassion, non- violence, and a sense of shared comradeship. These perspectives transcend cultural differences and provide a deeper understanding of the cosmos, encouraging us to lead ethical lives and cultivate a harmonious relationship with the interconnected universe we inhabit.

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Book Review

Wally V. Cirafesi, *John within Judaism: Religion, Ethnicity, and the Shaping of Jesus-Oriented Jewishness in the Fourth Gospel*, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity, Vol. 112, Brill: Leiden, 2022.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in contextual studies of the Fourth Gospel, particularly in its relation to ancient Judaism and Greco-Roman philosophy. Scholars have recognized the importance of understanding the cultural and historical context in which the Gospel was written in order to gain a deeper understanding of its message and theology. Studies of the Fourth Gospel in relation to ancient Judaism have focused on the ways in which the Gospel engages with Jewish religious and cultural practices, as well as the broader social and political context of first-century Judea. These studies have highlighted the Gospel's use of Jewish literary and theological motifs, such as the concept of the Logos and the figure of Moses, and have shown how these motifs are reinterpreted and transformed in the Gospel. Similarly, studies of the fourth Gospel in relation to Greco-Roman philosophy have focused on the ways in which the Gospel engages with philosophical ideas and concepts, such as the notion of logos in Stoic philosophy and the concept of truth in Platonic philosophy. These studies have highlighted the Gospel's engagement with philosophical questions and debates, and have shown how the Gospel's theology can be understood in light of these philosophical contexts.

"John within Judaism" by Wally V. Cirafesi is a well-researched book that offers a fresh perspective on the Gospel of John. The author's central argument is that John can be understood as an expression of Jewish identity in Greco-Roman antiquity, and that it employs strategies of ethnic identity formation similar to those found in other Jewish sources from the Second Temple and early rabbinic periods.

One of the strengths of the book is the way that Cirafesi carefully unpacks the complex and contested category of "Judaism," situating it in relation to other categories such as "religion" and "ethnicity." He shows how John's negotiation of Jewish identity is similar to the strategies employed by other Jewish sources from the same time period, and argues convincingly that John should be read "within Judaism." Cirafesi's analysis of the Gospel of John is nuanced and detailed, and he provides a wealth of evidence to support his argument. He demonstrates how John's use of "high christology" and its critique of the *Ioudaioi* can be understood as part of a broader pattern of Jewish identity formation, and how John coalesces with other expressions of ancient Jewish identity.

In his Introduction "John and Judaism, Then and Now" (1–26) Cirafesi acknowledges that the relationship between John and Judaism is a complex and multifaceted one, and that previous scholarship has approached this relationship in various ways. He notes for ex-

ample that Kingsley Barrett's questions about the form of Judaism that John relates to and the nature of that relationship are still relevant today, and that they continue to pose significant challenges to scholars. The author also acknowledges the broader cultural and historical context in which the study of John and Judaism takes place, including the history of Christian anti-Jewish hate speech and contemporary issues related to Jewish-Christian dialogue. However, his primary focus is on the historical and exegetical questions surrounding John and Judaism, and he seeks to offer a nuanced and insightful analysis of these questions. Overall, the introduction to "John within Judaism" sets the stage for a thoughtful and engaging study of the relationship between the Gospel of John and Jewish identity. The author's acknowledgement of the complexity and significance of this relationship, as well as the broader cultural and historical context in which it takes place, demonstrate his commitment to approaching this topic with sensitivity and insight.

The second chapter "John and the Problem of Ancient 'Judaism'" (27–76) delves deeper into the methodological questions surrounding the study of John's relationship to Judaism. The author identifies three primary questions that scholars must grapple with in order to understand this relationship:

(1) what was "Judaism" in antiquity, and how should we define this term?

(2) Should we emphasize unity or diversity in our understanding of Jewish identity during this period?

(3) What did it mean, according to the ancients, to be an *Ioudaios* (usually translated as "Jew" or "Judean")?

These questions are complex and highly debated in scholarship, and the author provides a detailed overview of the different perspectives and approaches that have been taken in addressing them. He notes that these questions are pieces of a larger puzzle, namely, constructing and modeling "Judaism" during a crucial period in its history. One of the strengths of this chapter is the way that the author acknowledges the complexity and fluidity of ancient Jewish identity. He recognizes that there is no single, essential characteristic that defines "Judaism," and that Jewish identity during this period was diverse and multifaceted. This insight is important for understanding the Gospel of John, which must be situated within this complex and dynamic cultural context. Overall, the second chapter of "John within Judaism" provides a thoughtful and nuanced overview of the methodological questions surrounding the study of John's relationship to Judaism. The author's acknowledgement of the complexity and diversity of ancient Jewish identity is particularly noteworthy, and sets the stage for a deeper understanding of the Gospel of John as an expression of this dynamic cultural milieu.

In the third chapter "The Jewish People and the Children of Israel's God in John" (77–126) the focus is on the term *Ioudaios* and its meaning within the context of John's Gospel. The author argues that the translation of *Ioudaios* as either "Jew" or "Judean" is problematic and that the term is inherently ambiguous. The author suggests that the term should be understood as both an ethnicity and a religion, rather than as a binary opposition between the two. The chapter goes on to explore how one was considered an *Ioudaios* in Greco-Roman antiquity and what the legitimizing basis of participation in the Jewish ethnos was. The author also examines how John's Gospel negotiates the concept of *Ioudaios* in relation to other ethnic identities, such as the Samaritans and Greeks, and how the categories of "the world" and "the children of God" factor into the Johannine vision of 'peoplehood.' This chapter provides a thorough examination of the complex issues surrounding

the term *Ioudaios* and its meaning within the context of John's Gospel. By taking a nuanced approach that acknowledges the inherent ambiguity of the term and considers its multiple dimensions, the author sheds new light on the ways in which John negotiates Jewish identity. This chapter is essential reading for anyone interested in understanding the complexities of the term *Ioudaios* and its significance in the Gospel of John.

The fourth chapter of the book with title ""We Have a Law ..." (John 19:7) The Ancestral Law and Its Laws in John" (127–184) focuses on the concept of ethnos in the context of ancient Judaism, particularly in relation to the Jewish people's adherence to their ancestral laws. The author notes that in antiquity, an ethnos was defined by its governing body of laws, which regulated the practice of its ancestral traditions. This is exemplified in the story of Ezra, who was commissioned by the Persian king Artaxerxes to reconnect the Yehudim to their ancestral laws and separate them from surrounding nations. Roman authors, such as Juvenal and Tacitus, also viewed adherence to ancestral laws as a defining feature of an ethnos, and those who adopted the laws of another people were seen as guilty of ethnic treachery. The author then examines several examples from Jewish literature where adherence to ancestral laws is presented as a defining feature of Jewish identity. Josephus, for example, defends Jewish laws against criticism by drawing parallels to the practices of other nations, arguing that adherence to ancestral laws is a common feature of all ethnē. Similarly, in First Maccabees, Jews who actively adhered to the ancestral laws of non-Jewish nations were seen as having abandoned their membership in the Jewish ethnos. The author of 4 Maccabees also notes how Antiochus Epiphanes's agenda of ethnic oppression distorted the Jewish ethnos by forcing them to change their manner of living and neglecting

their national cult. The author argues that adherence to ancestral laws was a crucial aspect of Jewish identity and played a central role in defining the Jewish ethnos. This has implications for understanding the role of the law in the Gospel of John and how it negotiates the identity of the *Ioudaioi*. The author suggests that the *Ioudaioi* in John's Gospel are characterized by their adherence to their ancestral laws and traditions, which sets them apart from other ethnic groups such as the Samaritans and Greeks. The Gospel also presents Jesus as challenging certain aspects of Jewish law, which could be seen as a challenge to the very identity of the Jewish ethnos.

In the fifth chapter "Reterritorializing Jewish Identity John and the Ancestral Land" (185–220), the author seeks to examine the role of the land of Israel as an ethno-political category in John's Gospel. The author argues that New Testament scholarship has generally underappreciated the significance of the land of Israel, not only as a theological category but also as an ethnic and political one. By approaching "land" in John's Gospel as an ethno-political category, the author hopes to shed new light on the conceptual relationship between John and Jewish identity. To provide some background, the author first explores how ancient historians used various techniques to justify a group's claim to a particular land. The concept of autochthony, which posits that an ethnos had its origins in people native to a particular territory, was a popular one used by Greek and Roman historiographers. By claiming autochthony, an ethnos could assert ownership over a territory and establish rightful citizenship. This identity could also serve to impress outsiders. The author then applies this concept to John's Gospel, arguing that the Gospel presents the land of Israel as an essential part of Jewish identity. The Gospel affirms the idea of autochthony by presenting the Jewish people as indigenous to the

land of Israel, as well as by emphasizing the centrality of the temple and the Jewish festivals. The author suggests that John's Gospel presents a reterritorialization of Jewish identity, in which the land of Israel becomes a crucial component of Jewish identity once again. In conclusion, the author argues that by understanding the land of Israel as an ethno-political category, we can gain a deeper appreciation for its significance in John's Gospel and in the formation of Jewish identity in antiquity. By presenting the land of Israel as a crucial component of Jewish identity, John's Gospel reasserts the importance of the Jewish people's connection to their ancestral land.

In his sixth chapter "The National Cult, the Public Assembly, and Jewish Associations John between the Institutions of Temple and Synagogue" (221–278), the author explores the role of the national cult in the formation of Jewish ethnic identity, specifically in relation to John's Gospel. National cults in the ancient world were not just religious institutions but were also tightly integrated into the social, political, and economic structures of an ethnos. The author argues that by examining John's attitude towards the Jewish national cult and how he uses the public space of the institutions of the temple and synagogue, we can better understand his particular vision of Jewish ethnic identity. The author contends that John's strategy facilitates an understanding of Jewish identity that is predicated upon alternative modes of access to the ancestral cult and disassociation from the official politics of the public assembly, rather than a break with Judaism. This is important because it challenges the common assumption that John's Gospel represents a break from Judaism and that it is anti-Jewish in its orientation. The author also notes that the national cults in the ancient world, including the Jewish national cult, were closely tied to public assemblies and associations, which were key institu-

tions for political and social organization. The author argues that understanding John's Gospel in relation to these institutions is crucial for understanding his vision of Jewish identity and how it relates to broader social and political structures in Jewish society.

The conclusion of the book (279–286) is that the text represents an expression of a diasporic Jewish identity, which negotiates and interprets Jewish ethnicity through different sites of meaning-making, including peoplehood, laws, land, and national cult. The Gospel does not envision a break between Jews and those who consider themselves Jews no longer, nor does it encourage abandoning Jewish ethnicity. Instead, John's conflict can be understood as occurring between different modes of interpreting Jewishness, specifically between a priestly-oriented type of Jewishness and a diasporic type, with Jewishness remaining the soteriological medium for non-Jews becoming Christ-followers and thus "children of god." The study also engages with recent scholarship on Judaism and the categories of religion and ethnicity and provides a critical analysis of the *Ioudaios* label, which always refers to a member of the Jewish ethnos, but where and how an author places a group of *Ioudaioi* on the spectrum of Jewish identity is a product of that author's discursive activity. Overall, the study provides a nuanced and insightful understanding of the Gospel of John's relationship to Judaism and its negotiation of Jewish ethnicity.

The book "John within Judaism Religion, Ethnicity, and the Shaping of Jesus-Oriented Jewishness in the Fourth Gospel" by Wally V. Cirafesi is a comprehensive and well-researched study that offers a fresh perspective on the relationship between the Gospel of John and Second Temple Judaism. Cirafesi presents a nuanced and highly detailed analysis of the key themes in John's gospel, including ethnicity, law, land, and national cult, and

demonstrates how these themes are situated within the broader context of Jewish identity formation in the Second Temple period. What makes Cirafesi's approach particularly noteworthy is his argument that John should be understood as a work "within Judaism" rather than a work that represents a break from Judaism. Through a detailed analysis of the text, Cirafesi shows how John negotiates different modes of interpreting Jewishness and how the conflicts and separations with-in the text are best understood as occurring between different modes of Jewish identity. Overall, "John within Judaism" is a highly informative and thought-provoking book that sheds new light on the complex relationship between John's gospel and Second Temple Judaism. Cirafesi's careful analysis and nuanced approach make this book a valuable resource for scholars and students of early Christianity, Judaism, and ancient history more broadly.

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