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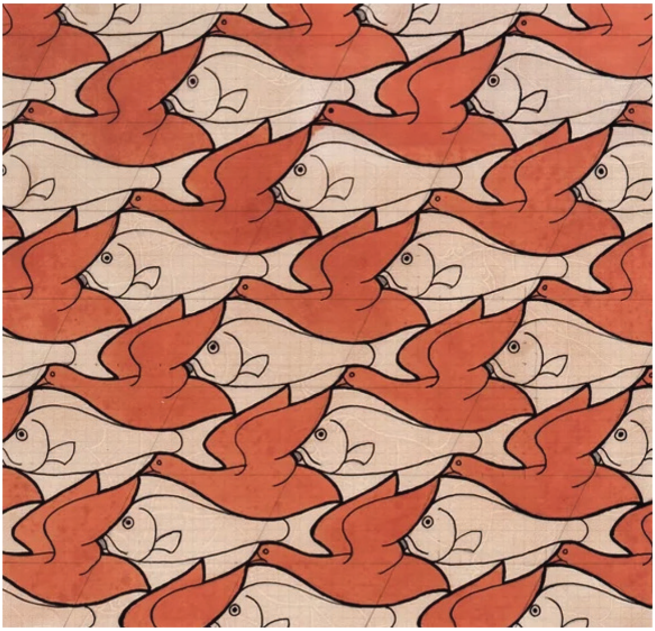

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Seeing Christ Everywhere: A Select Group of Early Church Fathers Looks at Ecclesiastes

Abstract: This essay seeks to briefly outline the life, teachings, and views about the Book of Ecclesiastes of a small but highly distinguished group of Christian thinkers that bridged the 4th century AD who literally shaped much of the Christian doctrine as we know it today: St. John Chrysostom, St. Jerome, and Augustine. After important introductory remarks, we begin by providing a snapshot of their lives and influences as a backdrop to understanding how and why they interpreted various verses within Ecclesiastes the way they did. Then we identify, extrapolate, and briefly discuss some of the more salient patterns of interpretation which emerged from their writings. The central finding was a distinct but rather sporadic tendency to apply the concepts, expressions, and ideas from an evangelistic Christological paradigm to help interpret particular verses in Ecclesiastes, many times explicitly, often times not. There were persistent attempts to make verses relevant to New Testament biblical texts by seeing Christ everywhere in Ecclesiastes verses. In many cases, these attempts flirted perilously close to, if not outright, illegitimate interpretative revision of Qohelet verses outside of its ancient Hebraic theological and cosmological origins. Other noteworthy interpretative patterns that emerged were the tendency to make Ecclesiastes verses applicable to everyday life, the selective and often opportunistic employment of other biblical texts from both the Old and New Testaments to support interpretations many times with doubtful applicability, and the fervent belief that Ecclesiastes contained hidden spiritual meanings and messages which they were charged to uncover.

Keywords: Church Father; Ecclesiastes; Hebrew; Christological paradigm; intertextual referencing; Septuagint; evangelical; allegory; hermeneutics; asceticism.

Our rather modest aim here is to briefly survey the life, theological teachings, hermeneutics, and particular views about the Book of Ecclesiastes of a small but very select group of highly distinguished Christian thinkers that bridged the 4th century AD: St. John Chrysostom, St. Jerome, and Augustine. Most contemporary biblical scholars would perhaps concur that these eminent religious thinkers contributed in major ways to shaping much of the Christian doctrine as we know it today. As we proceed to outline these contributions, we need to keep a few points in mind that will help us to understand better how and why they interpreted verses in Ecclesiastes the way they did.

An absolutely pivotal point to keep in mind is that these Church Fathers were in the very thick of debates about what is acceptable Christian doctrine. That means that they suffered tremendous persecution from imperial Roman leaders and others simply on the basis of their faith in God at the same time that they were writing, something other kinds of religious thinkers didn't have to worry as much about. On the whole, while writing they weren't sitting in the relatively more comfortable environment of scholarly offices or ecclesiastical residences like many Church Fathers that followed them later in history.

It is also important to mention that all of them were ordained, high-ranked members of the clergy (priests, bishops, archbishops). As such, we can be confident in asserting that their views carried considerable weight even beyond their own local churches. In fact, some of them were preaching in several other churches beyond their own on a regular basis. After all, most of them were fighting influential heretical groups and beliefs at the time as well as the pagan practices of political rulers, and they were attending ecumenical councils to set church policy on a great variety of issues. Some of them even engaged in open public debates about particular Christian doctrines.

It is also interesting to point out that many of them were not born into Christian families. Some of them were born into pagan families or families where only one parent was devoutly Christian. Consequently, often baptism and mature Christianity came much later in their lives and early educational training proceeded along pagan lines. It is equally interesting to point out that many of them were born into economically well-to-do families or families of noble or aristocratic heritage. In the main, they didn't derive from particularly impoverished families.

Not all of these early Christian thinkers wrote extensively on Ecclesiastes. When they did write commentaries, the common focus were the books of the New Testament with maybe Genesis or some of the prophets thrown in for good measure. Some of them were more gifted administrators than writers, so they spent most of their time administering to their churches or congregations many times while worrying about confronting imperial persecutions of one sort or another from which many of them and/or their family members suffered dearly even to the point of martyrdom.

Still, even when they wrote about Ecclesiastes and the writings were accessible in some acceptable shape or form, for the most part it was not what we consider today to be a comprehensive exegetical commentary. It tended not to be a kind of writing exercise which respects the meaning intended by the biblical writer by any stretch of the imagination, much less compared to the dominant theological framework at the time it was written. Very often, it was a few comments and opinions on a small number of chosen verses written as part of a sermon.

In fact, many Qohelet verses which came to be controversial for one reason or another in modern times tended not so controversial or otherwise problematic back then perhaps because it was viewed as a divinely-inspired text. Even the incredibly prolific production of writing material by the prodigious Augustine chiefly cited Ecclesiastes in his City of God magnum opus, as we will see below, while commenting much more extensively on other biblical texts and spending a great deal of time simply preaching from one church to another.

With these important considerations in mind as a backdrop, let us now pursue our survey of these three illustrious early Christian thinkers.

I. St. John Chrysostom (347 – 407 AD)

A celebrated preacher and archbishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom was considered one of the most important early Church Fathers of the 4th century AD. He is well-known mostly for his eloquent public-speaking skills and effective preaching style, speaking out against ecclesiastic and political abuse of authority, liturgical skills and knowledge, strong ascetic proclivities, and prolific writings. Not only is he honored as a saint in most Christian churches across orders and denominations, but he is also regarded as one of the three Holy Hierarchs by the Eastern Orthodox and Byzantine Catholic Churches.

His father was a high-ranking military officer in Antioch who died soon after his birth, leaving him to be raised by his mother. Most biblical scholars believe he was only baptized in his early 20s, after which he became a reader in the Antioch Church. His mother's connections in the political administration of the city perhaps landed him an education under a highly-respected pagan preacher, from whom he acquired high-level rhetorical skills and a great appreciation for the Greek language and literature. Soon thereafter, he became a lawyer. Over time, he tired of law and developed a profound commitment to Christianity which led him to study theology at university in a nearby city (Kelly, 1998).

From that point onwards, Chrysostom lived the life of a severe ascetic, becoming a hermit before the age of 30 and devoting two years in a continual standing position without much sleep while he memorized the entire Bible. Consequently, these severe ascetic practices permanently damaged his stomach and kidneys which, in turn, aggravated other health problems. Poor health compelled him to return to his birthplace in Antioch where initially he had been appointed to read aloud excerpts from the Bible during liturgy.

Soon he was enlisted to provide a variety of religious services as an ordained deacon and then as priest. Over the following 12 years, he acquired great respect and recognition for providing eloquent speeches on moral teaching and a variety of biblical passages at the cathedral in Antioch, the Golden Church. In these many talks, he underscored the central importance of charity and the concrete temporal and spiritual needs of the poor in Christianity, very often speaking out against the perceived abuses of wealth and personal property in this regard.

Contrary to the dominant allegorical hermeneutics of most churches in Alexandria at that time, Chrysostom was concerned mainly with applying scriptural texts and principles to everyday life in Antioch and the world. This straightforward practical approach to preaching earned him considerable public respect, support, and influence. For example, shortly after Chrysostom first returned to Antioch several Antioch citizens had gone on a rampage throughout the city defacing and destroying statues of the emperor, Theodosius I, and his family. The city was only spared from severe consequences after Chrysostom delivered more than 20 homilies in church during Lent convincing those people to see the error in their behaviors. As a result, rampaging stopped permanently and many pagans converted to Christianity.

After this, his popularity in Antioch grew to such astounding heights he was appointed archbishop of Constantinople. During this time, he devoted much of his time founding several hospitals in Constantinople which benefitted the poor greatly and made him very popular with ordinary citizens. However, emphasizing social services to the needy had the opposite effect with the well-to-do.

He became very unpopular with the clergy and wealthy citizens for several other reasons, mostly because he would not condone nor provide extravagant social get-togethers like other clergy and because he constantly preached the necessity of vast clerical reforms. For example, without any offer of monetary compensation for their losses, he ordered regional preachers to go back to their own churches where they were most needed by the poor. Chrysostom's tumultuous period in Constantinople was just getting started, however.

After Chrysostom welcomed into his church four Egyptian monks who had been disciplined by the patriarch of Alexandria over acceptance of Origen's teachings, the patriarch started to actively oppose his appointment. When Chrysostom openly denounced the extravagant dressing of female well-to-dos popular at that time, he made an enemy of the emperor's wife who assumed he was aiming his talk directly at her. Soon the patriarch and other clergy instigated a synod[1] to charge Chrysostom with preaching Origen's banned teachings, and he was subsequently deposed and banished. Great popular anger resulted, so he was called back for a time.

However, Chrysostom's constant denunciations of pagan practices by the political rulers and harsh words this time directed to the empress herself and he was banished far away from the city. To be expected, mass outrage and rioting resulted and a cathedral was burnt down. During his banishment, he managed to provide financial support to Christian monks in Antioch who were supporting the emperor's anti-pagan laws by destroying pagan temples and shrines.

In the desperation of exile and increasing ill health, Chrysostom finally wrote letters to several prominent churchmen including bishops and the Pope himself. The Pope protested to the leaders of the town where Chrysostom had been banished, but to no effect, and then sent a large delegation of top religious clergy to intercede on his behalf. However, the delegation met many difficulties along the way and never reached Chrysostom (Allen and Mayer, 2000; Attwater, 1960; Carter, 1962).

Not to be deterred, he wrote more letters to several influential people in Constantinople, but this resulted in banishment and exile to an even further city on the long journey to which he died. His legacy endures, however, in Catholic Church teachings to this day. For example, he is cited in no less than 18 sections of the modern Catechism of the Catholic Church especially his thoughts on the Lord's Prayer and the purpose of prayer in general.

Again, there are several superb references that allow us to review some of Chrysostom's central views on Ecclesiastes Many widely used editions of Chrysostom's collected writings exist in several languages including English. We are quite fortunate to have among them his general views on Ecclesiastes and at least partial views on some of its verses. In 1890, his commentaries on Ecclesiastes were discovered among papers in the library of a monastery in Patmos, one of the northernmost islands located off the west coast of Turkey.

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[1] From the Greek term synodos, meaning 'assembly', it is a formal gathering or council of local or provincial bishops and other officials within the Christian church usually to discuss pressing disciplinary or administrative issues. Nowadays, it commonly refers to the governing body of a particular church rather than a large formal meeting of bishops per tradition.

In these commentaries, Chrysostom prefaces his exegesis of specific verses with a few general comments about why he thinks the book is challenging to many people, and then proceeds to praise it as containing spiritually elevated messages pertinent to living a sound Christian life on earth. In other words, he essentially agrees with Qohelet's biblical perspective. In addition, many Chrysostom commentaries on Ecclesiastes are contained in homilies[2] on several biblical texts such as 1 Timothy and Hebrews (Hill, 2007).

In Chrysostom's homily on 1 Timothy 5: 11-15, he warns the reader about Ecclesiastes' emphasis on the vanity of this world:

> "Here what Solomon says, who knew the present world by actual experience...There was no one who lived in greater luxury, or higher glory...no one so wise or so powerful...What then? He had no enjoyment from all these things. What after all does he say of it himself. 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity'"

It is clear here that Chrysostom holds not one iota of doubt about the authorship of Ecclesiastes. Then, in full agreement with Qohelet, Chrysostom counsels everyone:

> "Let us believe him, and lay hold on that in which there is no vanity, in which there is truth...where there is no old age, nor decline, but all things bloom and flourish, without decay..."

Here Chrysostom is hermeneutically preparing the way for the entrance of the dominant Christological paradigm of his time, namely, Christ's resurrection and associated beliefs about the afterlife:

> "Let us, I beseech you, love God with genuine affection, not from fear of Hell, but from desire of the kingdom. For what is comparable to seeing Christ? Surely nothing!

Along with Qohelet, the implied advice here is to fear God reverentially with genuine love, not out of some wrongful fear of being cast down into the fiery pit of flames called Hell.

Among the few verses he comments upon are Qohelet's man-beast analogies in Eccl 3:18-21. He claims that Qohelet is not literally comparing man with animals but, rather, men of faith with men of no faith. In other words, Chrysostom argues that Qohelet is comparing different types of people, not different species. People who don't believe in God constantly harangue that He is blameworthy for all manner of injustices on earth and, therefore, cannot possibly exercise enough divine foresight to provide proper guidance or care for human destiny. Instead of glorifying and worshipping God, these people are too busy finding enough fault in Him to deny Him providence. Chrysostom claims that it is these kinds of people holding these types of beliefs which Qohelet refers to as beasts.

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[2] Homilies are simply religious lectures or discourses intended primarily for the moral instruction of church members through scriptural exegesis during a Mass. It differs slightly from a sermon which is essentially a religious talk on a particular moral topic provided a religious leader at liturgy not necessarily through commentary on Scripture.

By contrast with this allegorical interpretation, Chrysostom then proceeds to interpret Qohelet's reference to the shared fate of man and animals in a literal manner as a physical, bodily death only. He agrees that man and beast share one physical body existence with one life-energizing breath which expires at death. But he has something else to say about Qohelet's apparent doubt as to what happens afterwards, that is, after death, in the afterlife.

Here Chrysostom applies the resurrection doctrine dominant at his time to interpret Qohelet's doubt about the afterlife. People who reject the resurrection of Christ are life Qohelet in this regard, Chrysostom asserts, but this was not the author's view. So, then, Chrysostom distinguishes between Qohelet's unbeliever views as a character with the author's believer views. The implication, of course, is that Chrysostom thinks the author created Ecclesiastes in order to compare and contrast the views of resurrection believers and resurrection deniers.

In regards to Qohelet's views on the shared fate of the righteous and the wicked, the clean and the unclean, and the good man and the sinner in Eccl 9: 1-3, Chrysostom tends to stray away from Qohelet's apparent emphasis on the unfairness of death and the assumption that there may be nothing after death, that death ends all life. He believes that Qohelet is not saying that death is unfair because it befalls both the virtuous and the sinner but, rather, condemning those who hold this false view of death.

In other words, Chrysostom thinks Qohelet is being pedagogical in hoping to convey an important spiritual message not to take pride in neither virtue nor vice in life but to practice moderation since death is inevitable. Qohelet believes human life is very good, Chrysostom claims, but death is very bad, "…an evil in all that is done under the sun…" (Eccl 9: 3. Better for both the righteous and the wicked to fear God and to live on after death is the spiritual message that Qohelet is trying to convey, according to Chrysostom. Bodily death may be inevitable, but the implication is that spiritual death is another question altogether.

II. St. Jerome (347 – 420 AD)

For various reasons, the life and teachings of St. Jerome are relatively well-documented compared to many other early Church Fathers (Cain and Lossl, 2016; Kelly, 1975; Payne, 1990; Schaff and Wace, 2022). Born pagan in a small town in what is now known as Bosnia, Jerome became a Christian probably in his teens. He is a kind of Christian jack-of-all-trades, more or less: respected priest, able confessor, recognized historian, and consummate translator and theologian, amassing a corpus of writings that would put most contemporary biblical scholars to shame. Although he is best known for his Latin translation of the Bible (the Vulgate) from the Hebrew original rather than the Greek Septuagint, he also wrote extensive commentaries on the entire Bible as well as several polemical tracts and historical essays. Very few early Church Fathers have come anywhere near approaching his level of productivity, much less surpass it.

In his teens, he left his hometown with a friend and went to Rome to pursue rhetorical and philosophical studies. While in Rome, he also learned Latin and a bit of Greek.

Along with other students, he engaged in considerable casual sexual experimentations, but he writes that he suffered from an enormous guilt conscience afterwards. The bouts of guilt were so intense that it drove him to visit the catacombs regularly, crypts dug deep in the earth with walls lined with the bodies of the dead martyrs and Apostles.

Soon afterwards, he converted to Christianity and developed a desire to live an ascetic life of penance in the Syrian desert for nearly five years (and later in a desert near Bethlehem for 34 years), where he also learned Hebrew and did some studying and writing. After this stint in the desert, Jerome went back to Rome to fulfill some important religious duties as protégé to the pope such as revising the Latin Gospels and updating the Book of Psalms based on the Septuagint.

More importantly, however, Jerome was also well-known at that time for his writings and teachings on how to maintain a Christian moral life especially in the challenging social environment of major cosmopolitan centers like Rome. Due to his intimate patron relationships with numerous prominent female ascetics who derived from affluent senatorial families, Jerome devoted a great deal of his attention on the spiritual needs of Christian women in general and how they should live their lives. Due to his enormous body of writings on various aspects of the Christian faith and all of his teachings, Jerome is venerated in the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the Lutheran Church, and the Anglican Communion.

While fulfilling religious duties in Rome, Jerome became embroiled in a series of serious controversies. Jerome's constant female companionships that had begun earlier with several ascetic noblewomen from prominent senatorial families was expanded by a large community of well-born and highly-educated women from patrician families whom he relentlessly counseled to live a strong monastic life away from the lewd and lascivious indulgences of the Roman city.

In many cases, though, these women had taken vows of chastity and had commissioned Jerome to provide them guidance in writing on how to live their lives properly. So, then, a great deal of time was spent counseling them in correspondence about changes in lifestyle practices that needed to be made. This is a major reason why almost half of Jerome's epistles are addressed to women, something he was criticized for at the time.

To make matters worse, Jerome ceaselessly criticized the Roman deacons and priests for not living a religious or monastic life. Consequently, great hostility grew against him by the Roman clergy and their supporters who initiated an inquiry into allegations of having an illicit sexual relationship with a prominent widow. All the while, Jerome's writings in which he counseled women to maintain vows of becoming consecrated virgins were widely read and distributed throughout Rome.

In addition, Jerome openly and publicly condemned the hedonistic activities of another prominent young woman which led her to adopt a severe ascetic lifestyle based on his instructions that progressively weakened her until she died just four months later. When Jerome flatly insisted that the woman should not be mourned, that was more than most Roman women could bear. From that point onwards, Roman opinion polarized against Jerome and he was soon forced to leave Rome.

In contrast to Thaumaturgus and many other early Church Fathers, among St. Jerome's voluminous writings are extensive commentaries on the entire Bible including Ecclesiastes (McGregor, 2015). Although it is far from reaching the standards of modern exegetical commentaries, at least it still provides a fairly good grounding for assessment of theological views and interpretative approaches towards biblical text. Let us now take a look at some of the commentaries on the same key verses we have been following with the other Church Fathers.

You will recall that the wiseman-fool connection is made by Qohelet in Eccl 2: 14-16, where he stresses that the same fate awaits them both not only in terms of bodily death, but also in terms of remembrance and even divine recompense. Qohelet does not see a great advantage to wisdom because death claims both the wise and the unwise. Therefore, it is ludicrous to pursue wisdom if its benefit terminates when life ends.

Whereas the traditional biblical viewpoint asserts that wisdom endures in a legacy that survives beyond the physical death of the wise man because his good works outlive him, Qoheleth argues resolutely that it's the opposite case. Jerome wastes no time in adopting a Christological interpretative point of view to settle the matter:

> "Whoever attains complete wisdom and has deserved Christ to be in his aim always raises his eyes to the heavens and will therefore, never think about terrestrial matters" (Jerome 2: 14)

So, immediately here, we have an interpretation of Qohelet's wiseman who has his 'eyes in his head' becomes Jerome's 'eyes to the heavens'. Of course, this means that the fool always keeps his eyes and his interests "on the ground", asserts Jerome. But if this is so, then why does Qohelet claim that they share a common mortality, the same fate and death, and the same troubles? At this point, Jerome simply claims that Qohelet reconsidered and concluded that his own initial same-fate opinion was in error. Consequently, he changes the text to match this finding:

> "For the wise and foolish will not have similar remembrance in the future when the end of the world comes; and they will be confined for no reason to equal death because the wise man will continue to the joys of heaven and the fool to his punishment" (Jerome, 2:15/16)

Jerome suggests that his interpretation is more accurate because the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew he uses "translates meaning...more clearly". And after all, it was Qohelet himself who tried to "convince us that his prior thoughts were foolish", so he himself "bore witness that he had spoken foolishly" (Grillo, 2015)..

It is clear here that Jerome's previous excessive experience with asceticism and monastic life in the deserts of Syria and near Bethlehem led him to identify Qohelet's view of the foolish as people who despise worldly life or "terrestrial matters". But this is more of a justification for a withdrawal from earthly life typical of asceticism and monastic life at that time than it is an accurate interpretation of Qohelet's more profound biblical meaning. It is also clear that Jerome reinterprets Qoheleth in line with the Christological perspective of his time and circles by likening him to someone "who deserves Christ".

In other words, Jerome attempts to explain Qohelet's verses by reference to the dominant Christian teachings and beliefs of his time regardless of whether such an interpretation violates the intended meaning of the text itself. More time will be spent finding an interpretation to justify the new substituted meaning than trying to decipher what lesson Qohelet intended to convey. Jerome appears not to be very much interested in interpreting Qohelet from Qohelet's point of view nor from the conventional ancient Hebraic biblical perspective, very much in line with the ancient rabbinical approach to interpretation of biblical text that we saw earlier.

As will be recalled, the next set of verses Eccl 3: 18-21 deal with Qohelet's infamous claim that in the end, man and beast share the same fate in more ways than one. Here Jerome rattles off a solid two pages of exegeses, nearly the longest response to any of Qohelet's verses contained in his entire Commentary on Ecclesiastes. In the ancient Hebraic and modern Jewish religious traditions, the parameters involved in the relationship between humanity and animals are divinely ordained and presented in the Bible in several places but especially Genesis and Psalms.

In Genesis, God openly recognizes animals as good and blesses them, commanding them to reproduce and multiply, but they are not made in the image of God (Gen 1: 27). Presumably, only human beings received the breath of God that is his spirit which allows him to transcend the world of animals (1 Thes 5: 23). God used his hands like a skillful potter to literally form human beings from the dust of the ground (Gen 2: 7), whereas animals were not created in this way.

Only human beings were given a faculty of creative thought to communicate with God, ranking them just below the status of angels (Psalm 8: 5). Further, human beings were created by God for God, that is, for the purpose of worshipping God as children of God, whereas animals did not receive this calling (Col 1: 16). So, then, the Bible clearly distinguishes between human beings and animals, whereas Qohelet and the modern evolutionary perspective do not appear to do so.

The question arises as to how St. Jerome deals with the man-beast relationship propounded by Qohelet in Ecclesiastes? Well, Jerome shrugs his shoulders and begins matter-of-factly by paraphrasing at length Qohelet's words, purportedly to demonstrate his understanding of the verses. In the process, however, he substitutes and adds many key terms of his own:

> "It is not surprising that there is no distinction in this life between righteous and wicked, nor that none values virtues, but all things occur with uncertain outcome, where nothing seems to differ according to the worthlessness of the body between sheep and men: there is the same birth, common end in death; we proceed similarly towards the light and are equally dissolved into dust. But there seems to be this difference, that the spirit of man ascends to the heavens, and the spirit of animals goes down into the earth, but from where do we know this for certain? Who can know whether what is hoped is true or false?" (Jerome, 3: 18-21)

From the start, Jerome flatly neglects Gohelet's core ancient Hebraic idea about God 'testing' humankind to make them aware they are animals without God in their lives. Since Jerome does not address this idea, it is doubtful that he understands Qohelet's intended message here. Nowhere in these man-beast verses do we find Qohelet talking about 'the righteous and the wicked', as Jerome does. Qohelet does not even suggest factually that 'there seems to be this difference' between man and beast, as Jerome does.

Qohelet did not propose or suggest in any way whatsoever a distinct difference between man and beast. At the end, Qohelet simply asks one 'Who-knows?' question, not two as Jerome does with 'from where do we know' (location or source) and 'who can know' (person). Therefore, what appears at first glance to be a lengthy accurate re-interpretation of Qohelet's intended meaning ends up becoming a cleverly-worded substitution of meaning.

Well, then, exactly what does Jerome think Qohelet is saying about the man-beast relationship? Does Jerome think that Qohelet believes the spirit of both men and beast die when their body dies, or that man and beast are destined for separate places after death? Not quite. Jerome draws on ancient biblical texts (Genesis, Job, Luke) to claim that:

> "…before the arrival of Christ all were led equally to the nether regions…And in fact before Christ accompanied by a robber opened the wheel of flames…, and the gates of paradise, the heavens were closed and the equal unworthiness of the spirits of sheep and of men was abridged." (Jerome, 3: 18/21)

As we can see here, Jerome is reinterpreting Qohelet through the dominant Christological perspective of his time even though he well knows it was written from within an ancient Hebraic theological and cosmological perspective. In doing so, Jerome is bending the intended ancient Hebrew meanings contained within Ecclesiastes in an attempt to make them exegetically applicable to his day and times, not necessarily to render an accurate interpretation from Qohelet's ancient Hebraic viewpoint. It is another question altogether as to whether this hermeneutical strategy does justice to the underlying religious Hebrew messages that are, in fact, directly applicable to a proper understanding of New Testament Christianity.

Again, there are a number of concepts in Jerome's commentary up to this point that are not found in Qohelet's verses beyond the Christ reference. Qohelet does not mention anything about the netherworld or underworld, although we can assume Qohelet's familiarity with it. Qohelet does not mention anything about the 'spirit' (imputing an eternal soul) of men and beast as Jerome does but, rather, their 'breath' (imputing a biological life-force). Further, Qohelet says nothing about comparing 'sheep' with 'sons of men' as Jerome does with his Christological approach (presumably to convey the idea of 'the Lord is my shepherd' in Psalm 23: 1 and possibly other biblical texts employing sheep terminology), especially with all the ancient connotations attached to that animal after the life and death of Christ.

In subsequent commentary on these verses, Jerome suggests that Qohelet argues humans are like beasts in that they are 'weak in body' but they 'differ from beasts in language', ideas not contained in these verses. Then he states that Qohelet is not referring to the existence of a soul but, rather, a life-breath (of air) that is the same for both man and beast, and supposedly, Jerome repeats Qohelet's "…and there is nothing more for man than for beast". However, Qohelet's original verse is: "they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast" (Eccl 3: 19). In terms of the biological life-force of 'breath', Qohelet does not see much advantage for one nor the other.

When it comes to Qohelet's 'Who-knows?' question regarding breath ascending upwards or descending downwards, Jerome begins his inquiry with, "But this seems to be blasphemy" when, actually, it's not. Why? Jerome takes the position that Qohelet is not stating a difference between man and beast in relation to the "dignity of the soul". Rather, Qohelet simply wants to illustrate the "difficulty of the matter" by adding the subjective pronoun 'who'.

Then once again, Jerome calls up a slew of biblical texts to support his judgment on Qohelet's claim, implying that Qohelet's way of posing the question is not knew to biblical narratives (Isaiah 53: 8; Jer 17: 9; Ps 14: 1/35: 17/72: 23). What's more, the prophetic texts in the Bible make clear that both man and beast are included in God's plan of salvation, although how this idea squares with statements about the 'breath' or 'spirit' of animals descending downwards into the earth is never considered.

In these extra biblical verses, Jerome shows that Qohelet is not actually adopting a new narrative technique of explicating biblical principles. Will the saintly man ascend to heaven or the sinner or beast go down into the earth? Is it possible for the righteous man to fall and the sinner to rise? Can the learned man of reason be led down to the underworld while the simpler and unlearned man be crowned in martyrdom in paradise? These are all questions posed in a great variety of biblical texts, and so Qohelet's question is not blasphemous, Jerome asserts. Even the sinner-beast analogy can be found there in these texts. That may or may not be these cases, of course, but in the verses in question, Qohelet only refers to beasts, not sinners.

In most of his commentaries on Ecclesiastes, we can see that Jerome's manner of interpretation is quite similar to that of other early Church Fathers, that is, draw upon biblical texts to legitimize reinterpreting the versal text under examination and attaching another meaning. The biblical hermeneutic does not appear to be aimed at deciphering Qohelet's intended meaning within an ancient Hebraic theological and cosmological perspective. In other words, it is largely an exercise in eisegesis rather than exegesis. The result is the transformation of the original similar man-beast fate into a man-beast distinction based mostly on the 'nature of the soul', but also language.

Among other problems already mentioned, the problem here with Jerome's thinking about the biblical view of the 'soul' in the man-beast relationship appears to be that biblical texts tend to disagree with the position that animals have no souls. From many texts in the Old Testament to the plethora of texts in the New Testament, several biblical passages explicitly state that animals have souls including the implicit meanings Jerome does not consider in Ecclesiastes 3: 18-21. The ancient Hebrew Bible makes clear that God made a covenant with all of Creation, not only humankind (Gen 9: 12-17; Psalm 50: 10-11; Hosea 2: 18).

Other ancient Hebraic biblical texts posit that each and every earthly animal praises God (Psalm 69: 34/150: 6; Job 12: 7-10; Isaiah 42: 10). Still other ancient biblical verses tell us that animals will be saved and they will accompany humans in heaven (Psalm 36: 6; Luke 3: 6; Romans 8: 19-21; John 3: 16). There are so many ancient biblical verses directly relevant to interpretation of Qohelet's man-beast verses that it's difficult to believe a prolific scholar like Jerome was not aware of them at the time that he wrote his Commentary on Ecclesiastes.

In the final verses to be considered here Eccl 9: 1-3, Qohelet begins by pointing out that the works of wise and righteous men are in 'the hands of God', and no man knows whether love or hate awaits him as compensation or punishment for what he has done in his earthly life. For Qohelet, this is the context which frames Chapter 9, verses 9: 1-9. In verse 9: 2, just in case the reader misunderstood this starting message, he goes one step further to claim that one fate awaits both the righteous and the wicked, the good man and the sinner, the clean and the unclean, at the end of which he renders his verdict categorically: "This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men" (9: 3).

It is difficult to believe that here and elsewhere in Chapter 9 (9: 3-4) Jerome draws on and praises the work of a high-level Roman statesman, Symmachus, who was the son of a consular family which held great fame and wealth in Roman society at that time (345 – 402 AD). However, less known by many contemporary biblical scholars is that Symmachus was a vehement opponent of Christianity. He even sought to preserve the traditional religions of Rome at the time when much of the Roman aristocracy was converting to Christianity[3].

Jerome introduces his interpretation of Eccl 9: 1 by stating: "Symmachus also interprets this more clearly…", and later introduces 9: 3-4 similarly, "Symmachus interprets this in his usual clearer way…" Jerome does not make clear why he needs to draw upon a public opponent of Christianity to support his interpretation, although the interpretation itself does not change Qohelet's words nor meanings.

Qohelet is saying that the same fate awaits all men: good, bad, and ostensibly anything in-between, and it is uncertain that God's judgment awaits them after earthly life. Everything is 'in the hands of God'. Jerome comments that too many men think that all the little things they do will not be judged, only the big things, and even the little mistakes made by the wise and righteous man makes him think those little mistakes will not be judged in the future. Here Jerome thinks that Qohelet is right in saying every little thing in a person's life will be judged by God, although that is not explicitly stated.

Still, Jerome calls up Psalms 30: 13 to say that everyone must be seen from the perspective of a "spiritual understanding". The suggestion is that even if a person experiences hardship and troubles in earthly life, whether they are righteous or wicked, it is still better to side with God. Even if angry with God due to suffering, it is still better to "sacrifice to God with a troubled spirit" than not to sacrifice to God at all.

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[3] It is not clear at all why Jerome refers to Symmachus, surely not an ardent defender of Christian doctrine and practices, unless one interprets the reference as politico-cultural genuflection given hisauthoritative position in the Roman government (governor of proconsular Africa in 373, urban prefect of Rome in 384-385, and consul in 391). He fervently disagreed with Rome's turn to Christianity as a state religion and pleaded for the restoration of traditional Roman religions and cult practices and beliefs (Barrow, 1973).

Finally, we arrive at Jerome's response to Qohelet's claim that evil permeates the hearts of all humankind, the righteous and the wicked alike. Qohelet puts it this way:

> "…Furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil
> and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives.
> Afterwards they go to the dead" (Eccl 9: 3).

What is the ancient Hebraic biblical meaning of what Qohelet is saying here? The conventional understanding of this verse is that it is a veiled reference to what occurred in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3. The hearts and minds of humankind are filled with the evil of disobedience to God's commands due to fall of man. In other words, evil and insanity in the hearts of men is an Adamic inheritance. Human beings are by nature characterized by evil or disobedience to God. Given that this is the case, it is understandable why Qohelet advises human beings to be wise and use every opportunity to do good works while they are living and hope for God's reward after earthly life. By contrast, Jerome's wisdom frames the matter this way:

> "…we are filled with wrongdoings and impudence and wickedness, and after all these trials in life we are suddenly taken by death and afterwards we cannot consort with the living." (Jerome, 9: 3/4)

Then, immediately afterwards, Jerome has second thoughts:

> "Or indeed it could mean this: since the same difficulties afflict both the just and the unjust, men are therefore provoked to commit sins. Then after he has tried all things, which are done in vain, while he is unknowing, he descends to the world of the dead." (Jerome, 9: 3/4)

It is notable that Jerome does not call on Genesis to help interpret the meaning of Qohelet here. The phrase 'provoked to commit sins' is a far cry from sin being a constitutive integral part of human nature, as suggested by Genesis and ancient Hebrew biblical theology. There is no indication by Jerome that men are incited by nature to commit sins as pointed out in Genesis and in the other biblical texts he continually calls upon to support his interpretations.

Quite the contrary, it seems that external circumstances and conditions appear to pressure human beings into committing sins, which is not a biblical perspective at all, to say the least. There is not even the suggestion that human beings should embrace every opportunity to do good deeds even knowing that they are sinful creatures by nature, continually and willfully disobeying God's commandments. In this way, then, Jerome comes up short in conveying an accurate interpretation of both Qohelet's message and where it sits relative to the ancient Hebraic biblical perspective.

III. Augustine (354–430 AD)

It's surely no exaggeration to begin by stating that Augustine is arguably one of the most, if not the most, important early Church Father. The famed Oxford historian, Diarmaid MacCulloch, goes even further in praise by comparing him to no less than Paul the Apostle:

> "Augustine's impact on Western Christian thought can hardly
> be overstated; only his beloved example, Paul of Tarsus, has
> been more influential, and Westerners have generally seen
> Paul through Augustine's eyes." (MacCulloch, 2009, p. 319)

Augustine's central importance to the development of the Christian faith was also realized by many of his contemporaries. Even St. Jerome mentions in a letter to him that he had successfully re-established the genuine ancient faith as it was initially intended to be understood.

We know a lot about Augustine's early life and adulthood through his own letters and especially through his famous autobiographical book, Confessions. He was born to a devout Christian mother and a pagan father who, nevertheless, converted to Christianity at death. The mother tried to raise him Christian as best she could, but he admits it was not easy doing so. Belonging to the upper crust of roman citizens, the family was entirely Romanized and strongly subject to Roman cultural influences especially as the family spoke only Latin.

At 11, he was sent to a nearby school to learn Latin literature and pagan religious beliefs and practices. While there and along with some friends, he needlessly stole fruit from a nearby garden simply because it was not allowed. The lesson he says he learned from that event was that human beings are naturally inclined to sin just for the sport of it. At 17, he was sent to a very expensive school in Carthage to pursue an education in rhetoric, his mother warning him to behave of himself at school. Impressionable young man that he was, however, led him to follow a hedonistic lifestyle for a while following the behaviors of other young men at the school.

Nevertheless, an encounter with Cicero's work at the school sparked his love of wisdom and ignited an interest in philosophy. To his mother's everlasting disappointment, however, he became a Manichean, despite his mother's constant emphasis on the values and principles of the Christian faith. The chief rival to Christianity at the time, basically Manicheans believed in the dualistic struggle between a good spiritual world and an evil material world with human beings as the battleground between the forces of good and the forces of evil, so God under these conditions cannot be viewed as omnipotent.

In Carthage, Augustine had begun a sexual relationship with a woman outside of marriage that lasted over 15 years, out of which his only child was born. Later, he ended this relationship in favor of a planned marriage to a wealthy teenage heiress, but he became a priest before the marriage could take place. He taught grammar and rhetoric at different schools in Carthage and Rome for a while, but that didn't work out either for a variety of reasons.

Then in 384 at the age of 30, some Manichean friends of his with political connections to the prefect of Rome eventually led him to secure a position as rhetoric professor with the imperial court at Milan, the most coveted academic position in the Latin world at the time. His mother followed him to Milan to impress upon him the necessity of continuous Christian training. Finally, at 31 years of age, he converted to Christianity after meeting and developing a lasting friendship with Ambrose who more or less adopted him as a spiritual son after his father died.

This conversion to Christianity turned out to be the pivotal moment for the rest of his life, leading him to turn away from rhetoric to spend the bulk of his time preaching on a great variety of biblical texts and combatting various heretical beliefs including his own former Manichean religion. In the process, he became more famous as a preacher than as a rhetorician, believing with great fervor that the salvation of his listeners was at stake each time he spoke. Consequently, we owe as much to Augustine in contemporary Christian preaching style as we do to his major contributions in Christian rhetoric and doctrine, having preached no less than 6,000 sermons in his life.

By 395, he was a fully ordained bishop in Hippo. By that time, he had already lost his son and both parents, and he decided to give all his property to a church where he had previously taught grammar. At the time, bishops were the only ones allowed to preach. So, while living a monastic life in episcopal residence of his church, he decided to schedule all of his time preaching unceasingly at his church and many other churches with the professed aim of converting as many people to Christianity as possible, eating sparingly and working tirelessly until his death in 430 (Bonner, 2002; Brown, 2000; Chadwick, 2009; Hollingworth, 2013; Kirwan, 2008; Knowles and Pinkett, 2004; Rist, 2008; Schaff, 2015).

Although Augustine during his massively productive life as scholar, writer, and Christian cleric did not write a comprehensive exegetical commentary on Ecclesiastes like some of his contemporaries, Jerome, for example, he did cite it numerous times in some of his major writings especially in Book XX of his magnum opus, The City of God. We shall deal here with a select group of cited discussions that best reflect Augustine's overall views on various Qohelet verses, only some of which have also been reviewed here by other early Church Fathers. Therefore, perfect one-on-one versal comparisons cannot be made with Augustine.

Instead, our primary purpose here will be not only to glean an overall sense of where Augustine sits on various topics and issues contained in those verses, but also to obtain insight into the theological and philosophical systems of ideas he applied to understand them. Perhaps this approach may permit us to make at least some partial comparisons with the early Church Fathers we have reviewed. Augustine's magnificent stature within the history of Christianity and the development of Christian doctrine deserves nothing less, and he is surely an apropos conclusion to our early patristic review on Ecclesiastes.

Few biblical scholars know that Augustine's 800-page masterwork was written in Latin with the actual title, On the City of God Against the Pagans, and only much later came to be known in the abbreviated form, The City of God. That slight difference in titles connotes a huge difference in the motivation behind writing it. To make a long story short, Augustine's book was intended as a comprehensive response to the allegations of many learned pagans in Rome and elsewhere at the time who were contending that Christianity was causing a decline of Rome's greater glory, power and influence in the world.

Augustine wanted to counter these allegations by writing a book that addressed a host of central issues in theology to show that Christianity strengthens rather than weakens Roman nation. Some of the key theological questions it addresses are the tension between human free will and divine foresight, the relationship between human nature and the doctrine of original sin, the existence and nature of evil, and the suffering of the righteous. So, then, we have to understand Augustine's references to Ecclesiastes within this general narrative framework.

In The City of God, Augustine explicitly cites Ecclesiastes at least 15 times with occasional multiple versal entries in one footnote spread out across the book beginning at page 273 and ending on page 644. The writing is a collection of 22 books each addressing a series of different theological issues, topics, and controversies, so the references to Ecclesiastes are staggered and not addressed synchronically. Therefore, in order to avoid any confusion, our review here shall follow the order in which verses appear in the actual biblical text regardless of where they might be cited in Augustine's book. (See Appendix 1 for exact locations of Ecclesiastes citations in his book.)

From the start, it should be noted that Augustine references 9 out of Qohelet's 12 chapters. The three chapters which ware not cited and discussed are: Chapter 4 on the evils of oppression, Chapter 6 on the futility of human life, and Chapter 9 on the shared fate of the righteous and the wicked. Since Chapter 9 is part of our compared review here, it will not be possible to get Augustine's view of the matter. However, it may be possible to generalize from comments made in his book and provide a reasonable Augustinian interpretation of the matter.

The earliest Ecclesiastes verses occur on pages 643 (1: 2-3) and 354 (1: 9-10) of Augustine's work. As you may no doubt recall, Qohelet's starting verses refer to the vanity concept, the question of what advantage falls to man in all the work he does 'under the sun', and the assertion that there is nothing new under the sun. It is important to note here that Augustine does not for one moment doubt that Jerusalem's King Solomon is talking, with an explicit reference to start his comments,

His interpretation of Qohelet's verses appears to be accurate up to a certain point, at least from an ancient Hebraic point of view. He asserts that the king enumerates a series of delusions in earthly life 'under the sun' which makes human beings believe that something lasts when, in fact, everything is transitory and there's 'nothing lasting' neither for the wise man nor for the fool. What's worse, Augustine adds, is that 'one event happens to them all…in this life under the sun'. What event? Qohelet says death. What does Augustine say? Well, he believes that Solomon is "unquestionably alluding to those evils which we see befall good and bad men alike." Qohelet's shared fate of death is not alluded to at all here. The shared fate of death becomes the shared fate of 'evils' afflicting 'good and bad men alike'.

Augustine adopts a similar interpretative approach to the nothing- new-under-the-sun verses in Eccl 1:9-10. He claims that Solomon is not referring here to the cyclical repetition of the same periods and events of time like it is taught by some philosophers, most notably at Plato's Academy in Athens. Exact repeated cycles of life is not what Solomon meant, Augustine complains. "Far be it from any true believer to suppose that by those words…cycles are meant", warns Augustine. After all, that would imply that Christ's death and resurrection would happen over and over again, and the promised resurrection of believers would be compromised. Instead, Solomon understood the words 'nothing new under the sun' to mean:

> "…that in the predestination of God all things have already
> existed, and that thus there is no new thing under the sun"
> (Augustine, 2018, p. 355)

Predestination is the belief that the destiny of all human beings is determined beforehand by God since it it assumed that all events have been willed by God. Quite apart from what 'the predestination of God' exactly means, it is perhaps unlikely that Qohelet was holding this doctrine in mind when he coined the expression 'nothing new under the sun'. The belief in predestination among the ancient Jews was anything but a settled affair, to say the least.

The Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes were all divided on this question. To the Pharisees, not all things are predestined by God because that would obviate the whole idea about man's free will. As for the Sadducees, there was no predestination established by God at all and no divine interference whatsoever in earthly affairs. By contrast to these two Jewish religious factions, the Essenes believed that everything was predestined by God (Kohler and Broyde, 2021).

If we interpret Qohelet's verses in Chapter 1 from an ancient Hebraic point of view, therefore, it would be difficult to argue that predestination of God is the intended meaning. Judaism professes a fervent belief in the principle of free will in the determination of eternal life. The human attainment of eternal life is totally dependent upon an individual's good or bad actions in material earthly life. Divine decision or decree can determine good fortune or adversity in material earthly life, but neither God nor man can predetermine an individual's election to eternal life or reprobation under the principle of free will.

Already, then, what we appear to be seeing here in Augustine's interpretations of a few short introductory verses in Qohelet's Chapter 1 is the displacement of the ancient Hebraic biblical meanings underlying its concepts, expressions, and ideas by a more current Christological theological paradigm. Augustine does not appear to be overwhelmingly concerned with uncovering Qohelet's intended ancient Hebraic meanings within the text but, rather, employing its terms and expressions to explicate his Christological paradigm. Let us look at other verses in Qohelet to see if this pattern holds true.

The next Qohelet verse that Augustine cites is Eccl 2: 13-14 which expresses the idea of where the wise man's eyes are located. According to Qohelet, regardless of where the eyes are located for the wise or for the fool, "I know that one fate befalls them both", that is, "the wise man and the fool alike die" (Eccl 2: 16). But as noted before, Augustine thinks that Solomon is "unquestioningly alluding to evils" that beset both the wise man and the fool, both the good man and the bad man alike. Augustine does not attempt to decipher what the expression means from within Qohelet's ancient Hebraic biblical perspective. The assumption is that the fool lacks wisdom by definition, so he walks in darkness, while the righteous man possesses the light of wisdom.

Another verse in Chapter 2 which Augustine cites 200 pages earlier is Eccl 2: 24 which contains the popular 'eat, drink, and be merry' expression, as it were. What complicates things is that where this verse is cited actually contains 6 references to very different verses in Qohelet not exactly in the synchronic order presented there. Again, to avoid confusion, we will maintain our approach of dealing with content in Augustine's book that applies specifically to particular verses rather than address all the verses cited as multiple entries in one discussion.

The traditional view of the meaning of this verse is that humanity is incapable of finding meaning and purpose in life through reason and experience. Enjoyment, fulfillment, or pleasure in life cannot exist without God. But if the sons of men see life itself as a gift from God, then labor can also be seen as a gift "from the hand of God,' as Qohelet states. Belief in God, therefore, is the foundation for enjoyment and fulfillment in life. What it means in terms of the ancient Hebraic perspective is that humanity should live for God in the true eternal meaning of life. In other words, the true meaning of life is not living it by finding meaning 'under the sun' but, rather, finding eternal meaning in their life. Human life is connected to eternity, and only God can impart eternal meaning to it.

What does Augustine say? Again, it is not clear here that Augustine is terribly concerned with explicating Qohelet's underlying meaning, even to the point of quoting the verse incorrectly. Augustine's quote reads: "There is no good for a man, except that he should eat and drink". Qohelet says: "There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God."

Consequently, Augustine introduces his Christological hermeneutic at this point through employing an 'eating-at-the-table' metaphor. Human beings are enjoined to partake of the spiritual nourishment offered at the table set by the "Mediator of the New Testament Himself" (Christ). Eat and drink the body and blood of Christ for true sustenance, Augustine hears Ecclesiastes saying, rather than "savor the dainties of carnal pleasures". Arguably, whose carnal pleasures he is referring to is not exactly difficult to imagine.

The next verses in Qohelet's synchronic arrangement cited in Augustine's book are Eccl 3: 13 and 3: 21, Qohelet's repeated reference to the divine gift of eating and drinking and viewing labor as good, and the man-beast analogy, respectively. We have already talked about Augustine's view of the 'eat, drink, and be merry' expression. What remains to be addressed in Chapter 3 are the verses dealing with the shared fate of man and beast, Eccl 3: 18-21, only the last verse of which is mentioned by Augustine. Despite the fact that Augustine rambles on for three pages till the end of Book 13 on the broad related topics of this verse comparing and contrasting Hebrew, Latin, and Greek meanings in the process (breath, spirit, bodily life, spiritual life, afterlife, and so forth), we can still deduce a fairly accurate Augustinian view of the man-beast relationship.

We will no doubt recall the full conventional import of meanings Qohelet conveys in those verses. God is testing human beings by creating them as animals that they may understand the meaninglessness of earthly life without Him front and center. This is why the fate of the sons of men and beasts is alike: they both have the same 'breath', they both 'die', and their physical bodies return afterwards to the place from which they were made, the earth. Where does the breath of each go after it expires? Who knows? Qohelet quips, implying that only God knows where the breath of human beings and animals go at death; we cannot observe that animals go here and humans go there, so to speak.

The Jewish Midrash interprets these verses as metaphorically comparing righteous 'men' with wicked or beastly 'men'. Men who are not righteous believers live as beasts do in the wild but among other men. However, this metaphorical interpretation is highly unlikely given the initial 'test' verse which begins the versal sequence. Therefore, it is likely that Qohelet was indeed referring to the breath or spirit of animals in the wild. We cannot observe whether an animal or a human has a soul or a spirit, so we cannot know for certain where they go after death if they do have one. The best that we can do is to have faith in God, to fear God adoringly and trustfully, and to obey His commandments.

Augustine labors on for nearly three pages to settle some of these questions basing his argument principally on Genesis but referencing other biblical texts as well. As for whether or not human beings have souls, he warns the reader not to "carelessly neglect the teaching of Scripture" where it states: "'Let the earth bring forth the living soul' (Gen 1: 24), when all the terrestrial animals were created." (Augustine, ibid., p. 395). And just a few verses down from the same verse in Genesis where it speaks about all life on dry land had died due to the great flood, Augustine asserts wryly why readers haven't noticed: "All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died."

Essentially, Augustine's argument here is that if Scripture can talk about living souls and spirits of life "even in reference to beasts," then why should we doubt that animals have souls? Indeed, it was the "ordinary style of Scripture to speak of animals "in which the soul serves as the residence of sensation". Granted, the rational soul of man was not created in the same way as the soul of other animals out of the waters and the earth, Augustine says, but still God "ordered that it should live in an animal body like those other animals"

Scripture talks about this when it says, "Let the earth produce every living soul". It is safe to say, therefore, that Augustine here is answering Qohelet's 'Who knows' question in Eccl 3: 21, namely, animals have souls although not the same type and not made in the same way as that of human souls. If there was any doubt intended by Qohelet about the existence of souls in humans and animals, there was evidently no such doubt within Augustine. The physical bodies of animals may perish, but their souls do not.

The next Qohelet synchronic verse addressed by Augustine is Eccl 5: 18, again part of one multiple entry footnote on p. 546 in his book. As it turns out, it is yet another out of 5 times that Qohelet repeats the 'eat, drink, and be merry' advice already reviewed. However, Qohelet this time introduces new terminological considerations in the same message, so it is important to cite it fully here for proper comparative purposes:

> "Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting; to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward."

Furthermore, to make clear what he intends to mean by this verse, Qohelet goes on to say in the very next key verse that the same rule applies to "every man to whom God has given riches and wealth…(as) his reward…(for) his labor." Labor is God's 'reward' to the common man, while 'wealth' is the reward to the rich man, it seems. Both the common man and the rich man should rejoice and enjoy God's rewards to them.

The terms "good and fitting", "enjoy oneself", and "reward" are all new terminological embellishments to the same Qohelet message. Whatever Qohelet may mean by this message, given the timeframe involved, it is certainly not in any way a veiled nor explicit reference to partaking at the New Testament table of the body and blood of Christ as evangelists might claim. However true it may be to live by faith in Christ who will nourish or feed the believer's soul, and however spiritual it may be to eat His flesh and drink His blood in the sacrament of the Eucharist, it seems unlikely that this was Qohelet's message in verse 5: 18.

Yet Augustine proceeds exactly along these lines, as noted before in one of the earlier repeated verses. Augustine claims that Qohelet is beseeching readers to partake at the table of the "mediator of the New Testament" who furnishes a meal replete with His own body and blood. Referring just previously to Proverbs 9: 1-6 on the nature of wisdom and then to Psalms 40: 6 on offering body as sacrifice, Augustine contends that this is exactly what Ecclesiastes means in "the sentence about eating and drinking." All of the "sacrifices of the Old Testament" have been succeeded by the New Testament sacrifice of Christ, and now "His body is offered, and served up to the partakers of it" (Ibid., p. 546).

According to Augustine, the proof that Qohelet is referring to the New Testament sacrifice of Christ "is made plain when he says, 'It is better to go into the house of mourning than to go into the house of feasting'" (Eccl 7: 2), the next synchronic citation of Ecclesiastes in Augustine's book. And then again, presumably to reinforce the same evangelistic eating-at-the-table-of-Christ message, Augustine boldly cites Qohelet two verses later: "The house of the wise is in the house of mourning, and the heart of the simple in the house of feasting" (Eccl 7: 4). Apparently, Augustine was so enamored with communicating his evangelistic message that he neglected to notice the inherent tensions between these two verses. It was simply good enough that both Qohelet sentences referred to 'feasting'.

The last verse in Chapter 7 of Ecclesiastes that Augustine cites in his book is 7: 29, nearly 150 pages earlier than the two Chapter 7 verses just mentioned. Since we have not previously reviewed this short particular verse, we need to quote it now in full: "Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices". The traditional interpretation of the meaning of this sentence is not hard to decipher. Qohelet seems to be saying that God originally had a simple design for man, but humanity's sinful nature always leads him to concoct evil or sinful schemes which frustrate God's simple plan, which is to worship Him only and obey His commandments. Humanity would prefer to worship idols and false gods, and love money, power, and pleasure rather than to love God and live righteously.

Basically, Augustine understands Qohelet to be proffering the same message except his interpretation is wholly framed within an exegesis on free will in the context of the fall of mankind in Genesis. “Accordingly, God, as it is written, made man upright, and consequently with a good will”, says Augustine (Ibid., p. 413). Apparently, ‘upright’ makes possible a ‘good will’ in Augustine’s eyes. Good will, then, is the “work of God” which means that God created man with it. “But the first evil will,” he continues, the same evil will that came from the “evil tree bringing forth evil fruit,” which “preceded all man’s evil acts, was…a…falling away from the work of God…therefore the acts resulting were evil, not having God, but the will itself for their end…” Man may be good by nature, but evil can exist alongside it. “Evil cannot exist without good,” Augustine cautions. The will, then, can worship the good or be the “slave of vice and sin”. Therefore, a truly free will is not a slave to vice. It almost goes without saying that there is hardly a Christian biblical scholar who would disagree with Augustine on these points.

The next set of verses that Augustine addresses in his book are Eccl 8: 14 and 8:15. Since verse 8:15 is yet another repetition of the ‘eat, drink, and be merry’ expression by Qohelet, there is no need to provide any further analysis or commentary – except to say that verses 8: 14 and 8: 15 are more than 100 pages apart and discussed within different topical contexts in Augustine’s book. Again, since verse 8: 14 has not been reviewed in this study, we need to quote it in full here:

> “There is futility which is done on the earth, that is, there are righteous men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked. On the other hand, there are evil men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I say that this too is futility.”

The traditional interpretation of this verse is fairly simple to understand. Basically, Qohelet is claiming here that it often happens in earthly life that the righteous seem to receive what the wicked deserve, and the wicked seem to receive what the righteous deserve. In this way as in many other ways Qohelet points out, earthly human life is often unjust and doesn’t make much sense. The perfect example of this in the ancient Hebrew Torah is when Cain murders his brother Able and then goes on to reap great prosperity. It is rather surprising that Qohelet doesn’t mention this at all.

Needless to say, this enigmatic state of human affairs begs the question of why would a just God permit such a thing to happen. It seems to be a mystery known only to God. Like the other confusing and troubling nonsensical things that happen in human life, we should simply rejoice in the work or labor that we do and in the good that we can do in our lifetime, as Qohelet advises (Eccl 3: 12). But human beings can only truly enjoy life and experience pleasures through faith in God. We should find pleasure in living for God on earth every day of our lives meaning fearing God reverentially and obeying His commandments.

What does Augustine say about this? Apparently, Qohelet devoted the entire book of Ecclesiastes to fully expose this particular vanity, he claims. Why? Answer:

> “…evidently with no other object that we might long for that life in which there is no vanity under the sun, but verity under Him who made the sun.” (Ibid., p. 644).

Why can't humanity do this now? Answer:

> "...it was by the just and righteous judgment of God that man,
> made like to vanity, was destined to pass away..." (Ibid).

With an implicit reference to creation in Genesis, this is the truth of man's situation, argues Augustine. But while man lives his days of vanity on earth, it makes a crucial difference whether he resists this truth in vice or yields to it in piety because there will be a "future judgment" when God shall bring justice and reward to good men and reprobation to bad men, Augustine states assuredly. Again, here it is likely that Augustine's interpretation would meet with some consensus among most contemporary Christian biblical scholars.

The next synchronic verse in Ecclesiastes which Augustine addresses is Eccl 10: 16-17 in one footnote on page 547. Since we have not commented on these verses previously, again we need to quote them here fully before comparing views:

> "....Woe to you. O land, whose king is a lad, and whose
> princes feast in the morning. Blessed are you, O land, whose
> king is of nobility and whose princes eat at the appropriate
> time – for strength and not for drunkenness."

The conventional interpretation of the meaning of these verses is relatively straightforward. To set the context properly, what Qohelet is referring to in these verses as well as across most of Chapter 10 is the folly and foolishness that he has witnessed even in the loftiest and most exalted of places where powerful and rich men sit in humble seats of authority. When young and inexperienced kings acquire leadership positions of power and wealth, their immaturity makes them unprepared to handle their duties with consummate responsibility.

Consequently, the princes under them also act irresponsibly, even when it comes to eating. They are prone to self-indulgence and lack of discipline and self-control. What Qohelet is saying is that it is better to have leaders with great maturity, integrity, wisdom, and good character who eat "for strength, not for drunkenness" and who can seek good counsel from others when needed, rather than young, inexperienced leaders lacking in these qualities of leadership. The fact that Qohelet a few verses earlier mentions finding "folly... in many exalted places ... humble places" would seem to suggest that he is not only talking about political rulers, but also leaders in other social institutions such as religious and educational leaders. In other words, Qohelet implies that when the ruler of a country is young and inexperienced, folly tends to rule alongside him, and consequently, people with similar undisciplined characters tend to dominate the other institutions of that nation.

What does Augustine think about these verses? Well, put simply, he thinks that Qohelet:

> "...has called the devil a youth, because of the folly and pride,
> and rashness and unruliness, and other vices which are wont
> to abound at that age; but Christ is the Son of nobles, that is,
> of the holy patriarchs, of those belonging to the free city, of
> whom He was begotten in the flesh." (Ibid., p. 547).

The opportunistic introduction of a Christological perspective to explain what Qohelet allegedly means by the verses in question is evident here. Whereas Qohelet is referring to the damaging effects of poor leadership, Augustine is referring to the leaders of the city where Christ was born as well as the leaders of other cities "…who are eaters in the morning…before the suitable hour". Why? Well, because:

> "…they do not expect the seasonal felicity, which is the true,
> in the world to come, desiring to be speedily made happy
> with the renown of this world…" (Ibid.)

That is why those "princes of that and other cities" are always in error. Clearly, the expression 'the world to come' is an implicit reference to the Second Coming of Christ from the dominant evangelistic Christological perspective at that time. Lest there is any doubt that this is actually what Augustine means, he concludes his discussion of the cited reference: "…but the princes of the city of Christ patiently wait for the time of a blessedness that is not fallacious."

The next synchronic verse Augustine cites in his book from Ecclesiastes is 11:13 on page 273, nearly 300 pages earlier from the Chapter 10 citation on page 547. On page 273, Eccl 11: 13 is cited in a multiple entry Footnote 6 which also includes references to 2 Chron 30: 9 and Jth 7: 20. There are at least two problems with this citation. Most seriously, there is no verse 13 in Chapter 11 of Ecclesiastes since it ends at verse 10. When we look at where Footnote 6 is cited within the text of the page itself, it is located at the end of a phrase which talks about the piety of God, following a lengthy discussion about piety that began on the previous page.

It should also be noted that the entire Chapter 11 in Ecclesiastes is about Qohelet's advice for youth to 'cast their bread on the waters', followed shortly thereafter by 'sowing their seeds' as much as they can in the morning and in the evening, with all the evident sexual insinuations. Presumably, it is unlikely that Augustine would mix a discussion about piety in his book with a discussion about sexuality in Ecclesiastes. Now, when we look at the other cited verses in the footnote, 2 Chron 30: 9 speaks about God not turning away those the king invited to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover even if they had been unfaithful to God. Curiously, there is no such thing as Jth 7: 20 in the entire Bible, both New and Old Testaments. All of this being the case, no discussion can be pursued.

Finally, the last verse of Ecclesiastes which Augustine cites in his book is Eccl 12: 13-14, the last two verses of the book. Needless to say, from an evangelistic Christological biblical perspective, it would seem to be an appropriate way for Augustine to conclude citations to Qohelet's book. Let us recall those verses now:

> "The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and
> keep His commandments, because this applies to every
> person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything
> which is hidden, whether it is good or evil."

On the same page and the one that follows it, Augustine's subsection titles contain the expressions "last judgment", "divine judgment", and "end of the world". It appears, then, that Augustine chose to cite the ending verses of Ecclesiastes in fitting preparation for a full-fledged discussion about what will occur at the end times, a central focus of the evangelistic Christological theological paradigm.

The conventional biblical meaning of the verses is clear. We should fear and worship God our Creator in love and reverence by obeying his laws for human living as expressed in the commandments and elsewhere in the Bible. We should do our best to do good in all our earthly affairs until we die, after which God will judge us. God will judge all things that we do, even our secret or hidden things, even things done by people who are hated. God's judgment will be particular to each and every human being, and therefore not a general judgment of the species. He will decide whether what all human beings have done is good or evil, and no other one will decide. Life is brief, changing, and impermanent, but God's judgment is fixed and certain.

What does Augustine say in reference to these verses? His immediate reaction: "What truer, terser, more salutary enouncement could be made?" Then he goes on to proclaim that only those who are 'keepers of God's commandments' have a "real existence", and those who are not such keepers are "nothing". It is clear by using the term 'nothing', Augustine does not mean to imply condescendingly that they are worthless human beings. Rather, it is an idiomatic way of referring back to Qohelet's vanity as 'vapor'. The implication is that so long as human beings want to remain in the likeness of vanity they were created in, as he previously mentioned, they cannot be "renewed in the image of truth".

Presumably, in order to achieve this renewal, they need to admit their sinful nature and repent of their sins. Still, whether they choose to keep God's commandments or not, God will surely render judgment upon every act done in a man's earthly life including the acts of "every despised person". God sees every earthly person, despised by men or not, and will "not pass over him in His judgment" for He does not despise him, claims Augustine. Once again, there is hardly a Christian biblical scholar who would disagree with Augustine's interpretation of these verses.

Conclusion

We have now carefully surveyed the life influences, Christian teachings and perspectives, hermeneutics, and particular views of a very small but select group of three eminent 4th-century Christian thinkers on a variety of verses from the Book of Ecclesiastes. Perhaps we are in a propitious position to draw some key observations and generalizations from our findings. We need to extrapolate, identify, and briefly discuss some of the more salient patterns of interpretation which emerged from the writings of these eminent early Church Fathers.

Not surprisingly, the central pattern that emerged was a distinct tendency to apply the concepts, expressions, and ideas from a dominant Christological paradigm to help interpret particular verses in Ecclesiastes. It was not applied in a broad, sweeping sort of way to every verse from beginning to end, however, and sometimes it was applied explicitly while at other times it was applied through associated concepts and principles like sin, repentance, resurrection, and so forth. These Church Fathers appeared to be very selective and sometimes even opportunistic as to how and when it would be applied, many times straining to forge a link that simply was not there from a strictly rational point of view.

Clearly, the author of Ecclesiastes could not have been a New Testament author, whoever else he may or may not have been. Ostensibly, these early Church Fathers were quite aware of this historical fact. Yet persistent attempts to make verses relevant to New Testament biblical texts and verses flirted perilously close to, if not outright, illegitimate revision of Qohelet verses. To try to see Christ everywhere in Ecclesiastes verses doesn't seem to be a hermeneutical approach to the Bible terribly interested in truthful interpretation in this specific regard. Many times, it resulted in the eisegetical force-feeding of an evangelistic Christological paradigm into Qohelet verses that was arguably doubtful at best and often times inapplicable at worst. A perfect example of this is the eating-at-the-table-of-Christ metaphor reviewed above, but there were several other similar examples.

Given this heavy tendency to read Ecclesiastes through the eyes of a Christological paradigm, it shouldn't be surprising that these early Church Fathers didn't appear terribly interested in understanding Qohelet from Qohelet's point of view or the ancient Hebraic point of view from which it presumably emerged. In other words, for the most part, they didn't seem to be overwhelmingly concerned with deciphering Qohelet's intended meaning from within an ancient Hebraic theological and cosmological framework other than the occasional attempt or versal agreement. The dominant approach was to impose upon them where possible an established external theological paradigm rather than to decipher the author's intended meanings — sort of like trying to understand Shakespeare from Socrates' point of view rather than Shakespeare's, eisegesis rather than exegesis.

Beyond the application of a largely evangelistic Christological paradigm in vogue at that time, another significant interpretative pattern that emerged from analysis was the tendency to make Ecclesiastes verses applicable to everyday life. For example, Chrysostom placed heavy importance upon serving the needs of the poor and denunciating pagan practices as well as ecclesiastical and political abuses of authority, so these theological priorities entered into his interpretation of particular verses in Ecclesiastes. St. Jerome focused heavily upon serving the spiritual needs of affluent Christian women and criticizing clergy for not living a religious or monastic life. After his conversion to Christianity at 31 years old, Augustine decided to combat the hedonistic lifestyles of people living in major cosmopolitan cities like Rome heretical belief systems like Manicheanism.

Yet another significant interpretative pattern worth mentioning is the tendency to draw upon other biblical texts from both the Old and the New Testament to assist and support interpretations of particular verses in Ecclesiastes. The selective employment of other biblical texts to support conclusions made about the meaning of a verse was a dominant tendency of all these Church Fathers, but to varying degrees. Chrysostom hardly called upon them at all, whereas St. Jerome and Augustine drew upon them more heavily. In some cases, intertextual referencing didn't seem to make much common sense and it led Church Fathers to make questionable interpretations or to neglect conventional interpretations of verses that were more reasonable. A case in point is St. Jerome's neglect of the God-testing-man thesis for understanding Qohelet's man-beast verses. Sometimes intertextual referencing was also employed to legitimize reinterpretation of a verse and attach other meanings.

A final pattern of interpretation should also be noted since it appeared to underlie and fire the motivation of all these early Church Fathers beyond an evangelical Christological paradigm, applicability to everyday life at that time, and intertextual referencing with other parts of the Old and New Testaments. What appeared to be informing or infusing interpretation was the fervent belief that the verses in Ecclesiastes contained hidden spiritual meanings and messages about how to live a genuine Christian life on earth even though, strictly speaking, it was presumably written from within an ancient Hebraic theological and cosmological paradigm that did not include Christ. Had Christ never appeared in the first century, the reader gets the impression that these 'Church Fathers' would have still engaged in a spiritual interpretation of Ecclesiastes albeit with slightly different results.

Appendix

All citation references to Ecclesiastes contained within: Saint Augustine. Translated by Marcus Dods, D.D. 2018. The City of God. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.
1- p. 273 = Eccl 11: 13 (footnote = f 6)
2- p. 354 = Eccl 1: 9-10 (f 20)
3- p. 394 = Eccl 3: 21 (f 52)
4- p. 413 = Eccl 7: 29 (f 87)
5- p. 546 = Eccl 2: 24; 3: 13; 5: 18; 8: 15 (f 143)
Eccl 7: 2 (f 145)
Eccl 7: 4 (f 146)
6- p. 547 = Eccl 10: 16-17 (f 147)
7- p. 643 = Eccl 1: 2-3 (f 5)
Eccl 2: 13-14 (f 6)
8- p. 644 = Eccl 8: 14 (f 7)
Eccl 12: 13-14 (f 8)

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The Renaissance of Augustinian Temporality
From McTaggart to Prior

Abstract: Philosophers have intensely debated the nature of time since J. M. E. McTaggart's article "The Unreality of Time" (1908). While Augustine's discussion of time in *Confessiones* has been very influential throughout the history of philosophy, it was far from evident that it should be taken seriously in the modern analytic tradition. It was ignored by McTaggart and the Vienna Circle. However, though criticizing Augustine's method, Wittgenstein thought it worth discussing inspiring others to do the same. Findlay's further engagement inspired Prior to invent tense logic, which led to Augustine's treatment of temporality becoming relevant once more. This is the trajectory this article seeks to illuminate.

Keywords: St. Augustine, J. M. E. McTaggart, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Friedrich Waismann, Bertrand Russell, J. N. Findlay, Arthur Prior

For theologians, the relevance of St. Augustine of Hippo has never been questioned, and *Confessiones* stands out as one of his most important and influential works. His discussion of time in the eleventh book thereof has historically attracted much attention from philosophers as well,[1] but to the analytic tradition, the relevance of this discussion was far from obvious in the debate initiated by J. M. E. McTaggart's article "The Unreality of Time" (1908). Today, however, it seems barely feasible to write a book on the metaphysics of time without mentioning Augustine, which leads to the following research question: how did the development of the A-/B-theory debate from McTaggart to Prior result in the renewed relevance of Augustinian temporality?

Often Augustine's view of time is elaborated purely from *Confessiones* XI, but while this book also provides the background for the trajectory below, it is not sufficient to present an accurate picture thereof.[2] Due to the philosophical implications of Einstein's relativity theory, a new logic was needed in order to seriously engage with the "proto-presentism" of *Confessiones* XI. To understand how this came to be, I will investigate the early A-/B-theory debate by focussing on the application of Augustine's discussion of time.

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[1] Cf. Flash (1993, 27-75; 162-192) for an overview.

[2] For a thorough treatment, cf. Steiner's article "Augustine's Alleged Presentism" (forthcoming).

Aprioristic Metaphysics: J. M. E. McTaggart

In *Some Dogmas of Religion*, John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart (1866-1925) defines metaphysics as "the systematic study of the ultimate nature of reality" (1906, 1) in which physics plays a very limited role. Contrary to Augustine,[3] reality "is not a quality which admits of degrees. A thing cannot be more or less real than another which is also real." (McTaggart 1921, 4). For McTaggart, perception is generally misperception (1927, 57), and a priori beliefs are thus prioritized (1921, 40). His ideas about eliminating time[4] were already present in a letter from 1889 (McDaniel 2020), but with "The Unreality of Time" (1908) the modern debate between the A-theory and B-theory was initiated. The ideas put forward are further developed in the second volume of McTaggart's *The Nature of Existence* (1927) published posthumously and edited by C. D. Broad. As is well known, he distinguishes between defining positions in time as past, present, and future (the A series) and as earlier than and later than (the B series). We have the appearance of a time series which can be explained by introducing a C series[5] "where terms are connected by permanent relations" (McTaggart 1927, 30). In the B series, the fundamental sense moves from earlier to later, and, likewise, the C series has a direction from less to more inclusive. Therefore, "earlier than" and "included in" are the fundamental senses, and "later than" must, thus, be compared to "inclusive of" (McTaggart 1927, 362-363).

Interestingly, McTaggart neither mentions Augustine in *Some Dogmas of Religion* nor any of the two volumes of *The Nature of Existence*.[6] Some passages seem to echo an Augustinian way of talking.[7] McTaggart speaks of every period of time being divisible into parts, wherefore every perception datum also is (1921, 176). He considers whether past, present, and future is a subjective reality of the mind (1927, 11). The present can be viewed as specious or as "a single point, separating future from past" (McTaggart 1927, 28-29). Though we may observe things as being in a specious present, nothing could really be so, since no point in time could be both past, present, and future. Though speaking of a vastly different reality, the following could be said by Augustine about God: "in timeless reality there is no change, and no weariness, and that which is highest can exist without ceasing." (McTaggart 1927, 160). While McTaggart believes "there can be no change unless some propositions are sometimes true and sometimes false" (1927, 15), he does not believe in the reality of change. The Law of the Excluded Middle is an a priori certainty, and, thus, reality does not come in degrees. Due to this, Augustinian temporality was not worth taking seriously or even mentioning. Doing metaphysics without physics, however, would soon be replaced by physics without metaphysics.

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[3] Augustine can say that only the present exists, though the past and future still have an objective content (civ. Dei IV, 33; VII, 30), while also saying that time is said not to exist (nec sunt) compared to God and eternity (Conf. XI, 4.6; civ. Dei I, 30; Trin. II, 5.9). Thus, ontology comes in (Neo-Platonic) degrees.

[4] As he points out, this position was held by F. H. Bradley as well, since time is "incapable of being anything beyond a relation" (Bradley 1897, 39).

[5] In the debate ever since, this has received far less discussion as a serious candidate. It is, however, included in Sam Baron and Kristie Miller's introduction (2019, 9-28; 115-117).

[6] Some effort has been made trying to understand Augustine using the series of McTaggart (cf. Matthews 2005, 82-84; Case 2021, 191-194; Morgan 2022, 26-29). More often than not, such attempts tend to cloud understanding since Augustine's view of ontology does not fit into modern, analytic categories.

[7] Jason Morgan formulates the comparison well: "From a certain standpoint, namely that of Heaven, St. Augustine might agree with McTaggart that time did not have ultimate reality. However, unlike McTaggart, St. Augustine thought that the human person was made to know in time" (2022, 29).

Metaphysics as Meaningless: The Vienna Circle

In the early 1920s, the Vienna Circle was formed with members such as Moritz Schlick, Rudolf Carnap, Friedrich Waismann, Otto Neurath, and Kurt Gödel. Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922[8]) had a major impact on the movement[9] in the preface of which he says that philosophical problems "rests on the misunderstanding of the logic of language" (cf. §4.003). What is outside this limit of language is simply nonsense. Philosophy is not a natural science, the totality of which is the totality of true propositions (§§4.11-4.111). Philosophy is an activity concerned with elucidation: logical clarification of thoughts and making propositions clear (§ 4.112; cf. §§4.114-4.116). Especially influential was Wittgenstein's view that logical propositions are either tautological or self-contradictory, and neither of these say anything about reality, thereby being senseless "pseudo-propositions" (§§4.46-4.463; §5.142; §5.43; §§6.1-6.111). Metaphysics is without meaning since we should "say nothing except what can be said, *i.e.* the propositions of natural science, *i.e.* something that has nothing to do with philosophy"[10] (§6.53). While Wittgenstein would criticize the Logical Positivists for having misunderstood his *Tractatus*,[11] this view of metaphysics and propositions was something they could utilize for the natural sciences to enter the main stage overshadowing all other bi-roles.

Moritz Schlick expresses it thus: "For I am convinced that we now find ourselves at an altogether decisive turning point in philosophy, and that we are objectively justified in considering that an end has come to fruitless conflict of systems." (1959 [1930/31], 54).[12] Throughout the 1930s, Logical Positivism spread internationally, and looking back A. J. Ayer characterized the movement as having a "missionary spirit" (1959, 6). In essence, there are three kinds of meaningful statements (Carnap 1959 [1932], 76; Hempel 1959 [1950], 108): tautologies, which say nothing about reality, contradictions, which are by definition false, and empirical statements that lead to factual propositions when verified. Thus, statements without empirical content could never be verified (Carnap 1968 [1935], 103-104), and gaining knowledge a priori is simply not feasible (Hahn 1959 [1933], 152). Metaphysical statements are "empty sounds" (Schlick 1959 [1930/31], 56), "old pseudo-questions" (Schlick 1959 [1930/31], 59), "*entirely meaningless* ... in its strictest sense" (Carnap 1959 [1932], 61), "mere illusory concepts" (Carnap 1959 [1930/31], 145), and our language ought to be purified thereof (Neurath 1959 [1932/33], 200). Rudolf Carnap does, however, talk about them as "Lebenseinstellung" and "Lebensgefühl" — as expressions of a general attitude towards life (1959 [1932], 78) or even as art (1959 [1932], 79) or poetry (1968 [1935], 112).

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[8] Published in German the year before.

[9] For a nuanced description thereof, cf. Ayer (1959, 4-5).

[10] Per Hasle astutely observes that the *Tractatus* can at the same time be interpreted as a metaphysical and anti-metaphysical theory (2015, 27).

[11] *Tractatus* famously ends "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." (§7). In his *Briefe an Ludwig von Ficker*, Wittgenstein wrote that he had considered writing in the *Tractatus* that it consist of two parts; what is here published and a second, unwritten part being the more important of the two (Christensen 2006, 16). Contrary to the logical positivist, the *Tractatus*, for Wittgenstein, did not mean that things like ethics and religion could not be expressed in meaningful language. He read the Bible, Augustine, Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Barth, and prayers were written in *Geheime Tagebücher* during World War I (Schanz 2006, 35; Albinus 2006, 76) — around the time of his thinking that would lead to the *Tractatus*.

[12] The Vienna Circle was devoted to a unified science in a unified language (Neurath 1959 [1932/33], 207; 1959 [1931/32], 284). They firmly believed this project would enhance the life of humanity (Carnap 1968 [1963], 188).

Being a member of the Vienna Circle's inner circle, Friedrich Waismann[13] had formerly studied mathematics and physics before studying philosophy under Schlick. Before investigating his approach to Augustinian temporality, it will be necessary to treat Wittgenstein first in order to attain the right chronology in our trajectory, as Waismann's approach was strongly influenced by his relationship with Wittgenstein.[14]

Meaning in Language Games: Ludwig Wittgenstein

The Wittgenstein of *Tractatus* and *Philosophische Untersuchungen* has traditionally been spoken of as the "early" and "later", but while some today also speak of a "middle" and "post-later" Wittgenstein, others claim a certain unity in his thinking between the "stages"[15] (Biletzki and Matar 2023). Turning from formal logic to ordinary language, he rejected traditional and dogmatic philosophy — even his own *Tractatus*. Of special interest in regard to the question of utilizing Augustine is *The Blue and Brown Books* (1958).[16] Discussing the meaning of a word in *The Blue Book*, Wittgenstein says that looking for a thing that corresponds to a substantive is a major source of "philosophical bewilderment" (BB, 1) — as though a sign "were an object *co-existing* with the sign" (BB, 5). In reality, the significance of the sign comes from belonging to a language, a system. If we become puzzled about the nature of time it is because the substantive "time" makes us think that the word contains some hidden meaning. We, thus, mystify our use of language, when all the facts about time actually are right in front of us (BB, 6).

In *The Blue Book*, Wittgenstein introduces his well-known "language games" but as primitive languages, where philosophical confusion arises due to our "craving for generality" (BB, 17). In applying the word "game" to languages, we immediately think that "game" must contain some common property in all the various games, when in reality games have "family likeness". In a family of six children, there may not be a property like being blue-eyed or having brown hair that applies to all members, though they may still have a likeness. Craving for generality also stems from being preoccupied with the method of natural science: “This tendency is the real source of metaphysics, and lead the philosopher into complete darkness ... Philosophy really *is* ‘purely descriptive’” (BB, 18; cf. 35). Concepts do not have a real definition, and rarely does ordinary language meet the exactness of mathematics or science (BB, 25). It is in this light that Wittgenstein considers Augustine’s question of the nature of time.

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[13] In a later paper he was reluctant to have published, Waismann argued that the Logical Positivist attached too rigid a sense to the word "meaningfulness" when such words have a multiplicity of meanings (1959 [1946], 26).

[14] For a fuller story, cf. Uebel (2017).

[15] Though I find the idea of a certain unity through his development intriguing, I think applying stages has a heuristic advantage.

[16] Henceforth BB, the former dictated in 1933-34 and the latter in 1934-35.

The question “What is time?”[17] asks for a definition, but Wittgenstein immediately asks what we should gain since it would lead to other undefined terms. And why not be equally puzzled by lacking a precise definition of the word “chair”? The “What is ...?” question is slightly misleading and expresses a mental discomfort (BB, 26). Definitions are cleared up by grammar, and the puzzlement about the word “time” is due to an apparent grammatical contradiction. When Augustine discusses the problem of measuring time, the word “measure” is actually applied in two different ways resulting in the contradiction. Augustine uses measuring as length, but the grammar thereof is different when applied to spatial and temporal distance (BB, 26). Augustine, however, explicitly mentions the difference between spatial and temporal measurements (Conf. XI, 26.33). But Wittgenstein’s point is that in trying to define the concept of time, we expect the definition will contain strict rules solving the puzzlement.[18] But when a definition is given, we examine it finding it at fault, and thereafter erroneously continue seeking the right definition.

Wittgenstein explicitly urges us to remember that words have the meanings we give them, and it is not a defect that many words do not have a strict meaning: “To think it is [a defect] would be like saying that the light of my reading lamp is no real light at all because it has no sharp boundary” (BB, 27). If “time” or any other word was given meaning by an independent power, then a scientific investigation of its real meaning would be possible, but that is simply not the case. Ideal languages can clear up thinking on certain subjects, but the goal is never to replace ordinary language: “ordinary language is all right” (BB, 28). Thus, the problem with Augustine is his method; thinking that the word “time” contains a metaphysical essence that can be uncovered and strictly applied, when in reality that is not how words and their meanings function. In *The Brown Book*, Wittgenstein no longer prioritizes primitive languages. Starting by briefly discussing Augustine’s view of how children learn to speak, he concludes that this approach is insufficient for ordinary languages (BB, 77). Developing his theory of language games, Wittgenstein now has the view that languages are complete systems of communication in themselves (BB, 81). He considers language games having temporal expressions as a part thereof and concludes the following (BB, 107):

> Looking at these language games, we don’t come across the ideas of the past, the future and the present in their problematic and almost mysterious aspect. What this aspect is and how it comes about that it appears can be almost characteristically exemplified if we look at the ques-

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[17] The famous question of Augustine introducing his reflections on temporality: “Quid est ergo tempus?” (Conf. XI, 14.17).

[18] Wittgenstein compares Augustine’s question with Socrates’ “What is knowledge?” to which we ought to reply: “There is no one exact usage of the word ‘knowledge’; but we can make up several such usages, which will more or less agree with the ways the word is actually used” (BB, 26-27).

> tion "Where does the present go when it becomes past, and where is the past?"—Under what circumstances has this question an allurement for us? For under certain circumstances it hasn't, and we should wave it away as nonsense.

Talking about the flow of events, the river of time, and the future as something coming towards us, we are dragged into puzzlement by our analogies. Words like "now" become mysterious, and we ask "What is the 'now'?" (BB, 108). How is "now" related to other statements like "five o'clock" or "today"? Where does it go when it becomes past? We might as well ask "Where does the flame of a candle go to when it's blown out?" (BB, 108). Wittgenstein argues that if we want to understand how the word "now" functions we should look at its actual usage in language — not just a few phrases but the whole language game. Like *The Brown Book*, the first paragraph of *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (1945[19]) begins with Augustine's view of signification[20] here quoted in Latin. But it is exactly when language is ignored that problems in philosophy arise (§38). We often experience a "feeling of familiarity" (§67; BB, 127; 180), and though all languages may not have a specific characteristic in common there are many kinds of interrelatedness (§65). In this complicated network — the games — words have their meaning.

Augustine's question is followed by a sentence about knowing when no one asks but not being able to explain when they do. According to Wittgenstein, such a sentence could never appear in a question regarding natural science (§89). There are many statements about time, duration, the past, and so forth, but these are not philosophical statements (Aussagen). Misunderstandings are cleared away by understanding that our inquiry is grammatical — how words are used (§43; §90). We can look at how the word "time" or different temporal expressions are used, what analogies are applied, and so forth, but ultimately, a word like "time" will never be completely clarified in such a way that we will have an understanding of its true, metaphysical nature.

When philosophers try to grasp the essence of things using a word like "being" (sein), "object" (Gegenstand), or "proposition" (Satz) we should ask whether the word is used like this in the language where it belongs: "What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (§116). Because philosophy ought not to interfere with ordinary language, it can only describe it. We are entangled (verfangen) in our own rules, and this entanglement is what philosophy seeks to understand. There is nothing to explain nor deduce — it all lies in the open (§§124-126). After a long discussion, Wittgenstein says that philosophy reaches a dead end when we think our investigation has the purpose of describing some concealed phenomena that evade our understanding. He then quotes Augustine in Latin: "They are manifest and customary, and at the same time they are excessively concealed, and their discovery is new"[21] (§436). The quote is from *Confessiones* (XI, 22.28); a passage from the middle part of Augustine's investigation into the nature of temporality, where he confesses his ignorance (imperitia) thereof. Having tried to solve "this very complicated riddle" (istuc implicatissimum aenigma), he prays to God for enlightenment on the subject of these "ordinary and concealed" (usitata et abdita) things. Augustine views the concept of time as a mystery to be penetrated by understanding, but, according to Wittgenstein, that is exactly why he should fail to do so. We cannot even describe the aroma of coffee (§610).

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[19] The final draft was finished between 1945 and1946, published posthumously in 1953. I follow the subdivision by P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte (2009) of taking what was formerly known as "Part II" as a separate work called *Philosophie der Psychologie — Ein Fragment*.

[20] Findlay comments: "It is a little doubtful whether Augustine in this passage really held any uniform conception of the *res*, the things or matters, named by words ... Wittgenstein is obviously only making use of Augustine as a stalking-horse for an attack on reification" (1984, 192).

If the language games are regarded as primary (§656) it even becomes possible to stop (abzubrechen) doing philosophy whenever we want, which is the real discovery (§133). Though not mentioning Augustine by name in the relevant chapter, Wittgenstein discusses time and the present in *Philosophische Bemerkungen*. Often language is used to limit (abzugrenzen) the world, which is simply not feasible (V, 47). If our data of the world was timeless, we would not be able to speak thereof, since propositions are only verified in the present (V, 48). That time only puzzles us when we philosophize proves that we misuse our language when becoming puzzled (V, 52). Our language cannot directly express the nature of reality by propositions. If someone (Augustine) says that only the present moment is real, Wittgenstein urges us to reply: "in contrast to what?" (V, 54). And it turns out that contesting that only the present is real is equally wrong (V, 56). Therefore, the only option is to return to investigating the rules of our language games.

According to Kurt Flash, "Wittgenstein hat vorgeführt, wie die Augustinischen *Bekenntnisse* in der Theoriesituation des 20. Jahrhunderts zu sprechen beginnen können" (1993, 70). Reading *Confessiones* was not merely of historical or theological interest, but could stimulate philosophical reflection on several topics. For our trajectory, the following quote by J. N. Findlay is especially important: "The interest in Augustine as a case of philosophical puzzlement is due to Wittgenstein" (1941, 223 n 5). Findlay does not specify whether he merely means to himself or generally but either way the treatment by Wittgenstein led to Findlay's article that led to Arthur Prior's tense logic, which would complete the renaissance of Augustinian temporality. Before turning to Findlay, two detours are important to present a nuanced trajectory. First, we return to Waismann who would further develop the Wittgensteinian approach of attacking Augustine's question. Then I will treat Bertrand Russell who, though representing the B-theoretic view, would argue that Augustine's discussion of time was worth taking seriously.

Asking the Wrong Question: Friedrich Waismann

The Augustinian question "What is time?" launches Waismann's article from the journal *Analysis*. If time is "the form of becoming" it would certainly be strange if someone said "Don't hurry, still plenty of form of becoming" (Waismann 1968 [1950/51], 55). Neither "the possibility of change" nor "measurable duration" will do. Defining the word "time" is difficult or maybe even impossible, but why would it help us to be able to replace the word in a given context with its *definiens*? We can replace "by this time" with "now", "at the same time" with "simultaneously", and so forth, but we do not have *one* translation used for all phrases consistently (Waismann 1968 [1950/51], 56). The word "time" is intricate, irregular, incomplete, and loose and, therefore, cannot be formalized.

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[21] "Manifestissima et usitatissima sunt, et eadem rursus nimis latent, et nova est inventio eorum". Translations from Latin are my own.

To answer Augustine's question, we must look into the various usages of the word time. "Indeed, if anyone is able to use the word correctly, in all sort of contexts and on the right sort of occasions, he knows 'what time is', and no formula in the world can make him wiser." (Waismann 1968 [1950/51], 56-57). Waismann even argues in his later article "How I See Philosophy" that, unlike science, there are no proofs, theorems, or questions that can be decided "yes" or "no" in philosophy.[22] Augustine obviously knew how time was measured, but was puzzled over how it was possible. When time suddenly seems curious it is simply an example of the ordinary striking us peculiar. We apply different pictures like being carried down the stream, going forward in time, being always present, and the present slipping through one's fingers: "using different pictures, each in its own way quite appropriate to the occasion; yet when he tries to apply them jointly they clash" (Waismann 1959 [1956], 349). Thus, we end up asking what time even is — knowing what it is yet feeling mystified.

Maybe the problem with Augustine's question and the subsequent philosophical debates is using the noun form "the time" since we instead ought to ask how the word "time" is actually being used (Waismann 1959 [1956], 350). It is the attitude of the one asking the question that needs to be changed. Our language creates habits of thought that must sometimes be challenged. Waismann compares the philosopher to a good swimmer: just like the latter is able to swim up-stream, the former "should master the unspeakably difficult art of thinking up-speech, against the current of clichés" (Waismann 1959 [1956], 363). No philosophical argument is logically compelling, but using philosophy to criticize language and reach deeper insights we will be able to see things in a new way. Waismann describes the paradox connected with discoveries and mentions the example of Descartes' discovery of analytic geometry: "But could he seek for it? To say that he spent years looking for it sounds downright absurd ... But if he could not seek, how could he find?" (Waismann 1959 [1956], 377-378). Ironically, this is the exact same paradox involved in *Confessiones* about whether a human being first knows or invokes God (I, 1.1), which Waismann does not seem to notice.

Ultimately, Waismann concludes: "To say that metaphysics is nonsense *is nonsense*." (1959 [1956], 380). Augustine's questions never could be answered, and answering them is not what philosophy is about. In arguing for a certain openness in analytic philosophy, Waismann judges the "What is time?" question to be wrongheaded from the outset. Had he engaged with the whole of *Confessiones*, however, he might have found an epistemology he could utilize.

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[22] "To seek, in philosophy, for rigorous proofs is to seek for the shadow of one's voice." (Waismann 1959 [1956], 374).

A Tenseless Scientific Language: Bertrand Russell

Frege had encouraged Wittgenstein to study under Russell, which he did in 1911. The assistance of Russell was vital for the *Tractatus* seeing the light of day, to which he wrote the introduction[23] (1922). Because science contains matters on which people agree, contrary to philosophy, it should be the "data of philosophy" due to its lesser risk of error (Russell 1959 [1924], 46). This method[24] has important consequences for the metaphysics of time, as the four-dimensional view of the special theory of relativity[25] is the normative data on which logical analysis can be provided.

Fundamental notions like time are often uncritically accepted, on which Russell comments: "I believe all these notions to be inexact and approximate, essentially infected with vagueness, incapable of forming part of any exact science." (1959 [1924], 48). Philosophy aims to understand the world,[26] and language is the instrument for reaching this goal. Language can suggest false beliefs, and tensed language does exactly this. Words like "now" and "here" vary in meaning due to the speaker's position in space and time, which Russell calls "egocentric particulars" (1948, 100). The word "now" both has a subjective and objective meaning[27] (1948, 106), and our belief in time originates in memory and perception of change within the specious present (1948, 226). Russell applies a hierarchy of languages and is, therefore, willing to speak of subjective time: "All my recollections occur *now*, not at the times when the recollected events occurred" (1948, 227). But the difficult question is, how this relates to objective time, and this is the point at which Augustine enters the discussion.

Russell calls the eleventh book of *Confessiones* the "best purely philosophical work" of Augustine and signifies his theory of time as "relativistic" due to it having had a beginning and being created *ex nihilo* (1961 [1946], 351-352). According to Russell's interpretation of Augustine, time becomes "something mental" and "one of the most extreme forms of … subjectivism" (1961 [1946], 353). Though Russell, obviously, does not agree with Augustine the following comment is interesting: "it is clearly a very able theory, deserving to be seriously considered" (1961 [1946], 353). Not only does it surpass the Greek philosophers, but is also better than Kant's subjective theory. But Russell thought Augustine substituted objective time[28] for the subjective: "Memory, perception, and expectation, according to him, made up all that there is of time"[29] (Russell 1948, 228). This moment-solipsism is an “excessive subjectivity”, but even the solipsist believes in the reality of her own past and future. Dreams, for example, are true experiences in memory and perception, but we do not let them give rise to beliefs about objective reality. The Problem with Augustinian temporality is the following (Russell 1948, 228):

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[23] It is well known that Wittgenstein thought Russell misrepresented him, but less known that there are two versions of the introduction. For the full background story, cf. Iglesias (1977).

[24] He would later develop five postulates that validate the scientific method (1948, 506-515) and the kind of empiricism he embraces (ibid., 516-527).

[25] Cf. Russell (1960 [1927], 113-119).

[26] When philosophy succeeds in this, it ceases to be philosophy and becomes science, according to Russell (Copleston 1966, 487).

[27] In *The Problems of Philosophy*, Russell distinguishes public from private time (2015 [1912], 28) and concludes: "The free intellect will see as God might see, without *here* and *now* (ibid., 131).

[28] That is, the time of physics and history.

[29] Though Russell discusses Augustine's De Civitate Dei at length (1961 [1946], 353-361), he does not note that the work clearly operates with an objective view of time (IV, 33; VII, 30; cf. Gn. adv. Man. II, 3.4). A somewhat similar point is noticed by Flash (1993, 74).

> My momentary experience contains a space of perception, which is not the space of physics, and a time of perception and recollection, which is not the time of physics and history. My past, as it occurred, cannot be identified with my recollections of it, and my objective history, which was in objective time, differs from the subjective history of my present recollections, which, objectively, is all *now*.

This is the problem of subjective time’s relation to objective time. Objective time is inferred (Russell 1948, 12) and “most nearly akin to logic and mathematics” (Russell 1948, 19). It is far too easy to elicit a dialogue, as Augustine does, asking whether the past and future exist, asking whether the present contains a lapse of time, and concluding that time does not exist, but this does not lead us to understand what objective time is (Russell 1948, 284). While Russell works with a hierarchy of languages, ordinary tensed language is fine for everyday usage but not for knowledge of the nature of reality.[30] A major wedge is driven between subjective tenses of the mind and objective, tenseless, spatio-temporal reality. “Now” is equal to other relative and egocentric words like “here”, “I”, and “this”. The objective space-time structure, in which events occupy regions, must therefore be spoken of in the B-theory words of “earlier” and “later”.

Another B-theorist, Donald C. Williams, was very critical of contemporary ways of applying Augustine: “The difficulties which we need not take seriously are those made by primitive minds, and by new deliberate primitivists, who recommend that we follow out the Augustinian clue, as Augustine did not, that the man who best feels he understands time is he who refuses to think about it.” (1968 [1951], 99-100). Referencing *Confessiones* XI, 14.17, Williams argues that highlighting the present leads people to think of motion by certain pictures and analogies, and that is where the fault lies. Time should never be isolated from space and vice versa, since true motion always takes place in the space-time worm (1968 [1951], 104-105). Like Russell, he speaks of “egocentric particulars” leading people mistakenly to believe in things like passage. Therefore, Augustine’s reasoning ought not to be taken seriously, as its premise from the outset is seriously flawed.

While Russell, contrary to Williams, can appreciate the great philosophical ability of Augustine, the conclusion becomes the same. If tense is an egocentric feature of everyday language, but the objective spatiotemporal reality revealed by science should be described in a tenseless logic and language, then Augustine’s reasoning has no merit. In the debate initiated by McTaggart, the B-theorists seemed at this point to have logic on their side. In 1953, W. V. O. Quine even went as far as saying: “I do not see how, failing to appreciate the tenselessness of quantification over temporal entities, one could reasonably take modern logic very seriously” (Quoted from Jakobsen 2017, 73). This, however, was about to change, which would also change the reception and application of Augustinian temporality. We therefore, finally, turn our attention to the important trajectory from Findlay and his early Wittgensteinian phase to Prior's invention of tense logic.

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[30] In fact, so does Augustine (civ. Dei XI, 21; Conf. XI, 4.6) though emphasizing a different point.

A Calculus of Tenses: J. N. Findlay

John Niemeyer Findlay first met Wittgenstein in 1930, and his last book, *Wittgenstein: a Critique*, was published at eighty years of age: "I am deeply critical of almost anything Wittgenstein said on almost any topic whatsoever … But without the stimulus of his teaching I should not have arrived at these contrary opinions at all" (1984, 20). Thus, while concluding Wittgenstein's "determined superficiality" to be just as far from ordinary language as Frege's and Russell's symbolism (1984, 211), his book is also a tribute. Findlay was, likewise, critical of Wittgenstein's treatment of the metaphysics of time. But not in the beginning! His important and influential "Time: a Treatment of some Puzzles" (1941) he would later call "an early Wittgensteinian article"[31] (1984, 135) since he at that point argued that the Augustinian puzzles about the measurement of time would disappear when "length" is not used univocally of time and space. In a republication of the article in 1968, Findlay said: "Though I still agree with its general approach, I am now inclined to attach rather more positive value and importance to the metaphysical perplexities and positions it deals with." (1968, 143). This early Wittgensteinian treatment of *Confessiones* XI would inspire Prior's invention of tense logic and, thus, the renaissance of Augustinian temporality. Prior, in turn, played a key role in Findlay becoming increasingly critical of Wittgenstein.

In discussing Alexius Meinong, Findlay argued that formal logic does not, necessarily, lead to a tenseless understanding of time (Jakobsen 2021, 182) as Russell had asserted. Some facts are now the case, but neither always has been or will be facts. Discussing the problem of time, Findlay says: "we may inquire whether the whole conception of a duration, as something present all at once and in a block, does not do violence to our notion of time quite as seriously as would a Spinozistic eternity" (1936, 190). Thus, Findlay continues:

> But though there cannot be bridge-like connections[32] between the real present and the non-existent past and future, there may nevertheless be, in the bosom of the real present, a self-transcendent reference to what has been and what will be … There is a genuine state of motion in the present, and motion does not resolve itself as it does on the Russellian theory, into a set of external relations between different positions of the same body at different times.

If temporal relations are dealt with as relational properties instead of just relations, then tense could be taken more seriously than was currently the case. But how? As a formalized logic or language game? To answer this focussing on his treatment of Augustine, we turn to Findlay's 1941 article.

The article aims to inquire into what causes the puzzlement about time, and from the outset, it is suggested that the origin of the obscurity lies "in our ways of thinking and talking" (Findlay 1941, 216). If there is a genuine problem, the burden of proof is on the people who depart from ordinary language. These people act like "casual visitors from 'eternity'", but they can be cured of the "disorder through a clear awareness of its causes" (Findlay 1941, 217). Like in Moore's "Proof of an External World", the question about how something can cease to be the case can be answered by straightening one's finger saying "now it has ceased to be crooked" (Findlay 1941, 217). In Wittgensteinian fashion, sometimes the problem is the question — especially in the philosophy of time where puzzles flourish. Words like "present" and "now" can be applied in gradually stricter senses, but when we do so our ordinary language begins to collapse since these words are normally not that strict. "We can be bullied into admitting that this is a 'loose' and 'inaccurate' way of talking" (Findlay 1941, 221-222), and the prime historical example of doing so is Augustine's discussion of the length of the present.[33]

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[31] The title even has a footnote saying: "It will be obvious that the basic ideas of this paper derive from Wittgenstein." (Findlay 1941, 216 n 1). When reaching the discussion of Augustine, he writes: "The interest in Augustine as a case of philosophical puzzlement is due to Wittgenstein." (1941, 223 n 5).

[32] By this, Findlay means a relation, that is, "a universal whose peculiar nature it is to connect one entity with other entities or … with itself. (1936, 176).

But in our ordinary language, there is not a clear demarcation between long and short, thus when being "bullied" into complete consistency we end up exchanging a useful language for an inutile. Engaging with the eleventh book of the *Confessiones*, Findlay highlights three aspects leading to bewilderment.[34] This engagement with Augustine is much more elaborate and thorough than any of the former discussed, and Findlay quotes him several times. The first puzzle is how what takes no time could add up to something that does. According to Findlay, there is an indefinite number of ways of avoiding this puzzle — as well as the other two (1941, 225). We could deny of very short events that they have past and future parts and instead say they are present as wholes. We quite often speak of events as happening, and only if they are longer do we speak in tenses of their remoter parts. We also speak of events as taking "no time at all", thus excluding successive divisibility. Consistency is desirable and communication would not be possible without some degree thereof, but we should not "make a fetish of consistency" (Findlay 1941, 226). Augustine's strive for consistency is an example of it disrupting ordinary language and leading to confusion instead of clarity.

The second puzzle is how the different stages of an event can form a whole when they are never together. Findlay compares this to attempting to build a house if all the bricks repelled each other (1941, 224). But there is a difference in talking about coexistent and successive parts since the parts of the latter do not need to be together. Things can have magnitude without being whole (Findlay 1941, 228). The third puzzle is how time can be measured when only a vanishing part has reality. Again, several alternative responses are available. We can reject the analogy between measuring the spatial and temporal, or we can speak of succession in the present. We can speak of the past having existence, subsistence, or some other suitable status (Findlay 1941, 228). In sum, the discussion of Augustinian temporality is more about language than metaphysics, and, thus, Findlay's kinship with Wittgenstein is evident.

An interesting turn of events happens in the article's last pages. Findlay speaks of the perplexity of rapid change and the change of truth value. "But all this only means we lack a settled and satisfactory way of talking about swiftly changing things" (Findlay 1941, 232). But regarding tenses, if our conventions are sufficiently outlined they contain the materials for a formal calculus, leading to the following famous footnote (1941, 233 n 17):

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[33] Findlay specifically has Conf. XI, 15.19-20 in mind.

[34] He also compares the Augustinian puzzles with Zeno's paradoxes (1941, 229-231).

> The calculus of tenses should have been included in the modern development of modal logics. It includes such obvious propositions as that
>
> x present ≡ (x present) present ;
> x future ≡ (x future) present ≡ (x present) future ;
>
> also such comparatively recondite propositions as that
>
> (x). (x past) future ; i.e., all events, past, present and future, *will* be past.

These are Findlay's tense logical laws, but he quickly returns to talk about how we *feel* we ought to be able to say the same at all times. We could purge our language of all tenses, speaking tenselessly in terms of dates, thus avoiding puzzlement. But we would still feel like something of worth had been omitted, ending up combining these two ways of speaking (Findlay 1941, 234). According to Findlay, this is what McTaggart does. And understanding the sources of our puzzlement enables us to get rid of it.

In "An Examination of Tenses" (1956), Findlay says that his attitude to Wittgenstein's teachings "has become in some ways dissident" (1956, 167). Being now more preoccupied with concepts, he discusses "temporal position", which can be understood in two ways: the time of the occurrence or the existence of objects and events (1956, 172). From the standpoint of the perceiving person, the temporal position is conceived as tensed. When, however, the perceiver plays no part, the temporal position can be conceived as tenseless. Findlay wants to make a few points about the tensed way of conceiving. First, that temporal positions are conceived *from* a temporal standpoint does not mean that they are conceived *in relation to* that standpoint (Findlay 1956, 174). Our act of thinking can easily be thought of in a tenseless manner. "The most important feature of the tensed mode of conceiving temporal position (and the feature which gives rise to most of its philosophical difficulty) is, however, the fact that this mode of conceiving *regularly and steadily changes*, as experience continues, and as our thought develops with it" (Findlay 1956, 175). That many philosophers want to think and discourse within the limits of a single, unchanging manner, Findlay argues, will not make them immune to "the sawing tooth of time", and he characterizes their determination as obstinate (1956, 176). Ultimately, Findlay argues that both ways of speaking of temporal position are legitimate and applicable.

Findlay does, however, think that the tensed mode of speaking is closer to the nature of time since we always occupy a position in time. We always talk and conceive from the temporal standpoint we are in. We have an immediate consciousness and experience of time even if the specious present causes certain obscurities (Findlay 1956, 182). But Findlay's main reason for preferring a tensed view of temporal position is that we deal radically differently with things future than past. This points to an asymmetry between the two; the past is in principle completely knowable and unalterable, while the future is open and cannot be completely foreseen (Findlay 1956, 184). Though doing so carefully, Findlay would more intentionally dive into the metaphysics of time and later write the following: "The need to develop a complete logic of tenses, and to put it into accord with a logic dealing with matters that transcend time and tense, remains highly urgent" (1984, 160). But this post-Wittgensteinian phase was both after his discussion of Augustinian temporality and inspiration of Prior to pursue the same.

With Findlay, our trajectory meets a much deeper engagement with the argumentation of *Confessiones* eleventh book. Some debate has revolved around the following quote from Prior referring to the footnote quoted in full above: "In a sense the founding father of modern tense-logic was J. N. Findlay"[35] (1967, 1). Tense logic was Prior's invention prompting the question of why he would thus credit Findlay. While David Jakobsen presents a nuanced view of the background story thereof (2021), I would add that a simple solution is to emphasize the first part of the quote "*In a sense*".[36] By discussing Augustine, taking tenses seriously in metaphysics, and briefly formulating a calculus thereof, Findlay paved the way for Prior, whose tense logic his work on tenses would ultimately not hold a candle to. To credit him as the founder (at least without adding "in a sense") may be excessive, but he was John the Baptist of tense logic.

The Invention of Tense Logic: Arthur N. Prior

Arthur Norman Prior talked publicly for the first time in 1954 about his invention of tense logic. Though being urged not to by J. J. C. Smart[37] (Jakobsen 2017, 78), Prior delivered his John Locke lectures two years later on the same topic published in *Time and Modality* (1957). Firmly believing tenses to be a part of reality (1999 [1958], 1), thus having metaphysical status, Prior introduced the temporal operators *P* for "It has been the case that" and *F* for "It will be the case that" (1957, 8). To these weak operators, two strong were later adjoined: *H* for "It has always been the case that" and *G* for "It will always be the case that"[38] (Prior 1967, 32-34). A present-tense operator would, however, be superfluous.[39] The present is something very fundamental and intimately connected with existence and reality. Prior's redundancy theory of the present implies that there is no difference between "It is now the case that" and just plain "It is the case that" (1976 [1957], 66; 2003 [1968], 171). In an almost Augustinian fashion, Prior says the following about the present and the real: "they are one and the same concept, and the present simply *is* the real considered in relation to two particular species of unreality, namely the past and the future." (2008 [1970[40]], 129). The present needs no qualifying prefix, and the metaphysical implications thereof are vastly different from the tenseless approach to logic and language. If presentism is the right ontology of time, and tenses can be logically formalized, then the relevance of Augustinian temporality looks quite different.

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[35] Prior also credits Findlay with teaching him most of what he knows about both ethics and logic (1949, xi), being taught by him from 1935-1937.

[36] Douglas Lackey completely leaves this part out (2019), thereby giving the wrong impression.

[37] Discussing temporal metaphors, his article "The River of Time" (1949) bears the imprint of Wittgenstein.

[38] Thus, $F = \neg G \neg$ (It will not always be false that).

[39] Prior later investigated and modified this claim (2003 [1968]; cf. Bourne 2006, 42-43 n 2).

[40] Written the year before.

When discussing Findlay's "calculus of tenses" in his *Past, Present and Future*, Prior says: "There is a hint of these laws in the long passage from Augustine's *Confessions* which forms the subject of the earlier part of Findlay's article, though the relevant remarks are in later sections than those on which Findlay concentrates"[41] (1967, 9). After recapitulating and citing snippets of *Confessiones* XI, 17.22-18.23, Prior concludes Augustine's argument as "*x* future" equating "(*x* present) future". The converse point is also the case, such that "*x* future = (*x* future) present" (1967, 9-10). It is evident that the language of Augustine is very similar to the tense logic of Prior. Augustine speaks of "the present concerning the future"[42] (Conf. XI, 20.26), whereas Prior speaks of "the *presence of the futurity*" (1957, 10). The "now" that, according to Russell, was an egocentric particular is for Prior something metaphysically fundamental.

This gave him a reason to engage with Augustine on a deeper level, which he especially does in his article "Changes in Events and Changes in Things". While time's flow or passage certainly is just a metaphor the reality behind can still be discussed. Clearing up some misunderstandings, Prior argues that events do not change — they happen. Events *are* changes, because it is things that change whereafter we say an event has occurred (2003 [1962], 8). But events that go on for a long time will have both past and future phases, where it makes sense to speak of passage as something real. Prior applies Augustine's notion of a long time but restates it as "*what goes on* over the interval" (2003 [1962], 10). Thoroughly engaging with *Confessiones* XI, 15.20-26.33, Prior agrees that long processes take a long time when they are actually occurring. This raises the question of the different phases since all of them are not presently happening. He notes that Augustine was not familiar with the modern term "the specious present", but says it would not have made any difference, as the question pertains to longer periods (2003 [1962], 11). Augustine speaks of the past and future having a form of "being" in some "secret place", but they must be there as present since the present is the real.

To make use of this, Prior discusses the grammar of temporality being of the conviction that solving metaphysical problems requires understanding the grammar applied. He argues that conjugating a verb into past- or future-tense is precisely the same as attaching an adverb to a sentence (2003 [1962], 13). Rationally, the sentence "I was folding laundry" might as well be expressed using a past-tense prefix: "It was the case that I am folding laundry". Constructing this view of tensed grammar using the *Confessiones* leads Prior to the following conclusion (2003 [1962], 13-14):

> The construction I am sketching embodies the truth behind Augustine's suggestion of the 'secret place' where past and future times 'are', and his insistence that wherever they are, they are not there as past or future but as present. The past is not the present but it *is* the past present, and the future is not the present but it *is* the future present.

According to the B-theorists, the truth value of well-formulated propositions cannot change. McTaggart argued, that for change to be real — which, according to him, it is not

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[41] Already at the age of 16, Prior engaged with *Confessiones* XI (2020 [1931], 259), but of interest for our current trajectory is Prior's utilization of Augustine in his tense logical phase.

[42] "praesens de futuris".

— some propositions must be true at some times and false at others (McTaggart 1927, 15). This is the view Prior inherits from the antique and medieval discussions of temporality: "To say that a change has occurred is to say at least this much: that something which was the case formerly is not the case now" (2003 [1962], 14). In this way, the grammar of language reveals that the present, the now, is fundamental. And if this presentist ontology is correct, the past- and future-tensed statements must be grounded therein. Our ordinary way of talking may look like changes in events, but it is really about changes in things.

Contrary to Waismann and Wittgenstein, time can be formalized. Contrary to Russell and Quine, logic need not be tenseless. This is the contribution of Prior's tense logic, and with it, Augustinian temporality became relevant once again. Though Augustine's epistemology and ontology are different from Prior's analytic — or "grammaticist" as he would prefer it to be called — approach, his discussion of tenses could now be taken seriously and utilized in the modern A-theory/B-theory debate. In *Confessiones* XI, we meet what I would characterize as a sort of "proto-presentism", which Prior's invention of presentism made use of. Prior was the first not to primarily attack Augustine's question, but thought his theory worth elaborating on and developing. And since the time of Prior, few books on the metaphysics of time are able to ignore the contribution of Augustine.

Concluding the Trajectory

While McTaggart introduced the A- and B-series, he viewed time as unreal, and, thus, there was no reason to even mention Augustine. Waismann's treatment of Augustine was inspired by Wittgenstein, as was the case for Findlay. For Wittgenstein and Waismann, time cannot be formalized, and the word "time" does not contain some hidden essence revealing metaphysical truth. Therefore, Augustine's questions had to be shown to be wrong, in which Findlay also took part. But in doing so, Wittgenstein demonstrated the relevance of engaging with Augustinian temporality, which Findlay did on a much deeper level. This would inspire Prior to invent tense logic, demonstrating that while Russell viewed Augustinian temporality as something to be taken seriously as a theory of subjective time, Prior was able to formalize Augustine's discussion as objective time. Viewing the past and future as unreal and the present as metaphysically fundamental was something shared by Augustine and Prior. Logic needed not to be tenseless, and because tensed propositions became relevant again, so did Augustinian temporality.

In addition to what has been the main emphasis above, the trajectory reveals the following insights. First, the individual philosopher's view or method of metaphysics to a large degree dictated how the *Confessiones* was interpreted. Second, the more empiricist-minded thinkers tended to disregard historical philosophy for current science, especially physics. Third, the law of the excluded middle makes it difficult to understand Augustine's ontology of time from a modern analytic approach to philosophy. This, I would argue, is still the case today. Fourth, while Augustine's relevance in the contemporary analytic philosophy of time is largely due to the tense logic of Prior, he himself did not utilize much beyond the eleventh book of *Confessiones*. And the interpretation thereof changes when a broader corpus of Augustine's writings is treated.

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Spinoza et Hume sur le miracle et le témoignage: une perspective épistémologique

Résumé: Le *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (TTP) de Spinoza, paru en 1670, a ébranlé l'ensemble des valeurs judéo-chrétiennes, en contestant toutes les particularités nationales et religieuses. Il sapait ainsi les assises des croyances traditionnelles, en s'attaquant notamment à la notion de miracle. Même si l'auteur de l'*Ethique* ne se trouve mentionné que dans le *Traité de la Nature Humaine*, et que les philosophies de Spinoza et de Hume apparaissent parfois comme étant antithétiques, elles présentent toutefois plusieurs points de convergence. Nous essayerons de les préciser par rapport à la question du miracle. Nous aborderons l'approche proprement humienne en faisant appel au théorème de Bayses, et nous examinerons enfin le statut épistémologique de la connaissance testimoniale.

Abstract: Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (TTP), published in 1670, shook all Judeo-Christian values, challenging all national and religious peculiarities. He thus undermined the foundations of traditional beliefs, notably by attacking the notion of miracle. Even if the author of the *Ethics* is only mentioned in the *Treatise on Human Nature*, and the philosophies of Spinoza and Hume sometimes appear to be antithetical, they nevertheless present several points of convergence. We will try to clarify them in relation to the question of the miracle. We will approach the Humean procedure, using the Bayses theorem, and we will finally examine the epistemological status of testimonial knowledge.

Mots-clefs: Spinoza, Hume, miracle, probabilité, certitude, théorème de Bayses, témoignage, connaissance testimoniale

Keywords: Spinoza, Hume, miracle, probability, certainty, Bayes' theorem, testimony, testimonial knowledge.

La thèse de Spinoza concernant le miracle

Pour Spinoza, les miracles ont été utilisés pour asservir le Peuple juif, en cultivant sa crédulité. A l'appui de cette thèse, il cherche à montrer, d'une part que le contenu des récits merveilleux peut s'expliquer de façon purement naturelle, et d'autre part que le miracle s'adresse à l'imagination. Le recours au miracle fait également appel à la peur, à l'amour, à la dévotion et à la vénération au moyen d'une manipulation politique pour le seul profit de ceux qui sont à l'origine des faits miraculeux. D'une façon générale, la croyance aux miracles est toujours liée à l'ignorance du peuple des véritables causes des phénomènes observés

(Spinoza, 2010, III, 52, Scolie; Spinoza 1954, *Lettre* 73), dans la mesure où le miracle n'existe que dans l'esprit de son observateur (Kreisel, 2001, p.579). Cependant, Spinoza a donné une fonction politique au miracle qui reste au service des souverains, en utilisant la dévotion religieuse plus que la peur (non tam ex metu, quaro devotione su-um officium faceret) pour préserver son pouvoir (Spinoza 1999, pp.222-223). Puisque la majorité des hommes ne vivent pas sous la direction de la raison, le miracle est toujours utile pour les conduire à la dévotion (*ad devotionem*), même s'ils conçoivent Dieu de manière imaginaire (Spinoza 1999, pp.262-263; LeBuffe 2018, pp.136-136). Une telle fonction est basée sur la psychologie humaine, qui encourage les citoyens à vivre conformément aux lois divines et politiques, que le souverain cherche à préserver (James 2012, pp.131-132). En ce sens, le miracle a une fonction pédagogique, capable de guider le peuple (Rosenthal 2010, p.228).

En discutant le miracle de Josué à Gabaon, Spinoza, selon l'expression de W. Z. Harvey, « ridiculise » la conception biblique défendue au Moyen Âge et à la Renaissance (Harvey 2013, p.661). Du fait que la Bible s'accorde entièrement avec l'explication naturelle, il n'y a pas lieu de recourir à des explications surnaturelles. On peut ainsi résumer l'approche spinoziste du miracle en quatre points :

1. Rien ne peut venir contredire les lois de la nature, qui présentent toujours un ordre fixe et immuable (*fixum et immutabilem ordinem*).
2. Contrairement aux explications naturelles, les miracles ne sauraient nous faire connaître l'essence de Dieu, ni Son existence et ni Sa providence.
3. Les événements que l'Ecriture rapporte à la Providence ne peuvent être expliqués que de façon naturelle.
4. Les miracles bibliques nécessitent une nouvelle interprétation de l'Ecriture, au risque de contredire leur description littérale (Spinoza 1999, pp.244-249).

Spinoza soutient la thèse selon laquelle les prophètes étaient eux-mêmes convaincus que les miracles étaient entièrement naturels. Cependant, ils n'ont pas voulu heurter l'imagination du vulgaire, et ils ont donc continué à cultiver le merveilleux (Spinoza 1999, pp.252-255 ; Fraenkel 2013, p.647). D'une façon générale, les miracles décrits par l'Ecriture relèvent tous des lois naturelles, et Spinoza ajoute que si on pouvait trouver un miracle qui viendrait les contredire, « il faut vraiment croire que c'est un ajout aux Lettres sacrées dû à des hommes sacrilèges (*a sacrilegis hominibus sacris literis adjectum fuisse*) » (Spinoza, 1999, pp.263-264)[1].

D'après Graeme Hunter, l'approche spinoziste du miracle est double. Concernant plus précisément le texte biblique, le miracle relève d'abord d'une « définition faible », le posant comme un événement que nous ne pouvons pas expliquer au moyen de nos catégories habituelles. Comme le précise Spinoza, « le nom de miracle ne peut se comprendre que relativement aux opinions des hommes et ne signifie rien d'autre qu'un ouvrage dont nous ne pouvons expliquer la cause naturelle sur le modèle d'une autre chose habituelle » (Spinoza, 1999, pp.244-245). Mais le miracle relève également d'une « définition forte », posée par Spinoza comme « ce dont la cause ne peut être expliquée par les principes des choses naturelles, principes connus par la lumière naturelle » (Spinoza, 1999, pp.246-247). Ces deux définitions ne contredisent pas ce que Hunter appelle « L'axiome Miracle », défini par Spinoza de la façon suivante : « Rien n'arrive donc dans la nature qui soit contraire à ses lois universelles, ni même qui ne s'accorde pas avec elles ou n'en résulte pas (*Nihil igitur in natura contingit, quod ipsius legibus universalibus repugnet; at nec etiam aliquid, quod cum iisdem non convenit aut ex iisdem non sequitur* » (Spinoza, 1999, pp.244-245).

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[1] Selon cette explication, Spinoza aurait dû souligner que la mention de la plaie des premiers nés égyptiens doit être un ajout sacrilège, puisqu'elle ne peut aucunement être expliquée de façon naturelle. Le Malbym (R. M'eyr Leyboush ben Myk̲al Weisser, 1809-1879) souligne que Pharaon n'a pas été convaincu par les neuf premières plaies puisqu'elles avaient été produites par Moïse, mais il a accepté de libérer les Hébreux après la dixième plaie, celle des premiers nés, car elle avait une origine seulement divine Malbym, 1844.

En accord avec son étymologie latine, le terme « miraculum » connote bien l'idée de merveille et d'extraordinaire, entrainant l'admiration, mais le miracle proprement dit n'a, pour Spinoza, aucune expression objective. Il ne fait que confronter son témoin à un simple problème d'ordre épistémologique, lié à l'ignorance des causes véritables de l'occurrence d'un événement sortant de l'ordinaire (Hunter, 2004, pp.41-51).Concernant le miracle de Gabaon, l'analyse spinoziste distingue entre trois plans sédimentés : d'abord, l'expérience subjective et sensorielle de Josué de l'allongement de la durée du jour ; ensuite, l'interprétation prophétique de l'origine divine d'un tel phénomène ; enfin, l'explication causale et naturelle de l'illusion miraculeuse (Spinoza, 1999, pp.264-267 ; Nadler, 2013, p.640). Pour Spinoza, les phénomènes naturels, qui constituent des décrets divins, ne sauraient déroger au déterminisme. De ce fait, pour expliquer naturellement le miracle de Gabaon, Spinoza souligne que Josué ignorait les causes météorologiques de l'allongement de la durée du jour, et l'illusion dont il a été victime procédait uniquement de la surabondance de glace (*glacie*) dans l'atmosphère, mentionnée dans le verset de *Josué* X, 11 (Spinoza 1999, p.129). Toutefois, il convient de préciser que ce texte ne parle nullement de poussière glacée, restant en suspension dans l'atmosphère et capable de perturber la réfraction des rayons lumineux, mais seulement de blocs de grêle (*'avney barad*), décrits comme des grandes pierres (*'avanym gedolot*), que Dieu a lancées miraculeusement sur l'armée adverse. C'est pourquoi, la mention de ces pierres gelées, qui ne pouvaient se maintenir naturellement dans l'atmosphère, ne saurait venir justifier la réduction spinoziste du miracle de Gabaon à une simple illusion d'optique[2]. En fait, la thèse défendue par Spinoza avait déjà été évoquée, dans un autre contexte, par R. Yehouda Ha-Levi, afin de souligner la nécessité de corriger le contenu des témoignages déformés, fournis par les myopes et les diplopes (Ha-Levi, 1994, p.155; Harvey, 2013, p.661).

Cependant, bien qu'elle s'appuie sur un certain nombre de textes juifs, la conception spinoziste du miracle contredit entièrement la Tradition juive. Comme le souligne R. Yehouda Ha-Levi, la multiplication des miracles et leur perduration, au moment de la sortie d'Egypte, du passage de la Mer Rouge et de la Révélation du Sinaï, ainsi que les pérégrinations du peuple juif dans le désert durant quarante ans, témoignent tous de leur origine divine (Ha-Levi R.Y, 1994 pp.24-25). Rappelons que Spinoza admettait la nécessité de reconnaître la réalité historique de la Révélation, du fait qu'il est impossible qu'il y ait eu une connivence au sein du peuple tout entier, pour transmettre aux descendants des Israélites des événements qui ne se seraient pas produits (Spinoza, 1999, pp.446-447 ; Matheron, 1971, p.9). En fait, comme le remarque G. H. R. Parkinson, l'impossibilité du miracle, selon Spinoza, repose sur l'idée que les lois de la nature sont des vérités nécessaires, et il est logiquement impossible qu'un événement puisse se produire sans obéir à ces lois. Or Hume a précisément remis en question la nécessité de la causalité naturelle (Parkinson, 1977, p.156).

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[2] Notons que la thèse de Spinoza, concernant le miracle de Gabaon, semble avoir été influencée par la remarque de Maimonide, suggérant que ce miracle résultait d'une sensation purement subjective (Maimonide, 1979, II, 35). Soulignons que, d'une façon générale, les remarques de Maimonide portant sur les notions de miracle et de prophétie ont fait l'objet de nombreux débats qui ont été résumés, notamment, par Hannah Kasher (Kasher, 1999, pp.25-52).

La nature du miracle selon Hume

Rappelons que le rapport de Hume à Spinoza a fait l'objet de débats. Ainsi, par exemple, Gilbert Boss insiste sur leurs divergences (Boss, 1982), alors que Wim Klever souligne une profonde convergence entre les deux auteurs (Klever, 1990). Si la critique humienne de la possibilité des miracles possède un style spinoziste, elle apparaît toutefois comme étant plus modérée que celle de Spinoza, que Hume n'hésite pas à qualifier d'athéiste (Hume, 1968, I, p.331). Il cherche uniquement à prouver qu'il est plus probable qu'un miracle rapporté ne se soit pas produit que la possibilité inverse. En fait, le problème posé par Hume n'est pas celui de la probabilité du miracle (qu'il ne nie pas ouvertement), mais des raisons réelles que les hommes ont d'y croire (Hume, 1947, pp.162-166). Alors que pour le rationalisme de Spinoza le miracle touchait à la question métaphysique de la nature identifiée à Dieu, l'empirisme de Hume voit dans la question du miracle un problème épistémologique concernant la croyance humaine (Popkin, 1979, pp 65-93 ; Earman, 2000, p.78 note 15). Mais, s'accordant avec Spinoza, Hume souligne les avantages politiques qui résultent toujours de la propagation d'une imposture au milieu d'un peuple ignorant. Même si la fraude semble souvent grossière pour pouvoir s'imposer à tous les hommes, elle a toutefois plus de chance de réussir dans les contrées éloignées (Hume, 1947, p.172).

Hume utilise, dans ses *Dialogues sur la Religion Naturelle*, l'argument traditionnel de l'inconnaissabilité de Dieu pour en tirer des conclusions athéistes (Hume, 2008, p.18 et p.63). Cet argument part du manque de connaissance que nous avons de l'essence divine, pour en déduire le manque de connaissance concernant l'existence de Dieu (Wolfson, 1960, p.112; Thomas d'Aquin, *Cont. Gent.* I, 12). Il fait finalement appel, mais sous une forme inversée, à l'argument ontologique, en concluant d'un défaut de perception de l'essence à la négation de l'existence. Depuis Spinoza, le rejet de la Révélation, et des miracles qui s'y trouvent liés, ne s'est pas opéré en raison de la découverte de nouveaux faits qui auraient été dirimants pour l'autorité biblique, mais seulement parce que, comme le dénonçait déjà Philon d'Alexandrie, la Révélation a été assimilée à un mythe. Le caractère historique de la Révélation est alors tombé en désuétude, et cette tendance s'est renforcée en raison du développement de la mythologie comparée (Philon, *De Decalogo*, 9, 32, Wolfson, 1960, p.104 et p.123).

Après Spinoza, Hume reprend la définition thomiste du miracle, comme contredisant l'ordre de la nature (Thomas d'Aquin, Q.110, Art. 4), mais pour la dénoncer pareillement. Si pour Spinoza, la croyance au miracle est simplement due à notre ignorance, qui procède d'une fausse conception de Dieu et de la nature, Hume insiste sur l'improbabilité de l'occurrence du miracle. Il annule ainsi la distinction entre miracle et événement merveilleux, dont, cependant, la probabilité d'occurrence n'est jamais nulle (Earman 2000, pp.9-13). Pour Hume, aucun témoignage n'est exempt d'erreur ou d'illusion et c'est pourquoi, avant de privilégier le merveilleux, comme le font les Barbares, nous devons donner la préférence aux informations basées sur les observations passées, et qui se trouvent recueillies par le plus grand nombre d'individus. Hume souligne que l'évidence, généralement associée aux témoignages humains, repose toujours sur l'expérience. C'est pourquoi, les hommes y croient du fait de la conjonction que l'auditeur du témoignage établit entre le récit testimonial et ses expériences personnelles. D'une façon générale, la raison pour laquelle nous prêtons foi aux témoins et aux historiens vient de ce que nous sommes accoutumés à trouver une conformité, par l'intermédiaire de nos souvenirs, entre les récits et leur contenu, tous posés comme étant objectifs. Mais lorsque le témoignage porte sur un fait proprement miraculeux, une telle conformité cesse d'être crédible car, dans la majorité des cas, l'événement exposé comme étant miraculeux entre en conflit avec l'enseignement issu des expériences passées, toujours explicables par les lois naturelles. Hume affirme que si quelqu'un cherchait à le persuader qu'il a vu un mort ressuscité à la vie, il chercherait alors à déterminer le degré de probabilité de l'intention de le tromper par rapport au degré de probabilité que l'événement rapporté se soit réellement produit. Il précise alors qu'il optera pour la situation la plus probable (Hume 1947, pp.162-166). Hume avance alors quatre raisons pour lesquelles nous sommes portés à rejeter la possibilité du miracle. La première raison est factuelle : aucun miracle n'a jamais été attesté par un nombre suffisant de personnes douées de bon sens, et possédant une éducation et une connaissance incontestables. La seconde raison est d'ordre épistémologique ; notre jugement se trouve fondé sur le plus grand nombre d'expériences observées, et même, lorsqu'un événement contredit ces expériences, nous restons toujours enclins à privilégier les situations les plus habituelles et les plus probables. Cette démarche prudente permet alors de démasquer les contrefaçons et les absurdités que l'intérêt humain pour l'extraordinaire n'a jamais manqué d'engendrer à travers les âges. La troisième raison est d'ordre historique : elle part du constat que le foisonnement de récits rapportant des faits surnaturels et miraculeux se produit essentiellement parmi les nations ignorantes et barbares, et cette raison ne concerne pas généralement nos contrées. La quatrième raison est d'ordre testimonial : soulignant que même si un prodige quelconque ne pouvait être réfuté, les différents témoignages venant confirmer l'événement surnaturel sont toujours contradictoires entre eux. Selon Hume, un miracle ne peut jamais être prouvé, et les preuves que l'on pourrait en donner se trouvent toujours contredites par des preuves contraires encore plus convaincantes. De plus, l'argument d'autorité, fondé sur la notoriété de la personne témoin du miracle, ne peut pas assurer la véracité de l'événement prodigieux (Hume 1947, pp.167-18).

Les critiques formulées à l'encontre de la théorie humienne du miracle

Hume cherche à nier la possibilité du miracle, car ne se produisant pas souvent, il s'oppose à nos habitudes et, par conséquent, contredit nos expériences. Ainsi, la mort constitue un fait universellement observé, alors que la résurrection reste un événement très rare. C'est pourquoi, un fait universellement établi, comme la mort, contredit un événement quasiment unique comme la résurrection.

En constituant les « bases raisonnables de croyances et d'opinions » (Hume, 1968, I, p.227) les démarches inductives et probabilistes, liées aux expériences observées, permettraient de rejeter la probabilité d'occurrence d'un événement unique. Par conséquent, des événements inhabituels, tels que le miracle, ne seraient jamais crédibles, même s'ils se sont réellement produits. Hume remet ainsi en question tout témoignage concernant un miracle qui se serait produit dans le passé, « sauf si le témoignage est de telle sorte que sa fausseté serait encore plus miraculeuse que le fait qu'il essaye d'établir » (Hume, 1947, p.166). Dans ce passage, Hume ne nie pas seulement la possibilité du miracle, mais également toute crédibilité concernant le témoignage venant attester l'occurrence d'un miracle. Il soutient ainsi que la preuve contre le miracle est du même genre que celle qui vient prouver la régularité naturelle (Fogelin, ,1990, p.84). Cependant, comme l'a souligné Norman L. Geisler, Hume valorise la croyance de ceux qui nient le miracle seulement en raison du fait qu'il se base uniquement sur le nombre d'observateurs, et non sur le degré de probabilité que le témoignage soit vrai. Il commet ainsi une erreur formelle du type *consensus gentium,* posant qu'une chose puisse devenir crédible du simple fait qu'elle soit crue par une majorité de personnes. Or, il s'agit là d'un sophisme qui opère un passage de l'énoncé d'ordre intensionnel : « tout le monde pense ou croit que P est vrai », à l'énoncé d'ordre extensionnel : « P est vrai ». Cette confusion entre deux ordres sémantiques hétérogènes se trouve, comme nous l'avons montré par ailleurs, au fondement même du procès de sécularisation spinoziste (Rozenberg, 2023, pp.35-41). Hume, qui fait dépendre le degré de vraisemblance de la probabilité d'occurrence de l'événement, confond en fait la « quantité » de vraisemblance ou d'évidence avec sa « qualité ».

La démarche de Hume porte sur deux types de probabilité, celle relative au miracle lui-même, et celle portant sur son témoignage. Cependant Hume applique, sans justification, des résultats concernant le second type de probabilité au premier type. Cela permet alors à Hume, comme le souligne George L. Mavrodes, de généraliser son expérience personnelle de n'avoir jamais assisté à un miracle, à l'ensemble de l'humanité, dont certains membres prétendent pourtant avoir été témoins d'événements miraculeux (Mavrodes, 1998, p.180). Pour qu'un tel déni puisse être légitime, il faudrait pouvoir le vérifier sur l'ensemble de la planète, ce qui représente une opération impossible à réaliser. Nous pensons que, d'un point de vue sémantique, le raisonnement de Hume est similaire à celui de Spinoza. Comme nous l'avons mentionné précédemment, et développé par ailleurs, le monisme de la substance repose sur un passage illégitime, de notions d'ordre intensionnel, comme celle de *natura naturans* qui est unique, à celles d'ordre extensionnel, comme celles de *na-*

tura naturata constituée par la multiplicité des modes finis (Rozenberg, 2003, pp.40-41). Ici de même, Hume cherche à projeter son expérience personnelle, qui est d'ordre intensionnel, et qui ne saurait être substituée *salva veritate*, à la classe de tous les humains, qui est d'ordre extensionnel. De même, il ne déduit nullement la transition qu'il tente d'opérer entre la probabilité portant sur le miracle, qui est unique et d'ordre intensionnel, à celle portant sur le témoignage qui, dans le cas des miracles bibliques, concerne la classe extensionnelle d'une multiplicité d'observateur, voire d'un peuple entier comme, par exemple, lors du passage de la Mer Rouge.

George Campbell, qui a publié une critique de la théorie humienne du miracle, quatorze ans après *l'Enquête sur l'Entendement Humain* de Hume, soulignait que la rareté d'un événement ne constitue jamais une raison pour nier la réalité de son occurrence. Il notait que l'approche de Hume est contraire au sens commun, prenant ainsi l'exemple d'un bac que des milliers de personnes ont déjà utilisé pour traverser un fleuve. Supposons qu'une personne vienne témoigner que ce bac a coulé, le sens commun déclarera immédiatement qu'un tel témoignage, même s'il est fourni par une personne, mais digne de foi, donne une assurance probable de la vérité du fait rapporté, bien qu'il soit unique et contredise la réalité habituelle (Campbell, 1765, pp.18-20(. Qu'un événement, d'origine naturelle ou non, puisse apparaître comme contraire à l'expérience, ne le rend pas pour autant impossible (Campbell, 1765, pp.41-44). D'un point de vue méthodologique, Campbell qualifiait le raisonnement de Hume de pur sophisme. En effet, tout en prétendant être général, son raisonnement ne se rapporte qu'à des cas particuliers. De plus son exigence de présenter des causes est incohérente, dans la mesure où la vraie cause du miracle étant d'origine divine, on ne saurait alors recourir à la causalité naturelle (Campbell 1765. pp.241-242). Une telle exigence contredit l'impossibilité logique que soulignera John Stuart Mill d'admettre la validité des lois de la nature, tout en croyant à un fait qui vient les démentir (Mill, 1930, p.409).

La philosophie juive médiévale a tenté d'apporter une solution à cette contradiction. Ainsi R. Eliah Delmedigo (1458-1493), dans son ouvrage *Behynat ha-Dat* que Spinoza possédait, part de la distinction maimonidienne entre l'impossibilité logique et l'impossibilité factuelle ou naturelle (Maimonide, 1979, pp.205-210). Il différencie entre les impossibilités qui sont d'ordre essentiel et celles qui sont impossibles uniquement dans le domaine naturel. Il anticipe ainsi la distinction kantienne entre l'opposition logique et l'opposition réelle (Kant, 1970, p.98). S'il est logiquement impossible que la partie soit plus grande que le tout, par contre, ce n'est que par référence aux lois de la nature qu'il apparaît comme étant impossible que, par exemple, les morts puissent revivre, ou qu'une personne soit en mesure de survivre quarante jours sans boire ni manger. Au contraire des lois logiques, Dieu peut, au besoin, modifier la nature qu'Il a créée (Delmedigo, 1629, pp.5b-6a).

De même, du point de vue probabiliste que nous avons examiné précédemment, il n'est pas contradictoire de poser simultanément une probabilité faible qu'un événement puisse se produise et, sur la base d'une observation présente ou d'un témoignage fiable, la possibilité que ce même événement soit fortement vraisemblable, voire même certain. En ce sens, il est possible de comprendre qu'il n'y ait aucune contradiction logique à considérer le miracle comme une expression naturelle de causes elles-mêmes supranaturelles (Mumford, 2001, pp.191-202). De plus, la validité de l'argument humien semble limitée à un seul observateur, mais ne paraît pas pertinent dans le cas de plusieurs observateurs indépendants, dont les témoignages ont tous été vérifiés comme étant concordants. Dans ce cas, l'observation correcte est plus probable d'être véridique que l'observation incorrecte (Kruskal, 1988, p.932). Comme nous le verrons avec l'examen du théorème de Bayses, il est toujours possible d'évaluer la probabilité *a posteriori* d'une hypothèse dont on connait la probabilité *a priori*. En fait, la négation d'une telle possibilité en viendrait alors à contester toute croyance portant sur l'occurrence d'événements passés, du fait qu'ils soient inusuels ou uniques, venant ainsi rejeter la possibilité même de l'historiographie (Geisler, 1997, pp.77-79 et p.97). Rappelons que, d'un point de vue épistémologique, toute exception se produisant dans le présent est toujours susceptible de remettre en question l'enseignement de nos expériences du passé. La possibilité de telles exceptions constitue en fait la condition même du progrès de la science, dans la mesure où elles permettent de changer de paradigme scientifique. Ainsi par exemple, ce sont les faits exceptionnels, inexpliqués par la théorie newtonienne de la gravitation, qui ont poussé Einstein à élaborer la théorie de la relativité (Bachelard, 1968, p.42). L'approche scientifique du monde, basée sur l'observation de faits réguliers et récurrents, rencontre l'événement singulier comme un horizon heuristique. La prise en compte de l'exception permet d'abord de forger une hypothèse, ensuite de tenter de la vérifier expérimentalement en fonction des relations causales observées, et enfin de mettre en évidence des phénomènes uniques et non réitérables (Flew, 1961, pp.205-208).

Hume et le théorème de Bayes

La logique de Hume repose sur une pétition de principe, qui implique de considérer comme vrai ce qu'il s'agit précisément de prouver. La valeur de vérité de la proposition : « aucun homme ne peut ressusciter », dépend de la vérité préalable de sa prémisse. Celle-ci doit être établie sur la base de la connaissance certaine qu'un tel événement ne s'est jamais produit dans le passé. Concernant la Bible, la vérité d'une telle prémisse n'a jamais été prouvée, mais seulement posée ou inférée à partir de l'hypothèse préjudicielle selon laquelle les récits bibliques ou autres histoires religieuses sont faux, sans toutefois se rapporter aux témoignages oraux ou écrits, qui affirment précisément le contraire (Schlesinger, 1987, p.220). C'est pourquoi l'épistémologie humienne, posant que des conjonctions constantes de l'expérience passée on ne saurait rien conclure de nécessaire concernant le futur, interdit finalement, contre Hume lui-même, de dénier, sur la base d'expériences passées, l'occurrence d'un miracle. En conséquence, la possibilité de faits miraculeux, en tant que singularité unique, reste entière (Schmitt, 2012, pp.49-71).

Thomas Bayes, qui était contemporain de Hume et avait lu ses œuvres, a établi, en 1763, un théorème permettant de dépasser la dichotomie entre l'habituel et l'exceptionnel, ainsi que d'attribuer un degré de probabilité à toute observation quelle que soit la nature de son objet et de ses variables, même s'il subsiste une certaine incertitude quant à son occurrence (Bayes & Price, 1763, p. 370-418 ; Earman, 2002, pp 91-92). Ce théorème peut être présenté sous la forme simplifiée suivante :

$$P\ (HIE) = P\ (EIH) \times P\ (H) / P\ (E).$$

La formule de gauche P (HIE) exprime la probabilité de l'évidence ou du moins de la vraisemblance (E) d'un témoignage qui reste fonction de l'hypothèse H. Elle vise à mettre au jour et à déterminer le degré de crédibilité que l'on peut accorder à ce témoignage. La formule de droite présente trois probabilités : la première P (EIH) concerne la probabilité de l'évidence (E) selon laquelle le témoignage soit vrai, et elle reste liée à l'hypothèse H. Elle cherche à déterminer son degré de vraisemblance. Les deux autres probabilités, P (H) et P (E), expriment les degrés de crédibilité qu'il convient d'attribuer, d'abord à l'hypothèse (H), avant que l'évidence (E) ne soit confirmée, et ensuite le degré de crédibilité se rapportant à cette évidence. La probabilité *a posteriori* de l'hypothèse concernant l'évidence, dans notre cas le témoignage dont il s'agit d'évaluer le degré de probabilité, est identique à la probabilité de l'évidence soutenue par l'hypothèse, lorsqu'elle se trouve multipliée par la probabilité *a priori* de l'hypothèse elle-même, puis divisée par la probabilité de l'évidence. Il devient ainsi possible d'établir le degré d'évidence d'une information, à partir de l'évaluation d'une hypothèse de départ (Lipton, 2004, pp.103-4 ; Engel, 2005, pp.58-72).

Le théorème de Bayes permet de calculer la probabilité d'hypothèses qui ne sont pas empiriquement vérifiables, et conséquemment il semble pouvoir s'appliquer au champ méta-naturel (Holder, 1998, pp.49-65). Concernant la question du miracle, ce théorème permet d'apprécier la *ratio* entre sa probabilité d'occurrence et la crédibilité des témoignages qui s'y rapportent, en donnant une place prépondérante au témoignage probable portant sur un événement particulier (Dawid, Gillies, 1989 ; Johnson, 1999, p.56). En ce sens, Locke posait que la connaissance par témoignage « renferme une parfaite certitude, et est en effet une véritable connaissance ». C'est pourquoi les miracles, « une fois bien attestés, trouvent non seulement créance pour eux-mêmes, mais la communiquent à d'autres vérités » (Locke, 1735, pp.430, 554-555 ; Pouivet, 2006, pp.12-13). Près de deux siècles après la formulation du théorème de Bayes, celle de Cox-Jaynes (1946) permettra de formaliser le concept de plausibilité sur une base rationnelle inductive, en calculant ses différents degrés, tout en évaluant la probabilité pour qu'un événement se produise indépendamment de sa fréquence (Cox, 1946, pp.1-13; Van Horn, 2003, pp.3-24). Elle confirmera ainsi la thèse de C. S. Peirce, selon laquelle la plausibilité d'une hypothèse devient indubitablement un argument de poids en faveur de la vérité de cette hypothèse (Peirce, 1937, VI, § 488).

De plus, la notion humienne de conjonction constante, distincte de celle de connexion nécessaire, loin de réfuter celle de miracle, lui donne en fait toute sa légitimité, puisqu'elle rend toujours possible l'émergence d'un événement futur, sans aucune relation nécessaire à un état présent ou passé au sein d'un processus permanent de création continuée (Dessler 1982, pp.183-184). Ainsi, paradoxalement, la critique humienne des miracles, tout en dérivant de sa théorie de la causalité, finit par la contredire (Levine, 1989, p.3). Cette contradiction semble avoir obligé Hume à retenir finalement le fidéisme. En effet, dans le chapitre X de *l'Enquête sur l'entendement humain*, Hume opère un total revirement concernant les notions de miracle et de prophétie. Parlant de l'Ecriture et des miracles qui s'y trouvent rapportés, il souligne que si la pure raison ne parvient pas à établir sa véracité, « quiconque est mû par la foi à y donner son assentiment est conscient d'un miracle continu dans sa propre personne, qui bouleverse tous les principes de son entendement et lui donne une détermination à croire ce qui est le plus contraire à la coutume et à l'expérience » (Hume 1947, p.185). En fait, Hume ne rejetait pas le merveilleux, ni même le miracle, considérés pour eux-mêmes, mais il cherchait d'abord à interroger la cohérence du domaine religieux (Campbell 1765. pp.60-66). Sa thèse sur le miracle dérive elle-même d'une décision théorique préalable non interrogée. C'est pourquoi, l'affirmation ou la négation de la possibilité du miracle ne dépend finalement que des hypothèses que chacun pose au départ de sa réflexion, et dont les axiomes premiers découlent toujours de l'acceptation ou du refus préalables des notions de création et de Révélation, et finalement de de l'affirmation de la notion d'immanence (Keener 2011, p.138).

Le témoignage et les fondements d'une connaissance testimoniale

Spinoza rappelle que l'authentification des prophètes bibliques exigeait un examen minutieux devant un tribunal, et que c'était finalement le témoignage (*testimonio*), attestant leur authenticité, qui venait valider leur statut de prophète (Spinoza 1999, pp.566-567). Cependant, Spinoza assimile le témoignage à la connaissance par ouï-dire (*ex auditu*) (Spinoza, 1954 a, II, 1-2; Spinoza 1954 b, §19; Spinoza 2010, II, 40, scolie II), et Alexandre Koyré souligne que la critique de cette connaissance, foncièrement imparfaite, devait constituer, pour Spinoza, un prélude à la critique de la foi (*fides ex auditu*) et de la connaissance historique basée sur la tradition (*fides historia*) (Koyré, 1994, p.101, note 18). C'est précisément ce projet que Spinoza tentera de réaliser dans le *TTP*, en posant que le témoignage de l'Ecriture, au contraire de la certitude mathématique, constitue une simple certitude morale (Spinoza 1999, pp.494-495), et il sera, sur ce point, suivi par Hume (Hume 2008, p.92).

Notons que le contemporain de David Hume, Thomas Reid, s'est opposé à l'auteur du *Traité de la Nature Humaine,* en suggérant que l'exemple de l'apprentissage de la langue maternelle montre que les mots et leur sens ont été transmis de façon fiable de génération en génération et que les hommes continueront à s'en servir, bien qu'ils soient toujours en mesure de les modifier. Le témoignage est la condition même du langage, et par conséquent de toute éducation. Il constitue une conviction qui ne dérive ni de l'expérience, ni du raisonnement, ni d'aucune convention. Le témoignage relève du « principe de crédulité » qui, avec le « principe de véracité », se trouve ancré dans la nature primitive de l'homme (Reid 1828, pp.341-348).

Cette perspective a été reprise par les philosophes contemporains du langage. Ainsi, Donald H. Davidson souligne qu'aucune interprétation des propos d'autrui n'est possible sans ce qu'il nomme le « principe de charité », par lequel nous lui accordons le fait qu'il ait raison dans la plupart de ses propos (Davidson 1984, p.197). Par ailleurs, parmi les quatre principes de la conversation, Paul Grice retient une maxime de qualité qui prescrit de dire la vérité (Grice 1975, pp.41-58). Ainsi, l'ensemble des rapports humains n'est possible que si l'on accorde toujours à autrui une présomption de vérité, valable jusqu'à preuve du contraire. En fait, il ne s'agit pas de rendre tout crédible, mais seulement de remettre en cause l'idée selon laquelle une authentique connaissance ne puisse être directement acquise par un témoignage. De même qu'il est possible de savoir perceptivement, on peut aussi connaître de façon testimoniale (Chauvier 2005, p.29).

Cette thèse s'oppose à celle que développait Spinoza, donnant comme exemple de connaissance par ouï-dire, celui des informations dont chacun dispose concernant sa date de naissance ou l'identité de ses parents (Spinoza 1954 b § 19). Or, ces exemples ne relèvent pas de l'ouï-dire, mais d'une forte présomption de véracité que, généralement, personne ne remet en cause, sauf à preuve du contraire (dans le cas où, par exemple, la parenté adoptive vient se substituer à la parenté biologique). Ces informations, transmises dans la prime enfance, déterminent l'identité individuelle et se révèlent généralement exactes. En cas de défaillance dans la transmission du nom de l'enfant et des informations portant sur la parenté, on a alors pu décrire des formes de « dés-identification» présentant des clivages aliénants du sujet concerné par une telle défaillance (Faimberg, 1993, p.70). Il est possible que les remarques étonnantes de Spinoza, concernant la question de la nomination familiale, soient liées à une pratique juridique spécifique au Portugal. En effet, déjà au XVII^{e} siècle, et jusqu'au troisième quart du XX^{e} siècle, la législation portugaise définissait le « droit au nom » d'une façon particulière. Elle permettait à l'enfant de porter plusieurs noms de famille, parmi lesquels le ou les noms maternel(s) qui précédai(en)t toujours le ou les noms paternel(s) (dos. Santos,1999, p.206). Au contraire, pour la Tradition juive, à laquelle Spinoza a appartenu jusqu'à son excommunication, la référence familiale est patrilinéaire et passe par la transmission du nom du père (Talmud 1970, *Yebamot* 54b). D'une façon générale l'identité trans-générationnelle possède un degré de certitude bien supérieure à celle de la connaissance par ouï-dire, qui reste problématique. En ce sens le *Talmud*, qui a établi des procédés draconiens de vérification des témoignages, souligne en même temps qu'il est interdit de croire une rumeur et de la poser comme vraie, bien qu'on doive toujours se méfier de ceux auxquels la rumeur se réfère afin de se protéger d'un danger éventuel (Talmud, 1970, *Nydah* 61a).

Notre analyse a cherché à éclaircir les problèmes posés par les théories spinoziste et humienne concernant, d'une part la question du miracle, et d'autre part celle du témoignage. Nous avons alors proposé une approche épistémologique qui a porté également sur des thèmes divers comme le théorème de Bayses et la connaissance testimoniale. Nous avons rappelé certaines sources qui, dans la Tradition juive, concernent aussi bien la croyance, la certitude, que le statut qu'il convient d'accorder à la notion de miracle. Les difficultés que nous avons soulignées, aussi bien chez Spinoza que chez Hume, demanderaient à réexaminer, de façon de façon systématique, ces questions dans une perspective à la fois traditionnelle et contemporaine.

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On the Necessity and Freedom of God in Schelling's *Ages of the World*

Abstract: In this essay, based on the text of the *Ages of the World*, Schelling's solution to the pantheism controversy is analyzed and commented on concerning the unification of God's necessity and freedom in creation. Schelling has distinguished two wills of God, the first is called 'self-will', the second is called 'love'. A God in 'equilibrium of choice' is described by the process of the emergence of self-will and the interaction between the two wills. In this equilibrium the two wills are equal in power: self-will does not want to create, whereas love wants to create. With the incomprehensible freedom of God creation is decided, this decision is of 'necessity of fact' in that it has to be accepted without any explanation of 'necessity of reason'. According to Schelling, the unification of God's necessity and freedom in creation can be summarized as follows: Firstly the creation itself is factual necessary because it is the result of the incomprehensible freedom of God. Secondly the creation is realized on the basis of the 'character' self-will provides, which is also factual necessary because it is the result of the incomprehensible freedom of 'Godhead'. The freedom in creation is realized by overcoming this factual necessity. Thirdly the incomprehensible freedom of creation is in accordance with the 'necessity of nature' of God, which is love. Thus creation is the only option for God. It is clear that Schelling's solution is highly religiously transcendent.

However, a rationalistic description underlies his religiously transcendent description of God's creation. These two kinds of descriptions are irreconcilable, in that the first seeks to give rationally necessary explanation to creation, while the second excludes any explanation and emphasizes on the incomprehensibility of freedom in creation. On the basis of textual analysis it is proved that both necessity of fact and necessity of nature are in fact deduced from dialectics. This use of dialectics is called the 'principle of equilibrium', which indeed stands for necessity of reason, conflicting with the incomprehensibility of freedom. Thus Schelling's solution is paradoxical, and his response to Spinoza's pantheism controversy is not successful.

Key Words: Schelling, Creation, Necessity, Freedom, Principle of equilibrium

1. Introduction

In the doctrine of Christianity it is believed that God has created the world in a transcendent way with absolute freedom, while in philosophy it is required that everything needs to be rationalized. With the great influence Christianity has over philosophy and the self consciousness of subjectivity of human being in the context of Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation, it has become a question to understand in a rational way the free creation of God. However, this pursuit of understanding concerns a tension between necessity and freedom which is hard to tackle: if the world is created by God by necessity of reason, God then is immanent in the world and loses its transcendence. And if God has created the world with absolute freedom, then even though the transcendence of God is posited, God itself and the world become therefore incomprehensible, in that creation is beyond reason.

The answer to this question is one of the main themes of Spinoza's philosophy, who is deemed as one of the origins of classical German philosophy. In his system, to protect comprehensibility of the world and God, he opposes the transcendent doctrine of God in Christianity and establishes an immanent ontology where everything is comprehensible through the necessity of reason. For him, God is the only substance with infinite attributes, from which, through the necessity of the divine nature, all the finite things called modes follow. And this necessity of the divine nature is comprehensible in that the nature of God is *causa sui*, which means the essence of God includes its existence. This relation between God and the world is described by Spinoza in Proposition 16 of *Ethics* as follows:

> From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes.[1]

It is obvious that the relation between God and the world in Spinoza is explained by necessity of reason, which is as certain and determined as the relation between a triangle and the sum of its three angles. The unification of necessity and freedom of God is resolved in Spinoza through the cancellation of a transcendent figure of God. God's freedom, for Spinoza, does not consist in its transcendence, rather it is free in that it follows its own necessity, which is comprehensible.

But it is just because Spinoza denies the transcendence of God that his philosophy was widely criticized in the 17th. and 18th. century. It is in the sense of immanence that Toland invents the term 'Pantheism' to describe Spinoza's philosophy, which, in the eyes of many scholars back then, equals to blind necessity without freedom.[2] Jacobi, following along this understanding of Spinoza, concludes in his pantheism controversy with Mendelssohn that philosophy, which is based on reason, can never reconcile with religion, which is based on the belief of the transcendence of God.[3] The tension between the necessity and freedom of God is henceforth for Jacobi unsolvable.

The pantheism controversy around Spinoza's philosophy deeply affected classical German philosophy. Almost every representative of this period has responded to Jacobi's conclusion. Schelling, of course, as a philosopher who considers himself as in constant dialogue with Spinoza, tries in different ways in his lifetime to answer the question Spinoza poses concerning the unification of the necessity and freedom of God. In his early period when he is a strict rationalist, he thinks positively of Spinoza's version of the unification of necessity and freedom of God. In his middle and late period, because of the influence on him by Christianity, Böhme, etc., he emphasizes more on the incomprehensibility of God and takes a critical stance concerning Spinoza's solution and this period is of interest for this paper. To have a basic impression of Schelling's attitude, we can have a look at these two excerpts Schelling writes in the *Ages of the World*[4] and *Freedom Essay*:

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[1] Spinoza, *Ethics*, 424.

[2] Cf. Knappik, "What is Wrong with Blind Necessity? Schelling's Critique of Spinoza's Necessitarianism in the *Freedom Essay*".

[3] Cf. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*.

> Spinoza knows that powerful balance of the primordial forces that he opposes to one another as the extended primordial force (hence, no doubt originally contracting?) and the thinking primordial force (no doubt, on account of the antithesis, extending, expanding?). But he only knows the balance, but not the conflict that emerges out of the equipollence. Both forces are juxtaposed in inactivity, without reciprocal excitation or intensification. Hence, the duality is lost in favor of the unity. Consequently, his substance, or the common being of both essences, persists in an eternal, immobile, inactive parity.[5]
>
> For, until the discovery of idealism, a genuine concept of freedom was lacking in all the more recent systems, in that of Leibniz as well as in that of Spinoza.[6]

It is clear by these comments on Spinoza that Schelling's attitude in this period is two-sided. On the one hand he admits the importance of Spinoza's rational ontology, in that it understands the equilibrium between extension and thought. On the other hand, however, he loses by his rational account of God its transcendent freedom. For Schelling, the true freedom of God is possible only when God has inner wills which are interacting with each other. The unification of necessity and freedom of God can only, according to him, be realized under his dynamic description of God's wills.

The late Schelling's monumental work *Ages of the World* concerns, among others, specifically the answer to the aforesaid question. It is the purpose of this paper to give an account of Schelling's response to the pantheism controversy in his book, and to analyze whether Schelling's response is logically tenable. In the following parts I will firstly introduce the plan Schelling aims to realize in *Ages of the World*, where it can be seen that he uses a special form of dialectics, which is called the 'principle of equilibrium' (Gleichgewichtsprinzip) by Zeltner,[7] to describe the whole process of God's creation and self revelation. The focus then is paid on how for God creation is, according to Schelling, both rationally necessary and transcendentally free. In the third part I will point out that despite Schelling's seemingly plausible account of this unification, an irreconcilable contradiction underlies his whole theory in his book, in that he seeks to give necessity of reason, which is represented by the principle of equilibrium, to creation which is also incomprehensible. It is pointed out that in strict sense transcendent creation is necessary only when we think necessity as necessity of fact, which means creation is a factual truth that can only be accepted as fact without explanation. But Schelling tries to explain with necessity of reason what can not be explained, rendering his solution self-contradictory. After some textual analysis of *Ages of the World* and some refutations against contentions made by scholars in favor of Schelling, I conclude that Schelling really fails in his *Ages of the World* to reconcile the necessity and freedom of God.

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[4] There are three English versions of the *Ages of the World* used in this paper, they are the draft of 1811 translated by Joseph P. Lawrence, the draft of 1813 translated by Judith Norman, and the fragment translated by Jason M. Wirth (See bibliography). In the following passages I would refer to each of these translations as *Ages of the World (1811)*, *Ages of the World (1813)*, and *Ages of the World (Fragment)*. For some texts, where needed, I will translate it by myself from the German original texts. As for Schelling's *Niederlassung 81* of *Ages of the World* which was written in 1814, due to the lack of original texts, when needed, I will translate from the excellent Chinese translation by Gang Xian, and refer to it as *Ages of the World (1814)*.

[5] *Ages of the World (Fragment)*, 104-105.

[6] Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, 17.

[7] Zeltner, "Gleichgewicht als Seinsprinzip. Schellings Philosophie des Gleichgewichts", 495-508.

2. From Godhead to the God in necessity

2.1. Scheme of Ages of the World and the Principle of Equilibrium

What Schelling aims to do in his long-term writing of the *Ages of the World* is to describe the whole process of the ages from before creation to the final unification of the world in God. The term 'ages' is in plural form, which stands for Schelling's original scheme in this book. He wants to divide the whole process into three parts: the Past, the Present and the Future. These three ages concern a conception of time of Schelling which is very different from the ordinary use. The Past does not refer to the moments of time before the current moment, it rather refers to the ground of time, the past of the existence of time, which means the condition or ground of the current world. It is preworldly (vorweltlich), it is the God before creation, which transcends time in an absolute way. The Present, too, does not merely refer to the current moment of time, it rather stands for the whole range of the time that we live, where everything changes constantly in the movement of contradiction. And the Future here also signifies an absolute future, which does not mean the moments after the current moment, but means the age which transcends the current world and where time, change, movement of contradiction no longer show themselves and are unified in the highest form of unification.

This whole process is represented as the description of God's self realization in *Ages of the World*. According to Schelling, contradiction first comes about in the absolute state of equilibrium of Godhead (Gottheit), which intensifies itself to the next state of equilibrium. In this state of equilibrium the God decides to create the world in a necessary and free manner, which makes this whole process before the actual world the Past. And it is by the movement of contradiction that this present world has that all the contradictions are reconciled in the highest form of unification in God, which is the highest state of equilibrium, representing the Future.

Although Schelling's long-term writing of *Ages of the World* does not finish as a completed work, and all the versions Schelling leaves us are about the Past, which never actually comes to the Present nor to the Future, however, it is worthwhile to notice from the original scheme of Schelling the principle of equilibrium that underlies his whole theory. This principle represents Schelling's method of dialectics, which means Schelling believes that the dialectical process of everything starts from a state of equilibrium without contradiction, to a state with continually intensified contradiction and ends up with a higher state of equilibrium without contradiction, ad infinitum.[8] As we are going to see in the following discussion, Schelling uses his principle of equilibrium to give the free creation necessity of reason, which, as we are going to prove, is self-contradictory.

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[8] The principle of equilibrium is the cornerstone of Schelling's dialectics. He has used this principle as his rationalistic principle throughout his whole life, for a more detailed knowledge of Schelling's use of this principle in his different phases, one can refer to Zeltner's work mentioned above.

2.2. The State of Equilibrium of Godhead

For Schelling the initial phase of God is called Godhead, which is the origin of everything and maintains its transcendence and freedom in absolute sense. The path through which Schelling finds Godhead is dialectical, he notices in this changing world that everything on the one hand keeps to itself and resists development, but on the other hand tends to transcend itself and to realize what it essentially is. These two aspects reflect the movement of contradiction of the changing world, the first is often called Object by Schelling in the sense of resistance, the latter is often called Subject by Schelling in the sense of activity. The world is thus a world of the contradiction between Object and Subject. However, this world is not just about contradiction, it is also about reconciliation and reunification, it moves towards stillness where contradiction is reconciled. According to Schelling's principle of equilibrium, one can by observing the world deduce from contradiction a state without contradiction, this is a state of equilibrium, or as Schelling puts it, a state of indifference (Indifferenz) between Object and Subject, which he terms Godhead.

What does it precisely mean when Schelling says the Godhead is indifferent of Object and Subject? He uses language analysis as an example to demonstrate his point, Godhead is for him like a subject of a sentence, and Object and Subject are like predicates of a sentence. On the one hand Godhead 'is' (ist) something that expresses itself as predicates, and in this sense Godhead is the 'expressive' (das Aussprechende) of the predicates, which expresses itself into the movement of contradiction between Object and Subject in the world. While on the other hand, Godhead 'is' at the same time not its predicates. The copula 'is' does not only refer to the identity between subject and predicates, it refers as well to their difference. Both subject and predicates are respectively independent, so the Godhead has some aspects which is not the predicates, and the predicates develop something more from the subject. Therefore, the subject 'Godhead' has an aspect that transcends the predicates 'Object and Subject', and the predicates 'Object and Subject' has an aspect that develops from the subject.

It is by this example that we know what it means for Godhead to be indifferent: it means not only that Godhead can express itself in the world as the movement of contradiction between Object and Subject, but also that independently speaking, Godhead is neither Object nor Subject, rather a total transcendent absolute. In this sense Godhead is indifferent to whether to express itself in the world or not, it is indifferent to existence (Existenz) because Godhead transcends all things. Schelling thus terms Godhead in this respect 'a will that does not want' (der Wille, der nichts will). Since Godhead is indifferent, it actually does not care about expressing itself as existence, neither does it care about keeping its transcendence. It is in all ways uninterested, thus Schelling describes Godhead in comparison with a child as follows:

> Look at a child, the way it rests in itself without distinction, and you will perceive a picture of purest divinity. We have elsewhere called the supreme the true and absolute unity of subject and

> object; because it is neither the one nor the other, it is yet the power to be either, or both. It is pure freedom in itself, the calm bliss (die gelassene Wonne) that, oblivious of itself, is so full and content with itself that it has nothing to think about. It is the quiet soulful inwardness (Innigkeit) that takes joy in its own nonbeing.[9]

This is to say that Godhead is in a purely transcendent state of equilibrium, it can come to exist, and it can not come to exist. These two aspects are indifferent to Godhead which represent Godhead's highest freedom, or use Schelling's term, Godhead's 'eternal freedom' (die ewige Freiheit). And since Godhead is in a state of equilibrium, it is thus detached to any of the options it has, everything it chooses is based purely on its eternal freedom, which is unconditional, and henceforth incomprehensible. The decision made by Godhead is a fact that one has to accept, it is necessary in that it is the necessity of fact, just as Schelling puts it:

> For any act, as long as it comes from a kind of unconditional freedom, is absolute; it appears, just because it appears as such, there is no ground; in other words, it is the ground of itself, because it is something absolutely free, but just because of this, it is also something absolutely necessary.[10]

The result of this unconditional freedom is, as we shall see in the following, the self engendering of the self-will, which is for Schelling a necessity of fact, providing a basis or, in Schelling's term, character (Charakter) for the creation of the world.

2.3. The Self-Will and the Love

The Godhead, which is in its calm bliss and soulful inwardness, is indifferent to all things, this indifference, deemed as nature of it, is also interpreted by Schelling as 'the purest love' (die reinste Liebe), since it is undiscriminating to all and shares itself with its expanding force. According to the necessity of its nature, Godhead can not always keep its calmness and indifference, it is to give itself out and share itself by expansion. As the expressive of the predicates 'Object' and 'Subject', Godhead includes these potentially, and in the respect that Godhead 'is' its predicates, Object and Subject get in touch with each other in an unconscious way. This longing (Sehnsucht) is a longing to find itself, and to be conscious of itself. For this Schelling writes:

> As we could imagine, the separate poles of a magnet are in a constant, unconscious longing by virtue of which they would strive to get to each other and would eagerly take the means at hand to obtain each other.[11]

Since Godhead 'is' and at the same 'is not' Object and Subject, it represents itself thus in both of these aspects. The former aspect is expressed through the self-will in Godhead, which longs to express these predicates. And this self-will is not a will that does not want, it actually wants something, and this something is existence. The latter aspect is represented in that the Godhead is still a will which does not want, it is still transcendent from existence. Hence, the self-will is not actively produced by Godhead, it is rather an independent will that engenders itself in Godhead by incomprehensible means, which proves the absolute freedom of God. To get a closer look of how this comes about, Schelling gives an example to let us recall how a new will emerges in a transcendent state of mind in human being:

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[9] *Ages of the World (1811)*, p. 72.

[10] *Ages of the World (1814)*, p. 249.

[11] *Ages of the World (1813)*, p. 137, re-translated. The original text is "Wie wir uns vorstellen können, daß die getrennten Pole eines Magnetes in einer beständigen, unbewußten Sehnsucht sind, kraft der sie an

> So think to yourself, if you have ever enjoyed such, those rare moments of blissful and perfect satisfaction, when the heart desires nothing, when you could wish that they would remain forever as they are, and which are really to you as eternity; Think of such moments and try to remember how in these very moments, unconsciously, without you being able to do anything about it or defend yourself against it, a will is generated again, which in a short time draws you to itself and into active life carries away; Remember this, and you will have an approximate picture of what we are attempting to describe here.[12]

It is very perplexing and hard to imagine this kind of moment, however, just because this process is hard to rationalize, it is then a proof that God's freedom is absolute. Self-will engenders itself through this mysterious process, which acts as a contracting force to give God a determination or limitation. Since Godhead or the purest love is an expanding force which only expands but never stops, it is by itself thus a force beyond existence without determination or limitation. It is by the contracting force of the self-will that the purest love is limited, and it is by this limitation that love becomes active. The self-will, in this sense, cooperates with love and makes God a God with determination, a God that contracts itself and connects with itself, which is a unification of the two wills led by the contracting force, where the two wills are happy to find each other and to keep in touch with one another. This unification of the two wills is called 'the first active will' (der erste wirkende Wille), since the purest love as indifferent Godhead is not a will that is active.

By differentiating in God two kinds of will, Schelling responds to Spinoza's version of God which is *causa sui*. In Spinoza, since God's essence contains its existence, it is the ground (Grund) of itself. For Spinoza there is only one God, it has in strict sense no parts. But for Schelling, even though he also admits that God is *causa sui*, he opposes the view that the ground of God and God itself is the same. Schelling asks this question in the *Ages of the World*:

> Have not they too, and for the longest time, used the expression 'God is the ground of his own existence'! Was this ground just a word, or was something real meant thereby? As for words, we refuse to use them without attaching a meaning to them, incorporating concepts into philosophical science in the most precise way. As for what the something real might be, we conclude that there must be a real difference between God insofar as he is the ground of his existence and God insofar as he actually exists.[13]

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[12] *Ages of the World (1813)*, p. 137, re-translated, the original text is " Denke dir also, wenn du je solcher genossen, jene seltnen Augenblicke einer seligen und vollkommenen Genüge, da das Herz nichts verlangt, da du wünschen könntest, daß sie ewig blieben wie sie sind, und die dir wirklich als Ewigkeit sind; denke dir solche Augenblicke und suche dich zu erinnern wie in eben diesen, dir unbewußt, ohne daß du etwas dazu thun oder dich dessen erwehren kannst, schon wieder ein Wille sich erzeugt, der in kurzem dich wieder an sich zieht und in's wirkende Leben fortreißt; erinnere dich dessen, und du wirst darinn ein ohngefähres Bild dessen haben, was wir hier zu beschreiben unternehmen."

[13] *Ages of the World (1811)*, 103-104.

By this question Schelling poses another version of *causa sui*, which contains in itself two wills, i.e., love and self-will. He terms love as 'the one that actually is' (das Seyende), and self-will as 'the ground of its existence' (der Grund ihrer Existenz). A God that is purely the ground for itself is for Schelling not plausible, since how can a thing that does not yet exist be the cause of its existence? It is for Schelling more plausible, when he says that God, as the one that actually is and *causa sui*, needs in itself a ground for its existence. As a contracting force and a longing for existence, self-will brings the purest love limitation and thus existence. With this differentiation, not only is the concept of *causa sui* more tenable for Schelling, but also is Spinoza's system of blind necessity modified and improved. As we shall see in the following passages, the two wills guarantees, as Schelling believes, the true freedom of God, of which a pure rational version of God in Spinoza's system can not assure.

2.4. The Self-Will and the Necessity of Fact

Spinoza, as is commonly known, denies the will of God, and will of God is barely needed for God to be free in terms of necessity of nature, which is actually a form of necessity of reason. He writes in his *Ethics*:

> For the will, like all other things, requires a cause by which it is determined to exist and produce an effect in a certain way. And although from a given will, or intellect infinitely many things may follow, God still cannot be said, on that account, to act from freedom of the will, any more than he can be said to act from freedom of motion and rest on account of those things that follow from motion and rest (for infinitely many things also follow from motion and rest). So will does not pertain to God's nature any more than do the other natural things, but is related to him in the same way as motion and rest, and all the other things which, as we have shown, follow from the necessity of the divine nature and are determined by it to exist and produce an effect in a certain way.[14]

Spinoza believes that just like even though in the attribute of extension things exist in motion and rest, it does not imply that God makes that happen according to the freedom of motion and rest, rather, the motion and rest of things in extension just follows the necessity of nature. It is by the same token for the attribute of thought, for even though everything in the attribute of thought exists according to God's necessity, it does not imply that God makes that happen according to the freedom of will, which is a free cause, rather, these things come to be out of necessity, which does not change. In this sense, God does not have will that is out of this necessity, and God's freedom consists in that God is determined by itself.

For Schelling, however, though he agrees with Spinoza that God follows its own nature, and that the freedom in creation is in accordance with its nature, which is love, he can not approve of the denial of free will of God. For him God is will, and the will is the prerequisite for the freedom of God in creation, since freedom consists in God's incomprehensible choice out of the equilibrium between the will to create and the will not to create, which will be illustrated in the following sections. This state of equilibrium is formed along with the dynamic interaction of love and self-will, which makes the God contained or enclosed in itself. This containment is called the 'character' (Charakter) of God by Schelling, which is a unification of love and self-will in which the self-will is the 'bond' (Band) that contracts the God in its limitation, posing itself as the factual necessary ground for the free creation of God.

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[14] *Ethics*, Part I, Proposition 32, Corollary 2, 435-436.

Since the word 'Charakter' in common usage is mostly for describing the given disposition or constitution of human being, it is then noticeable that when Schelling calls the containment of God its 'character', he is being anthropomorphic in that he likens the containment of God to the character of human being, which are both factually necessary factor that have to be accepted beyond the explanation of reason. For Schelling the legitimacy of likening human being to God consists in the fact that since God is the origin of the world, everything in the world then has a mark of God, and because human beings have consciousness and ability to gain knowledge, they thus have the 'participatory knowledge' (Mitwissenschaft) of creation. And by this knowledge human beings know that God has will and character just like human beings do.[15]

Character, according to Schelling, is the prerequisite for a free act both of human being and of God. If an act of human being is not made out of their character, this act is not an act of freedom but an empty act. Only when the act is done on the basis of the character, one can be called free in the real sense. This character, as the inner limitation of human being, can not be chosen by one's preference but is factually there as something one has to accept, as something of the necessity of fact. It is by making decisions out of this necessity of fact which poses itself as the limitation of human being that one can make real free act. For God it is the same, if God is not limited in its containment, if God is always the purest love that incessantly expands, it then is just an empty will without content. It is only when the purest love is contracted by the limitation of the self-will that God starts to have content or determination, and this determination, since the emergence of self-will is incomprehensible, is something God has to accept as the necessity of fact. This determination or containment of God poses itself as the ground for the free act of God in creation, just as the character of human being poses itself as the basis for free human act. Concerning the character of God, Schelling writes:

> The contraction of the first active will, through which the most primal and lucid purity covers itself over with a being (ein Seyn), can be compared with the fathomless deed through which a human being, prior to engaging in any particular or temporal action, gathers itself into an inwardly determined nature (Wesen), giving itself what we call its character.[16]

Hence it is proposed by Schelling that the realization of God's expansion or love consists in the ground that it is firstly contained in the limitation of self-will, and the freedom of God can only be realized according to the necessity of its nature when this nature (love of course) is based on its limitation, which is the necessity of fact.

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[15] Anthropomorphism is a basic stance of the middle-late Schelling. For more detailed discussion on this issue, cf. Hennigfeld, "Der Mensch im absoluten System. Anthropologische Ansätze in der Philosophie Schellings", 1-22, or Schelling's correspondence with Eschenmayer concerning the *Freedom Essay*.

[16] *Ages of the World (1811)*, 153.

Nevertheless, one can still wonder why it is so that expansion, development or self-sharing must depend on limitation or self-concealment. To make his points clearer, Schelling gives out some examples from nature, which, by Schelling's logic of anthropomorphism, is also valid for the case of God. All the preliminary phase of the world is self enclosed: the stillness and mute indifference of the mountains is the beginning of the natural world, the self-concealment of embryo is the beginning of life, and the Egyptian pyramids and Indian monuments in their muteness are constructed by the primordial human beings. These examples show that for development or expansion it is necessary that limitation and self-concealment appears firstly as ground or foundation. Therefore it is also true for God, Schelling writes:

> All development presupposes envelopment. Why else would everything progress from the small into the large, given that, if it were simply a matter of something progressing, it could well enough have been the opposite? Beginning lies where there is attraction. All being is contraction. The fundamental force that draws things together is the truly original, root force of nature.[17]

By this extract one can see that the true freedom of God in creation, which is the victory of the expansion of love, is based on the limitation or contraction self-will provides, which emerges incomprehensibly from Godhead and poses itself as the necessity of fact.

3. God's Creation: Freedom in Necessity

3.1. The State of Equilibrium Between Love and Self-Will

As is shown in 2.3., the two wills of God are in good terms with each other in the beginning, where the self-will is the communicating bond that unites the two wills into 'the first active will', nevertheless, it is by the logic the principle of equilibrium that these two wills can not always keep this harmony, tension and contradiction must come about along with their dynamic interaction.

In the first place, love is contracted in the first active will, even though this gives love its being or content, it is no longer flowing out or self-sharing, rather, it is kept into a dormant state and controlled by the self-will. Since self-will is the band and communicator, it tries to show to love what it inherently contains by presenting image to love. And from this presentation there arises in love the 'idea' (Idee) of things that will come to be. Since strictly speaking, love and self-will are indifferent in Godhead, their inner content is then actually the same, though with different aspects. Hence in this presentation love gradually is aware of the things contained in itself and becomes awake.

The presentation in harmonious phase can be divided into mainly two phases:

In the first phase self-will, as existence that contains in itself things it will help become existent, activates in itself in advance the whole procedure of creation, which follows the principle of equilibrium, in that the two wills are going to reconcile with each other through creation. In the second phase self-will presents what it activates in itself before love to try to communicate with it. Love looks at this presentation peacefully and there arises in itself the aforesaid idea of things coming to be, Schelling writes:

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[17] *Ages of the World (1811)*, 83.

> But through just this pulling-toward, eternal being is at the same time pulled away from what-eternally-is and becomes an actual counterpoint (Gegenwurf) for it, in which what-eternally-is can perceive everything. Since what-eternally-is sees into the eternal being, the images of future things that arise in eternal being are revealed to it as well, and so these images indirectly reach up to the highest subject. In this state, everything that will one day be actual in nature passed before what-eternally-is.[18]

Tension and contradiction appear gradually through this presentation, as love gradually become aware of itself and is conscious of its nature, which is to share and to expand. This nature is for this phase limited by self-will, since it is the bond that unites the two wills together. Every attempt made by love to expand itself is checked back by the more powerful contracting self-will, which makes love realize that it is not the purest love it used to be. Hence it attempts even more to get rid of limitation, whereas self-will pulls it back every time by its contracting force. In this phase self-will no longer plays the role of bond, it is rather an obstacle for love that madly wants to take control of love, as Schelling describes:

> As long as the contracting force maintains its predominance over the expanding force, it will be stimulated by the emerging conflict, initially dull and muted, to act in a blind and unconscious way. Much like the play of forces within a dream, strong, powerful, and monstrous births erupt, unrestrained by unity. If the rational soul does not exert an influence, then these forces act for themselves. No longer in that original condition of soulful inwardness and clairvoyance, where interiority seems to be filled with light and where, in those who are blessed, prophetic visions flicker forth, the primal being, entangled in conflict, now finds itself brooding as if over oppressive dreams that come up from a remote past. Soon, however, as the conflict grows stronger, wild fantasies pass through its inner life, making it feel all of the terrors of its own nature.[19]

It is by the necessity of fact self-will provides that love realizes its status of limitation, that it begins to be awake, to 'come to itself' (zu-sich-selber-kommen). Before this phase, love is dormant no matter in Godhead as purest love, or in the first active will, but now, love is becoming more and more powerful to confront self-will. Gradually two equal powers, i.e., the power of expansion and the power of concealment, are opposing each other. Both sides have the equal right to claim what it wants, hence these two are in a state of equilibrium where the two powers are 'equal valid' (gleichgültig).[20]

What is to be noted is that, even though these two wills are equal valid, God as a unification is still in its contraction and concealment before creation, which means God is in its necessity. And just because these two wills are equal valid, one can not tell in advance which choice God is going to decide, though in retrospect, it is necessity of fact that God chooses to create, and this kind of necessity represents the highest freedom of God. God, in this sense, is again indifferent to either choice. It does not care to create or not to create, the world does not matter for God. For this Schelling writes:

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[18] *Ages of the World (1813)*, 154. "What-eternally-is" refers here to love, "eternal being" refers to self-will.

[19] *Ages of the World (1811)*, 100.

[20] The word "gleichgültig" literally means "equal valid", but in common usage it refers to indifference. The "Gleichgültigkeit" of Godhead is thus translated as "indifference". However, this does not imply that "gleichgültig" has two meanings in Schelling, rather, the state of "indifference" is a state where two powers are both valid in the same way. When one wants to emphasize the indifferent aspect, it can be translated into "indifference", and when one wants to emphasize the equilibrium of powers, it can be translated into "equal valid".

> How is a decision possible here? Perhaps someone might say that one of the wills is by nature subservient to the other, in which case it would necessarily be overcome by the other will, and this other would then be the victor. But this presupposition is false. Both wills are by nature equally important, each has the same right to be active, and it is necessarily true that neither retreats before the other. But all this must be the case if God is to appear the freest essence of all, if a necessary origin of the world is to be revealed rather than discovered, and if all that there is, exists only by virtue of the free, divine will.[21]

It is thus clear that God's decision, which this essay is about to describe, is beyond reason and hence incomprehensible.

3.2. Creation as Unification of Necessity and Freedom

The creation is, according to Schelling, incomprehensible, nevertheless, is can still be described. This description is made by Schelling through his anthropomorphic method in which he compares God's decision with human being's in face of a danger. He writes:

> you have fallen unexpectedly into danger, and, without understanding or deliberation, divine inspiration takes hold and you do the only thing that could save you.[22]

Just as when facing a danger, human beings do not decide by 'deliberation' (Überlegung), it is by an incomprehensible divine inspiration that human beings make the decision and solve the problem, God, too, when torn by the two equally valid wills (one wants to create and the other does not), makes the resolution to create, once and for all, instantly and incomprehensibly, which excludes any form of deliberation. The decision therefore is an incomprehensible 'miracle' (Wunder), and, at the same time, an act of the highest freedom. It is by the necessity of fact that God created the world that human beings know that God has set up a sequence for the two wills and makes this world the 'Present' in his big plan of the ages of the world, which moves towards a higher unification of the 'Future'.

The necessity of fact that God creates the world is in the same sense necessary with the emergence of self-will in Godhead. Schelling comments that this kind of necessity is concerned with a freedom 'in which there is neither (explicit) deliberation nor choice, a freedom that is itself fate and necessity.'[23]

This kind of description of creation is in direct opposed terms with Leibniz's theory of possible worlds, which is Leibniz's response to Spinoza's 'blind necessity'. He criticizes in *Theodicy* that the denial of will in God is the denial of God's freedom.[24] To unify God's necessity and freedom in creation, he asserts that God's creation is God's choice of will out of God's intellect. In his version he distinguishes different possible worlds and holds that the real world which, even though there are three kinds of evil, i.e., physical evil, moral evil and metaphysical evil, is the best possible for God's intellect to create. The real world thus is proved as the best world in accordance with reason.

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[21] *Ages of the World (1813)*, 171-172.

[22] *Ages of the World (1813)*, 175.

[23] *Ages of the World (1813)*, 175.

[24] Cf. Knappik, "What is Wrong with Blind Necessity? Schelling's Critique of Spinoza's Necessitarianism in the *Freedom Essay*", 129-157.

Leibniz's theory is strongly opposed by Schelling, he criticizes:

> The human understanding has a high regard for itself, assuming that it will always be in a position to choose, through art and cunning, the best among whatever options are available. At least this much should be assumed for God as well. Even so, to accord him no other freedom than to choose the best among many possible worlds is to grant him very little in the way of real freedom.[25]

For Schelling Leibniz's theory means that God hesitates in deliberation before creation, a deliberate God who chooses between choices indecisively is free in the lowest sense. Only God that decides incomprehensibly and instantly can be called free. However, this decision is not a random arbitrary decision, not 'Willkür' out of the state of equilibrium, but a decision that is in accordance with the necessity of its nature, which is love.[26] Schelling thinks that choice is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for freedom, the true form of freedom differs from arbitrariness in the following sense: firstly, the equilibrium in an arbitrary decision-making scenario is different from the equilibrium in God before creation, in that the former concerns equilibrium before specific free actions, while the latter concerns equilibrium before freedom at all. Secondly, the former concerns equilibrium that does not have inner dynamic, which can be mechanically overcome by any random decision out of pure occasionality, whereas the latter concerns equilibrium between two dynamic and competing wills in contraction, and this state of equilibrium can only be overcome by the self-sharing will, which is love, otherwise this equilibrium in contraction can never be overcome. This means the choice of God made to end this equilibrium is creation, is to express itself by love, in this way it is a decision following the necessity of its nature, which is love. Thus this decision is not arbitrary, rather, it has only one option, even though it is pure free. He writes:

> It will still be acting only in accord to the inner necessity of its nature. For it is nothing other than love and can have in itself no other will but that of love and gentleness.[27]

As of now the whole process of God's decision to create concerning the unification of necessity and freedom is described, to sum up, one can say that Schelling resorts to two kinds of necessity in this unification, the first is called necessity of fact, which means the fact that can only be accepted without reason, this kind of necessity refers to the emergence of self-will in Godhead and God's decision to create the world. The second is called necessity of nature, which means that the whole process of God's creation is in accordance with what God's nature, i.e., love, entails. And freedom means inexplicable freedom, in that creation is the victory of love, which is made out of pure transcendence of God, and which is both based on the necessity of fact that God is in a state of contraction, and on the necessity of nature that God follows what love entails.

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[25] *Ages of the World (1811)*, 163.

[26] Buridan's ass is a good example in favor of this arbitrariness, in this example, a hungry ass is facing two same piles of hay, if there is no free choice based on arbitrariness, the ass will starve since reason can not distinguish between the two piles.

[27] *Ages of the World (1811)*, 159.

Here one can clearly see how Schelling in the *Ages of the World* responded to Spinoza's version of God. The God in Spinoza is in Schelling's eyes without dynamics and will, which is unacceptable for him who is under great influence of the transcendent image of God in Christianity. Freedom for Schelling is not only about following God's nature, it is more about its transcendence and incomprehensibility. However, on the other hand, Spinoza's rationalistic account of creation is widely accepted by Schelling. He believes that creation is a necessary action of God in that it is the only option for God. Living in the pantheism controversy, Schelling tries both to protect God's transcendent freedom and the necessity of the world in a rationalistic sense. Thus he transforms Spinoza's *causa sui* into a God that has two interactive wills, in which the self-will is the ground for the existence of love. He, then, with his dynamic description of the interaction between the two wills, develops Spinoza's account of God's nature, in that Schelling believes God's nature, i.e., love, can only be expressed afterwards within the contraction self-will brings. And God realizes its transcendent freedom based on the state of equilibrium between the two wills, which is in accordance both with the necessity of fact and the necessity of its nature. It 'seems' at first glance that Schelling has successively responded to Spinoza and protected God's transcendence in a pantheistic system.

4. Contradiction in Schelling's Account and Conclusion

It is just a 'seeming' success. As one should bear in mind, that Schelling never finishes his *Ages of the World*, and the completion of this book is for Schelling a hard task to realize, as Schelling notes once in the margin of the end pages of the 1813 draft, the treatise 'falls into utter falsehood from this point forward'.[28] Although there might be many other reasons behind this falsehood, the contradiction behind his unification of God's necessity and freedom counts as one.

Schelling's contradiction is basically that on the one hand he thinks creation is decided by God's incomprehensible freedom, but on the other hand gives necessity to something inexplicable. As analysis will show, both necessity of fact and necessity of nature are actually pushed by necessity of reason hidden behind Schelling's dialectic principle of equilibrium. He, in this sense, explains everything before creation through reason, which contradicts his account that creation is an inexplicable and transcendent free action of God.

This essay intends to prove this contradiction with the following evidence. Firstly, the emergence of self-will and the interaction of the two wills are actually explained by reason in *Ages of the World*. As is illustrated in 2.2. and 2.3. of this essay, Schelling argues that Godhead 'is' both Subject and Object and 'is not' Subject and Object. It is like the attraction of the magnetic poles that the indifferent God wants to express both of these aspects, thus self-will emerges, making God a unity with two competing wills. As for the interaction of the two wills, Schelling, with regular reference of self-will to being or ground and reference of love to essence,[29] describes how these two will are going to have greater conflict with one another and thus end up in a state of equilibrium before creation.[30] The problem is, when Schelling says the emergence of self-will is of factual necessity, he means that it is beyond any rational explanation. However, the dialectical account of how there emerges self-will in Godhead that 'is' and 'is not' Subject and Object, and the account that the two wills become equal valid through the interaction in the likeness of existence and essence are in fact explanation to the inexplicable process. And for this whole process, Schelling sums up by referring God to the 'one and the same =x' which includes A and B, which are basically the two wills:

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[28] *Ages of the World (1813)*, 182.

[29] There are many such descriptions in the text, for example, *Ages of the World (1811)*, 81 or 120 etc.

> But it still remains that 'one and the same = x' is both principles (A and B). But not just in accordance with the concept, but really and actually. Hence, 'the same = x' that is the two unities must again be the unity of both unities and with the intensified antithesis is found the intensified unity.[31]

This quotation clearly shows that the emergence of self-will and the intensified conflict between the two wills are explainable through his rationalistic principle of equilibrium, which makes himself self-contradictory.

Besides, for the necessity of fact that God creates the world in miracle, there is also textual evidence that Schelling is using his dialectical account, i.e., principle of equilibrium, to explain something incomprehensible. The most convincing example appears in the 1811 draft, where Schelling discusses three possibilities of God before creation and gives reason in advance why creation is necessary.[32] The three possibilities are: first, that God keeps this state of conflicting equilibrium forever, second, that either of these two wills completely conquers the other and cancels the contradiction, third, the two wills reconcile with one another by being in a sense independent from one another through the creation of the world, which makes self-will the 'Past' and love the 'Present'. The first is not an option, in that 'eternal ruin, eternal chaos, eternal torment and anxiety are impossible'.[33] And the second option is contrary to God's nature which hopes to express itself through the movement of dialectics. The third one is the only plausible, in that by this option God, by creating a sequence between self-will and love in creation, satisfies the requirements of the two wills. He writes:

> But since, according to the presupposition, they should indeed each be active, this relation of contradiction must be abandoned. Another relation, a grounding relation (Verhältnis des Grundes) must take its place. (This grounding relation is such that) when the one is active, then-precisely for that reason-the other is as well; in other words, one acts only as the ground, the predecessor of the other. Accordingly, with regard to the What, a decision could only consist in a sublation of simultaneity, or the fact that both would be posited in a single result.[34]

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[30] To make it terse I will not list all of the textual evidence in this paper, for a more detailed discussion of Schelling's account of the relation between "ground" and "essence", cf. Iber, *Das Andere der Vernunft als ihr Prinzip*.

[31] *Ages of the World (Fragment)*, 10.

[32] *Ages of the World (1811)*, 113 ff.

[33] *Ages of the World (1811)*, 114.

[34] *Ages of the World (1813)*, 173.

This is to say, that in order to solve the conflict, God needs to set up time and sequence to make self-will appear firstly and love secondly. However, these two wills are not separate forever, rather, as time goes by, the two wills will reunite in a higher form of unification between these two. Schelling writes concerning the separation of the two wills:

> Does not an even higher unity arise out of the division? Is this not perhaps the reason why they had to be divided in the first place, so that that unity could be unfolded? If the first unity that depended on a lack of division was unconscious and bound by necessity, does it not stand to reason that the higher unity that goes forth from the scission must be a free and conscious unity?[35]

This higher unity is called 'Spirit' (Geist), which is, to put it plainly, a new state of equilibrium between the two wills, which represents the 'Future' in the three ages.

As one can see from the description of the emergence of self-will, the interaction between the two wills before creation, and the three possibilities of God facing the state of equilibrium, Schelling clearly uses his dialectics, which is his principle of equilibrium, to explain the whole process that should have been inexplicable in the first place, since no matter the emergence of self-will or the creation itself is the result of the pure transcendent God, who is beyond any understanding. Nevertheless, Schelling still gives rational account to something beyond reason, which proves that he contradicts himself in his account of the unification between the necessity of fact and God's freedom.

For the necessity of nature the same contradiction exists. This necessity of nature is actually also based on Schelling's rationalistic principle of equilibrium. Firstly, as introduced in 2.2., the path Schelling finds Godhead is dialectical, he infers from the fact that there is movement of contradiction between Subject and Object that an indifferent unity of these two must be set. This indifferent unity is then called by him Godhead. Secondly, Schelling gives nature in advance to this totally transcendent Godhead that he calls love, which means sharing and expanding. It is by the necessity of this nature Schelling gives to an actually indifferent Godhead that God must share itself through creation. For this Schelling writes:

> Everything that is 'something' that has not yet come to exist must, according to its nature, find itself.[36]

What God's decision is going to be is indeed implied in this given nature. Hence God has to create and is no longer indifferent, it is pushed by the necessity of nature, which is deduced from Schelling's principle of equilibrium, its total transcendence and incomprehensibility are in this sense threatened by the nature Schelling gives through his dialectical thinking.[37]

Henceforth Schelling is inconsistent or rather self-contradictory in his account of God's creation concerning necessity and freedom, in that the inexplicable necessity of fact, which deals with the emergence of self-will and God's decision to create, is explained by the principle of equilibrium, and that the necessity of nature, which God follows in its creation, is deduced from the principle of equilibrium. The whole process of creation, which in Schelling's eyes should be miracle, is explained by his dialectics, which means something above reason is explained by the necessity of reason.[38]

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[35] *Ages of the World (1811)*, 123.

[36] *Ages of the World (1813)*, 137, re-translated, the original text is "Alles, das Etwas ist, ohne es doch noch wirklich zu seyn, muß, seiner Natur nach, sich selber suchen."

[37] Chepurin, among others, also holds this point concerning this necessity, cf. Chepurin, "Indifference and the World: Schelling's Pantheism of Bliss", 613-630.

There are some scholars, for example, Brown[39] and Hart[40], who claim that Schelling is not self-contradictory in *Ages of the World*. Dialectics, or principle of equilibrium, is not as strong in this book, according to them, as to become a form of necessity of reason. Dialectics is rather a path by which human beings understand God, which is beyond this, and, to quote Hart's word, human beings feel God's inner struggle by the 'eidetic intuition' dialectics provides. In this interpretation dialectics or principle of equilibrium does not have necessity or any kinds of objectivity, it is just a ladder human beings use to reach God, which can be thrown away afterwards.

This interpretation of weakening dialectics is not endorsed by Schelling's own account. He criticizes, according to the report of Fuhrmans, from 1827 his previous works (*Ages of the World* included of course), where Schelling admits that the God in his previous works is not truly indifferent, rather, it is more natural (natürlicher) for God to create as not to create. Complete freedom should only consist in complete indifference, and dialectics has given God a kind of necessity to create the world instead of being complete indifferent.[41] Thus it is convincing for this essay to say that Schelling is self-contradictory in terms of the unification of necessity and freedom in creation.

The deeper reason why Schelling is self-contradictory is related to his rationalism and his belief in Christianity. There are two different lines of logic behind the text of *Ages of the World*, one is really rationalistic just as Spinoza, in this line of logic Schelling uses his principle of equilibrium to give necessity of reason to God's creation, the other is really transcendent, and in this line of logic he maintains that God is totally beyond reason, thus beyond any form of explanation. The philosopher Schelling, who is in the middle of pantheism controversy, wants to hold together what Jacobi thinks as irreconcilable, i.e., God's necessity and freedom. He wants to, on the one hand, hold that God and world have necessary connection, but on the other hand, hold that God is transcendentally free. However, as these two lines are so obviously irreconcilable, Schelling's response to Spinoza's pantheism controversy is, according to the perspective of this paper, not successful.[42]

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[38] In the similar logic, Bracken identifies the contradiction between necessity of reason and incomprehensible freedom as the contradiction between causality and freedom. He contends that if God's decision can be explained by "antecedent-consequence" model, which is similar, though not totally the same, with what this essay calls necessity of reason, then God's freedom is threatened. For more detailed information of Bracken's account, cf. Bracken, "Freedom and Causality in the Philosophy of Schelling", 164-182, and his *Freiheit und Kausalität bei Schelling*.

[39] Brown, "Freiheit und Kausaliät bei Schelling, and: Absolute und endliche Freiheit: Schellings Lehre von Schöpfung und Fall", 128-131.

[40] Hart, review of *Freiheit und Kausalität bei Schelling*, 454-457.

[41] Fuhrmans, "Das Gott-Welt-Verhältnis in Schellings positiver Philosophie", 196-212.

[42] Schelling has tries to emend his incomplete theory of *Ages of the World* in late period by other works. He distinguishes in his late period "negative philosophy" and "positive philosophy", and calls negative philosophy

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the philosophy that threatens God's freedom by pure dialectics, and positive philosophy the philosophy that realizes God's freedom by hypothetical use of dialectics. To know more about whether the late Schelling's approach is successful, it is helpful to refer to works such as Bracken's, Fackenheim's, etc., which are listed in the bibliography. The discussion about whether late Schelling is successful also relates to discussion of Schelling's philosophy to post-metaphysics, to know more about this, works by Iber, White, Bracken, Schultz, Bowie, Frank, Žižek, etc. will be helpful, which are also listed in the bibliography.

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“Feelings Hitherto Unknown”: Labor, Spirituality, and Reform in Gogol’s *Dead Souls*

Abstract: This piece investigates the formal choices and style of Nikolai Gogol’s *Dead Souls* in reference to his ostensibly contradictory reflections upon the role of the “author as teacher” and the importance of the institution of serfdom in Russia. What emerges from this exploration is the notion that Gogol’s form and style in writing *Dead Souls* were in fact ethically weighted—and may provide some further context into what Gogol sought to achieve with composing the novel.

Keywords: Nikolai Gogol, *Dead Souls,* ethics, spirituality, serfdom, labor, reform, authorship

Manuscript:

“The second part of Dead Souls was burned because it was necessary. “Lest the seed die, it will not live again,” says the Apostle. It is first necessary to die in order to be resurrected. It was not easy to burn the work of five years... where was much of what had constituted my best thoughts and had occupied my soul... I thank God for having given me the strength to do it. It was not easy to burn the work of five years [of] such painful effort. But all has been burned, and, further, at that very time when, seeing my own death before me, I desired so much to leave after me something which would be a better reminiscence of myself.”[1]

There is a certain ambiguity, and moreover, a certain wistful sadness in Gogol’s words above. The first manuscript of the sequel to *Dead Souls* (the one alluded to in the above quotation) was, in fact, destroyed—never to reach the public that so eagerly anticipated its publication. Gogol tried once again to write the sequel on a later date—but consigned it once more to the fire, and died less than two weeks afterward. We may only speculate as to why this second draft was burned—be it an accident, or, as purposeful and despairing an act as the burning of his first draft. Regardless of Gogol’s inscrutable motives, however, it is evident that his previous explicit reference to the Gospel—“Lest the seed die”—which bears, by its very reference to the resurrection of Christ, a forceful hope for its own resurrection, is encumbered with a sense of bitter tragedy. The seed of this second novel appears to have died, and to have remained dead, despite Gogol’s highest hopes.

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[1] Gogol, Nikolai. *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends.* Trans. Jesse Zeldin. (Vanderbilt University Press, 1969), 108.

More importantly, however, this quote illuminates to us the human aspects of Gogol—the Gogol who suffered tremendously for his work simply because he believed so adamantly in the power and authority imbued in authorship. As he writes in this same letter, "the appearance of the second volume in the form…it was would sooner do harm than good… My business is simpler and lower: my business is above all what every man must think about, not just myself. My business is the soul…[And therefore] I burn when it is necessary to burn [and] never start anything without prayers".[2] Gogol never saw his work as loftily detached from the realm of practical matters. His writing was in almost every case oriented towards the individual—towards the reformation of men and women's habits, attitudes, and perceptions—and his stakes, the very soul of his fellow countrymen. He burns his second book not because it lacks artistic merit, not because it is inscrutable or poorly written, but because it may invoke, in his fellow Russians, a feeling of pride which may, in his own words, cause "a man…to [run] straight into the arms of the devil".[3] Gogol understood, in other words, the role of the author as a position of tremendous responsibility—and saw, in his own work, the imperative to "turn society, or even one generation, towards the beautiful".[4] He was, in this sense, a very socially oriented writer—a writer who cared deeply about the influence his work exerted upon his readers, and sought therefore to promote goodness and truth in all that he wrote.

These two aspects of Gogol—his status as an icon of incompleteness and his anxious belief in the social responsibility of the author—are the starting point of the present investigation. The first edition of *Dead Souls* is the culmination of both of these aspects: it is itself incomplete, and still yet understood most commonly as a treatise of social justice, as a political satire that illuminated the corruption of the Russian aristocracy/landowning class and the inability of the thickly bureaucratic Russian government to elicit positive social change. No critical voices have mentioned, to my knowledge, that these topics may be connected—that, in other words, Gogol's incompleteness (and perhaps other literary techniques) had a social, and thereby instrumental end concerning reform. Here I propose just this idea—for it seems to me that Gogol's incompleteness and other formal choices are all steeped in his understanding of his role's power and authority—and contain, as it were, an implicit call for reform concerning labor and spirituality. Writing in the parable style, routinely breaking the fourth wall, incorporating monolithic voices of spiritual guidance, and ultimately leaving the first book of *Dead Souls* on an incomplete sentence represent not only Gogol's authorial anxiety, but his desire to see real change evoked in the "dead souls" (*myertvii dushi)* of humanity—in the corrupt, the gluttonous, and the greedy. Gogol's formal choices, under this new perspective, can be seen as ethical decisions—and, as ethical decisions which furthermore help us understand his ultimate goals concerning labor and serfdom.

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[2] Gogol, *Correspondence,* 109-110.

[3] Ibid., 109.

[4] Ibid., 109.

There is but one, glaring issue that problematizes this entire investigation. To suggest that Gogol was, in any sense whatsoever, an individual concerned with personal liberty and emancipation would fly in the face of a number of critics—not to mention truth itself. Gogol was not, in fact, opposed to serfdom. Gogol was, in fact, a *supporter* of serfdom, calling, in his letters, for landowners to:

> Be a patriarch, an interceptor of everything, the vanguard of all things. Be the head, at the beginning of every general thing, that is: the sowing, the mowing, the harvesting of grain…inciting everyone to work robustly, praising the daredevil and reproaching the idler…Know how to get a hold of [the peasant] properly with a word…criticize him in front of the people…in such a way that [they] may laugh at him; a bit of this will be…useful.[5]

Gogol believed, in this sense, in the importance of maintaining serfdom—not reluctantly, as a "permissible evil," but wholeheartedly, as perhaps an institution that Russia could not thrive without. Even in his time, Gogol was harangued for these ideas—a common sentiment among the Russian intelligentsia being that it represented a "defense…derived not from 'Christ's truth' but rather from 'the devil's teaching'".[6] Serfdom, the slavery of one man to another, was to these other critics—but not to Gogol—"incompatible with Christianity"; the abolition of serfdom, a "practical realization of Christian doctrine".[7] V. G. Belinsky, a notable critic of the time, offers an even more comprehensively scathing diatribe against him—noting, in his famous 1847 letter to Gogol, that his defense of serfdom has turned him from "one of [Russia's] great leaders on the path towards consciousness, development, and progress" into a member of Russia's "apathetic slumber".[8]

These critics are, of course, right to point out the contradiction of Gogol's thought and writing—the apparent gap between ambition and application. Gogol saw himself as a promotor of ethical ideals, as a speaker of Christian truth—but then promoted wholeheartedly the institution of serfdom, this pernicious abuse of power whereby one human can own another human. This support would seem, then, to nullify the moral sentiments of his work—*Dead Souls* seems, in light of this revelation, not a call for liberty, but a step backwards for ideas concerning labor. Even so, I believe it is possible to see *Dead Souls* as an attack on certain injustices present *within* serfdom. The differentiation here is very important. Put another way, it seems clear that, despite refusing to attack serfdom as an institution (and in fact, even promoting it) Gogol still sought a degree of reform when it came to the relations between laborer and landowner. What Gogol wanted was not the absence of serfdom—but landowners which understood their duties to their people, and which looked beyond their own interests in managing their estates. We cannot ignore that, in the same letter where he suggests the strict verbal criticism and mockery of his serfs from above, Gogol also calls upon landowners to:

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[5] Ibid., 140-141.

[6] Paperno, Irina. "The Liberation of the Serfs as a Cultural Symbol." *The Russian Review,* vol. 50, no. 4 (1991): 418.

[7] Ibid., 418.

[8] Belinsky, V. G. "To N. V. Gogol, 3 July 1847." In *V. G. Belinsky: Selected Philosophical Works,* (Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1948): 503-505.

> Let there be a feast for the whole village....for all the peasants in your manor house...[and to] dine together with them, and go out to work with them, and in the work...[incite] everyone to work robustly...Celebrate the end of the work with still more feasts...Do not beat the peasants... Do not stay too long in your room but appear often at the work of the peasants. And where you appear, appear so that everyone, because of your arrival, is livelier and brighter...[And] take an axe or scythe in your hands.[9]

Gogol notes, in a similar vein, that the purpose of his call for "strength and authority" in scolding and lecturing the peasants is, first and foremost, an attempt at inspiring virtue—and not merely an attempt to exploit or acquire more capital from the serf as a resource: "Shake them up," he writes, "so that...they may not only live well themselves, but so that they may teach others the good life, so that drunkard may not teach drunkard...[let them see] how they can edify others and teach good to them".[10] Gogol's idea of reform was, in this sense, very different from how we might conceive of reform today—and it is here, perhaps, that we, alongside Belinsky, find ourselves confused (and possibly even outraged) with the apparent contradiction of Gogol's ideals. Gogol saw the relationship between peasant and landowner as corrupted by vice, sloth, and greed, but as something nonetheless redeemable if everyone embraced their Christian duty to one another. In Gogol's ideal Russia, landowners would pick up spades and shovels instead of sleeping and eating in ornate estates; serfs would work but not toil, and would feel the fruits of their labor rather than the vampirism of a greedy upper class.

In other words, reform was, to Gogol, something spiritual—something that emphasized not changes in who had power, nor changes in political or social systems as did Marx and Belinsky, but a change in the ethically-weighted relationship between landowner and laborer. The landowner was, in this ideal system, not a lazy or abusive dictator, but an advocate of the flourishing of the people that worked and lived alongside them. In this sense, Gogol may have been wrong not to attack serfdom outright; but was still radical, in a different sense, to address the necessity of reformed ideas, sensibilities, and inclinations in the landowning class. It is possible, this considered, that we ought to view Gogol not as an entirely amoral figure, as does Belinsky and others, nor as a champion of human rights concerning labor—but as an aspirant of interpersonal reform, a man seeking, if not the appropriate forms of socio-political change, an alteration of the landowning class's ethical responsibilities and attitudes towards their laborers. It is in this very limited sense, then, that we may say that Gogol's literary aspirations to be a teacher may be at least partially redeemed.

With this monumental claim introduced, we may now turn to the novel itself—and, more specifically, to those formal features that underline Gogol's social intentions. The form and content of *Dead Souls* betrays a desire to see real reform in the way labor and landowners were constructed at the time—an attempt to see his ideals of landowner/peasant relations changed, in the ways hitherto outlined, through the spiritual reform of his readers. *Dead Souls* is, on its surface, a story illustrating the corruption and vice of a set of imaginary Russian landowners and a fictionalized version of the Russian aristocracy. Its plot features one Tchichikov—a wealthy, vicious merchant of "souls" (serfs)—as he attempts to commit a largescale government fraud by buying the deeds of deceased serfs or "dead souls". Tchichikov visits numerous cities, towns, and estates in this aspiration—succeeding at times, failing at others, but in every case illuminating some other indecent, corrupt, or backwards aspect of the Russian system and landowning class. The landowners Tchichikov encounters are almost always presented as greedy, as suspicious, as lazy, as hopelessly and in every sense detached from the everyday needs of the people—their relative vices underlining their status as the only true "dead souls" of this novel. They are not irredeemable, and represent no single class or group of people, strictly speaking—i.e., the vices they present are in no ways unique to the aristocracy—but are, nonetheless, illustrations of real problems facing Russia, and perhaps especially the wealthier Russian that would constitute the main readership of his novel. Here, Gogol's social purpose is seen on its most broad scale. "There are times," Gogol writes of his novel, "when it is not possible to turn society, or even one generation, towards the beautiful, so long as it is not shown the depths of its present abasement".[11] It is for this reason, perhaps, that Gogol's depictions of the landowners (and not the serfs) are so comically unrealistic—one as a dust-bound hoarder of junk and filth, another almost inhumanly obese and gluttonous, and still another as "Sobakavitch" (figuratively, a "scoundrel," but literally, "son of a bitch").[12] In this, there is a definite break from reality—though not so significant a break that it infringes upon the novel's ultimate meaning. Gogol does not base his villains on any particular person or people, does not allude to their reality, but introduces them rather as "portraits," as caricatures "far from…real persons" that, though bearing a resemblance to reality in some ways (they are, in his words, "close to the soul") smack of their impossibility and fictionality.[13] "Who is Chichikov?" asks Richard Freeborn, "He is…the acquisitive urge in all of us…an urge [that] grows out of the impoverished state of our being…which we seek to overlook and yet remains a universally comic aspect of the human condition".[14] Indeed, in such comical depictions, Gogol very likely wished to impress upon the reader a vision of corruption that they might transfer to the reality of then-contemporary Russia—a way of visualizing, lightly and without too great a depth, the flaws of the nation's souls.

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[9] Gogol, *Correspondence,* 141.

[10] Ibid., 139.

Tchichikov, numbered among these comic villains by his insatiable greed, is eventually caught in his fraudulence, and thrown into prison—a moment where, in alignment with Gogol's desire to see real reform in the hearts of the corrupted, he is given a chance at moral redemption. It is in these final moments of the novel that we see a variety of gentle hints that he shall indeed reform his ways, take upon himself a simpler life, devoid of fraud and greed: "feelings hitherto unknown to him which he could not account for, rose in his heart…[as though] something were trying to awaken in him".[15] We see, here, the beginning of what might have become of the second and third parts of this novel—something which parallels, perhaps, *The Divine Comedy* in terms of structure—*Dead Souls* being, in this sense, the relative *Inferno.* Tchichikov, ascending the rungs of a renewed moral vision, would move past the corrupt landowners—past the "demons" and "dead souls" of the Russian Empire.

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[11] Gogol, *Correspondence,* 109.

[12] Gogol, *Dead Souls,* 116.

[13] Gogol, *Correspondence,* 103.

[14] Freeborn, Richard. "'Dead Souls': A Study." *The Slavonic and East European Review,* vol. 49, no. 114 (1971): 41-42.

And yet, the novel ends not only without this ultimate reform—not only in the absence of this ultimate *Paradiso*—but with an incomplete sentence, a mere fragment of an idea:

> "All will be fruitless until every one of us feels that…he must now take his stand against dishonesty. As a Russian, as one bound to you by the ties of birth and blood, I must now appeal to you. I appeal to those among you who have some conception of what is meant by an honorable way of thinking. I invite you to remember the duty which stands before a man in every position. I invite you to look more closely into your duty and the obligation of your earthly service for we have as yet but a dim understanding of it, and we scarcely…"[16]

It is in passages like this, perhaps, that we can sympathize with those who mistakenly perceive *Dead Souls* as profoundly opposed to serfdom. It is in passages like this, moreover, that Gogol-as-teacher emerges most explicitly—where Gogol appears in his text, very much ready to send the reader home with something to reflect upon. Indeed, what we see here are very likely the beginnings of Gogol's own ideas on the ties of labor that bind humanity together: a powerful underscoring of the duty between officials, landowners, and peasants, which must be understood more clearly (not to mention acted upon) if ever Russia is to flourish as a people. These lines are therefore numbered among the more important lines in the book—for they represent the last and most poignant call upon landowners, government officials, and all people in positions of power to change, to alter their course.

And yet—it is incomplete. This should strike us as odd. The book ends at the beginning of a powerful statement—but ends just before reaching its culmination, just barely before approaching its moment of didactic realization and revelation. What is our duty to others, after all? What is this "honorable way" of living and thinking that Gogol alludes to? Does it apply to everyone? To one group? We scarcely…understand? Believe? Know? In what ways are we, as government officials, landowners, and so forth, expected to change? In what ways should the labor of the people be reconsidered? And, perhaps more than any of these questions, the other, larger surprise, the still more inexplicable mystery: why would Gogol—who had, at this point in his literary career, illustrated quite clearly his ability to complete novels and stories—end this novel on an incomplete thought, an unfinished call to action, a sentence which seems on the very brink of profundity and specificity? Of this, we can only be certain that is not for lack of effort or care: Gogol was, if we need reminding, positively concerned with the effect of his writing upon his readership—

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[15] Gogol, *Dead Souls,* 372.

[16] Ibid., 384.

meaning that leaving something unfinished, leaving some idea unspoken, leaving room for the infiltration of vague ideas of reform and giving his readers no clearly elucidated path for changing their lives would appear unprecedented and out of character.

These questions have not gone unnoticed: critics have spoken on the relationship between this "open-ended" resolution and audience, and expressed similar confusion. Susanne Fusso notes, for instance, that this ending "eternally escapes the last word"—providing an openness which is both "powerful" and still yet "dangerous" because, in both senses, its incompleteness necessarily involves the interpretation of the audience.[17] There is, to Fusso, a double edge to this openness. On one hand, it involves the audience as people, calls upon them to "find themselves" in the vices and errors of its subject (Tchichikov) and leaves the burden of change upon them. The incomplete text therefore excites the audience' moral awareness—but so too may be indeterminate in dictating exactly what these changes might look like.[18] There is very little power of the author in determining the perceptions of an audience—a notable lack of control over what might be obtained from this sort of ending.[19] Others express a similar idea: as Simon Franklin writes, "Gogol's…readers constitute an audience, collective, challenged by author in the final chapter (as at the end of The Government Inspector) to con themselves ('in silence, alone') with the question: 'Is there not some part Chichikov in me?'".[20] Only—what feature specifically might the audience find in themselves? What social duties, what ideas of labor will they come to embrace? Might their conclusions be, as it were, something far different—possibly far worse—from what Gogol intended? Indeed, the audience can, once again, take from this what they please—there is a great deal of power placed in the hands of the interpreter, of the person receiving the message, since "each hearer may find in his own heart the sin to which the parable refers".[21] This ending, this lack of final fulfilment and closed ends, leaves the audience therefore in a game of "guessing and divination" that "border[s] on the creative act on telling stories"—a process that might result in unintended messages, in narratives which Gogol perhaps never intended to leave with his audience.[22] The audience is thrown into a state of moral confusion: "the final page leaves the narrator in the throes of a rhetorical spasm of such intensity that it threatens to overwhelm the entire preceding narrative".[23]

Again, it may strike us as odd that Gogol—who obsessed over the effects he exerted over his audience—may allow such ambiguity and open-endedness to seep into his writing through this formal device. This is all the more confusing on account of how explicit and didactic the rest of the novel is in its teaching—how, in other words, so much of the novel up until this moment is entirely unambiguous. Indeed, the rest of *Dead Souls* contains very little of this fragmentation and incompleteness—we see, elsewhere, various explicit calls to action that actually *do* follow through and provide readers with a very clear outline of what ought to be done and how one ought to act. For instance, Gogol's narrator is not afraid to address his audience directly, and with a staunchly didactic tone:

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[17] Fusso, Susanne. "Mertvye Dushi: Fragment, Parable, Promise." *Slavic Review,* vol. 49, no. 1, (1990): 45.

[18] Ibid., 45.

[19] Ibid., 45.

20 Franklin, Simon. "Novels Without End: Notes on "Eugene Onegin" and "Dead Souls." *The Modern Language Review,* vol. 79, no. 2, (1984): 380.

[21] Fusso, 43.

[22] Fusso, 46.

[23] Fusso, 40.

> The reader will insist on a definite answer in regard to one particular: what sort of man was [Tchichikov] as regards moral qualities? That he was not a hero filled with virtues and perfections is evident. What was he then...a scoundrel [?]. Why a scoundrel? There are no scoundrels among us nowadays...Wise is he who does not disdain any character, but probing it with a searching eye investigates its primary elements. Passions..[spring up] in a man born for better things, [and make] him forget great and sacred duties[24]

Gogol even outright criticizes his reader at times—recognizing them as capable of certain prejudices or peccadillos which might impede upon their understanding of his text and its characters. He writes, for instance, that there is indeed a "bit of Tchichikov" (and therefore, a bit of various vices) in everyone—and that it is in fact "pride" and the absence of "Christian meekness" that prevents one from such a realization.[25] He questions his reader's patriotism, laments their unwillingness to see truth, accuses them of hypocrisy—attacks people who censure his work because it is, as he saw it, too truthful, too accurate a representation of the human condition and human fallibility.[26] He explicitly condemns making money as "the universal vice".[27] Similarly, Gogol is never one to shy away from monolithic characters—characters which emerge and remain unchallenged in their doctrines and opinions, acting therefore as sages of truth. Murazov, one such sage of this text, most assuredly speaks beyond the walls of this text during his preachy discussions with Tchichikov:

> "Ah...[Tchichikov] I keep thinking what a man you might have made if with the same energy and patience you had applied yourself to honest labor and for a better object. If only any one of those who care for what is good had used as much energy in its service as you have to gain your kopecks...And had been capable of sacrificing personal vanity and pride, without sparing himself, for a good cause as you have done to gain your kopecks!".[28]

Waxing more obvious, at times, in his other dialogues—at times even bordering on the role of aspiring prophet:

> "Until men reject everything for which men will rend and devour one another on earth, and think of the welfare of their spiritual possessions, it will not be well. Days of hunger and poverty are coming for all the people, and each one severally ... that is clear. Whatever you say, you know, the body depends on the soul, how then can you expect things to thrive as they ought? Think not of [profit] but of your own living soul, and in God's name take a different path!".[29]

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[24] Gogol, *Dead Souls,* 245.

[25] Ibid., 248-249.

[26] Ibid., 246-247.

[27] Ibid., 245.

[28] Ibid., 371.

[29] Ibid., 381.

Here too we can feel, just under this text's surface, Gogol-as-teacher. In these and other passages there is that same energy, that same didactic tone, that same near-proverbial distribution of ideas that we see in his explicit references to the audience. Here the lessons are no less explicit than before, even though they come to us through a character—we could hardly misunderstand what Murazov is trying to convey here, hardly misinterpret or rely on what Fusso refers to as "divination" to come to conclusions. These lines are overwhelmingly available to readers as clear and explicit moral guidance—the diagnosis of Tchichikov's failings as an upper-class landowner, and so too his cure. Be honest—devote yourself to honest work, free from greed; reject amassing capital, reject covetousness, and embrace meek spirituality. Those who can indeed see themselves in Tchichikov, as the narrator explicitly requests, are therefore commanded to do the same.

We would, of course, only digress with further examples. The idea here, should ultimately be clear—that Gogol is quite content, and in fact, even makes a habit of being explicit and addressing the reader (usually the upper or middle class) outright throughout this text. And this would appear to make sense—nothing could be more natural for a socially-oriented writer like Gogol to preach so frequently and obviously in the attempt to reach his audience with the utmost clarity. He, like a good teacher, seeks to make his lesson accessible—almost to a fault. "*Dead Souls*," writes Anne Lounsbery, "reveals both Gogol's desire to reach a truly broad readership and his intensifying doubt that such a readership could ever be capable of reading his work in the way he wanted it to be read. In the end, the text expresses deep suspicion of all readerly interpretation and judgment".[30] Gogol's implicit suspicion in this text, stands, therefore, as testament to his belief that the "Russian reading public" would most certainly never receive his text the "right way"—to what Lounsbery refers to as Gogol's "break with the conventions of salon culture…[wherein] author and audience collaborate in creating art".[31] Gogol wanted, in short, to be explicit—to restrict from his audience the ability to form their own meanings, establish for themselves their own way of thinking or acting morally.

But in making this realization we only underline further the strangeness of this novel's end—this last, incomplete sentence, and the moral confusion it imparts. Why, after an entire novel of didacticism, of explicit teaching concerning the reform of society and labor, would Gogol shrink back in an instant—recoil, as it were, from these very same inclinations? Why, if he were so afraid of being misunderstood, would Gogol end his tale so strangely? Lounsbery, in an attempt to acknowledge this apparent dichotomy, asserts that it is simply an aspect of the text's self-referentially enigmatic nature—claiming ultimately that this incomplete ending may have ultimately been just the foreshadowing of the second volume that would never come:

> A distinguishing characteristic of the book Gogol' wrote…is its deliberate insistence on its own mysteriousness. The text repeatedly represents itself as…a question to be answered only by a rev-

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[30] Lounsbery, Anne. "'Russia! What Do You Want of Me?': The Russian Reading Public in Dead Souls." *Slavic Review,* vol. 60, no. 2 (2001): 367-389.

[31] Ibid., 372, 384.

> elation to come… In the second chapter, readers are tantalized with the promise of deep meaning "if only [they] will have the patience" to reach the end of this "very long" narrative… The final chapter enjoins readers to defer judgment, since they have yet to see "how the matter is to go in the future"… The end of the book is thus called a beginning, its promise of deep meaning is renewed without being explicitly fulfilled, and, the author seems to hope, the potential objections of its readers are thereby forestalled.[32]

Fusso would very likely agree with Lounsbery's assessment of this text's meaning as "forestalled"—this incompleteness does indeed betray incompleteness, and therefore alludes quite heavily to a second volume. As she writes, "the second volume as conceived by both author and readers would eliminate the need for judgment or interpretation altogether, for it would itself be the interpretation of, the solution to, the parable that is part 1… thus eliminating the dangerously creative acts of interpretation" that the first part allowed.[33]

This is all quite possible. Gogol may have left this part open-ended simply to foreshadow the sequel—an ethical cliffhanger, so to speak, of what was to come next. But so too might we introduce another idea—another interpretation of this end. We have already mentioned that this last passage is, on the level of content, a call to action—an admonishment of the corruption and viciousness of the current system. We have mentioned too that Gogol's open-endedness allows readers to find their own vices in the novel's characters—and thereby involves the readers. But no critics have mentioned, to my knowledge, the possibility that this incompleteness may indeed reflect the necessity of the audience completing the "work" themselves. There is, in this idea, more than a mere attempt to inculcate virtue in his readers—more than an excitement of one's moral sentiments. In leaving this last sentence open—in leaving his work incomplete—it may be that Gogol is implicating the work of the reader (ethical reform, labor reform, and so on) as its ultimate completion.

This idea is not, however, merely an untenable attempt to paint Gogol as a master of form. In fact, Gogol explicitly implicates his readers in his artistic process—calling upon them to quite literally help him finish his work, *even after* its completion and publication. As he writes in the preface to *Dead Souls*:

> It would be an excellent thing if someone who is endowed with the faculty of imagining and vividly picturing to himself the various situations wherein a character may be placed, and of mentally following up a character's career in one field and another—by this I mean someone who possesses the power of entering into and developing the ideas of the author whose work he may be reading —would scan each character herein portrayed, and tell me how each character ought to have acted at a given juncture, and what, to judge from the beginnings of each character, ought to have become of that character later, and what new circumstances might be devised in connection therewith, and what new details might advantageously be added to those already described.[34]

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[32] Lounsbery, 385-386.

[33] Fusso, 43, 46.

[34] Gogol, Nikolai. *Author's Preface to the First Portion of this Work.* Trans. D. J. Hogarth. Project Gutenberg Ebook, 2008.

In this preface, Gogol explicitly invites his readers to take part in his writing process—extends the ability of forming not only his new novel (Dead Souls II) but also in reforming the ideas and concepts of the first Dead Souls. "I beg of you, my reader," he writes in this same preface, "to act also as my corrector...Every man who has lived in the world and mixed with his fellow men will have remarked something which has remained hidden from the eyes of others".[35] The one strange thing to note here is that this is, of course, the *preface* of *Dead Souls*—and, in fact, to the *second edition* of the novel, released several years after its initial publication—meaning that, at this point, the novel is already out in circulation. There would be no way for him to reclaim even a word of his book from the masses—no possibility of changing the ideas present in the text as it was distributed. This is indeed a baffling concept—and alludes, perhaps, to Gogol's anxieties, and possibly even his madness in writing. Of course, Gogol may have just been looking for material for his later work—for a bit of added realism, taken from the lives of his readers. Receiving comments from others may have helped him significantly in this regard. And yet, even so, this desire for a renewed relationship with his reader is striking in that it allows the reader authority not only over the upcoming sequel to *Dead Souls,* but *Dead Souls* itself—the first, and again published novel. Gogol voices his support in this foreword for the reader's participation in the creation of his art—for the reader to take hold of the novel, take charge of its plots and characters and, with them in mind, create meaning from them. He challenges all readers ("every man who has lived") to insert his own experience into his words—"to record that fact as it may have occurred within his own experience"—and to investigate for himself the similarities with those around him, the connections, resemblances, and similarities between his work and the outside world.[36] Looking closely at his language, we see, most certainly, Gogol's imperative for the reader to fill in the gaps that he leaves: "tell me how each character ought to have acted" and "to judge from the beginnings of each character [what] ought to have become of that character later".[37] How a character "ought to have acted"? What "ought" to have become of them later? As Lounsbery writes, citing Iurii Mann, "the preface not only grants the reader the right to judge the truthfulness of Gogol's work but also turns this reader into 'a sort of higher authority, an unblinking eye hanging over the author'—an inquisitor-reader who keeps the author under constant surveillance".[38] In this, Gogol hands the reigns of authority to his readers—turns *Dead Souls* into not only a fluid and unsolidified document, but one that must be completed, made more realistic, by his readers.

In this sense, this final half-sentence and the general incompleteness of *Dead Souls* may be described as a call to action—one that is possibly even stronger than the content of the passage itself. Gogol desired his readers to fill in his work—to ask of themselves, in this ending, what might come next. There is, in this sense, an imperative not only to discover for themselves what might have become of Tchichikov and the corrupted government of Russia in the text—but also, to discover what might become of themselves, what their own "character," which might find itself among the Tchichikovs and Sobakavitches, ought to do next in its own ethical reconstruction. Leaving this text on the brink of redemption—leaving Tchichikov in such a liminal space, at the very beginning of his *Purgatorio*—implicates the reader: the reader must, like Dante, discover what it means to be reformed; what their own duties ("for which we have… a dim understanding") to their people consist of; and what it means to develop virtue and abandon vice. The earlier aspects of Gogol's novel—where he waxes explicit in his didacticism—are in this sense merely the guidance for these renewed moral capacities. The flaws he mocks and the vices he exposes are the means through which this transformation might begin—a literary mirror to the reader, wherein they realize that they see their own flaws and shortcomings. Gogol does not, in other words, leave his readers strictly to their own devices, does not force them to rely entirely upon what Fusso refers to as "divination," but rather provides every step until the last one—where, in an attempt to necessitate their involvement and impress upon them the importance of change, he leaves the moral transformation of the novel's characters in the reader's hands. How *does* Tchichikov reform? What becomes of him? How does this reformation take place? How does Russia's attitudes towards labor change? The reader must, in their own wisdom, finish the work on their own, in their own lives.

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[35] Gogol, *Preface,* 1.

[36] Gogol, *Preface,* 1.

[37] Gogol, *Preface,* 1.

[38] Lounsbery, 382. Mann, Iurii. *V Poiskakh Zhivoi Dushi: 'Mertvye Dushi.' Pistal'—Kritika—Chitatel'.* (Moscow, 1984), 242.

The "end" of this novel is, in this sense, merely the beginning—the final sentence, the bridge between the world of fiction and reality. The work is incomplete because there is work to do—Russia, like the novel itself, is a foundation that must be built upon, renewed by the efforts of many. The second and third volume of *Dead Souls* is, in this sense, Russia itself—an unfinished story that continues, even to this day. The freedom and "endless opportunities for interpretation" stand, in this sense, not as an instance of Gogol's failure as an author to impart meaning to his readers—but as a way of reaching the broadest audience possible and inspiring even more widespread reform for labor and production.[39] Gogol remains, in this regard, as socially-oriented as ever—even in incompletion and the total absence of resolution.

It is easy to see here why Gogol is occasionally thought to be mad. Torn between the loftiest of ideals and the practicalities of labor and authorship, Gogol presents critics and scholars with a paradoxicality that at times seems insurmountable. He embraces serfdom for the flourishing of the serfs; calls upon landowners to berate their peasants so that they might thrive; waxes and wanes between explicit didacticism and open-endedness. In all of this, Belinsky may have been correct about Gogol's poor judgement concerning the institution of serfdom. He may have been right, even, to recognize his support of serfdom as the "devil's truth." But to say so would only add further paradoxicality to this discussion, and to Gogol. In teaching this "devil's truth," Gogol sought to reform the entirety of Russia for what he perceived to be the better—sought, in his heart, an end to the suffering of serfs and the proliferation of virtue in landowners. Even in embracing the "devil's truth," Gogol sought to turn Russia towards the good—to end the exploitation of the poor and diminish the vice and corruption of the Russian aristocracy. This desire bleeds prominently into his work, as we have seen—*Dead Souls,* though not against serfdom, sought to ignite "feelings hitherto unknown" in its readers; to allow them what Belinsky refers to as a glimpse into a mirror.[40] It is with these things in mind that Gogol must be reconsidered as an author—and recognized, in the spirit of honesty and truthfulness he sought so radically to achieve in his readers, as an author capable of being both right and wrong.

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[39] Lounsbery, 384.

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[40] Belinsky, 505.

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Church polyphony in correlation with some fields of Roman Catholic theology

> “The ordination and direction of man to his ultimate
> end – which is God – by absolute and necessary law
> based on the nature and infinite perfection of God Himself
> is so solid that not even God could exempt anyone from it.”
> “Musicae sacrae disciplina,” Art. 24.

Abstract: The aim of this study is to present the meanings of the church polyphony that arose from the fields of Roman Catholic theology. The introduction of the polyphonic sound into the liturgical practices of the Roman Catholic Church was not conducted without disturbances and alterations. Nevertheless, various sources testify about the close correlation between the fields of theology and philosophy and the field of music, and consequently, polyphony. This concerns the usiological approach to triadology and juridical soteriology, on the one side, and music as the speculative science rooted in the cosmological discourses of ancient Greek philosophers, on the other side. It is arguable that musical tractates showed a tendency of attributing the idea of God’s Presence to the notion of the polyphonic sound. This paper mainly refers to the musical sources pertaining to the periods of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. After a brief reflection on the soteriological ‘legacy’ of Roman Catholic theology, the authors present the main course of the Augustinian and Boethian thought which forms a solid link between ontological and soteriological questions and the idea of music. In the next chapter, the authors explore the connection between the mentioned philosophical and theological ideas with the development of the church-polyphonic sound. The final chapter provides some concluding remarks on this topic.

Keywords: church polyphony, Roman Catholic theology, philosophy, music, Augustine, Boethius.

Introduction

During the course of history, the introduction of the polyphonic sound into the liturgical practices of the Roman Catholic Church witnessed various disturbances and alterations. Over centuries, clerics and composers disagreed about the introduction of the then avant-garde sound into liturgy. Today, church polyphony represents the second most significant musical genre which should be regarded as very close to Gregorian chant. According to Swain, the complete Western harmony owes its origins and development to the counterpoint embellishment of Gregorian chant melodies. Thus, polyphony characterises Roman Catholicism much more profoundly than Gregorian chant does.[1]

In the Roman Catholic Church the 'main' polyphonic sound is named *polifonia sacra*, which indicates that it is subject to the liturgical event; or *polifonia classica* since it encompasses the repertoire which symbolises an ideal polyphonic church composition.[2] As such, the sound of polyphony is considered to be the one which cherishes "universality" of liturgical music, and thus, fulfils its primary purpose – giving glory to God directly and sanctifying the faithful.

This paper deals with the correlation between the church-polyphonic sound and the fields of Roman Catholic theology. It will be argued that musical tractates showed a tendency of attributing the idea of God's Presence to the notion of the polyphonic sound. Due to the complexity of the subject, this paper will mainly refer to the examples pertaining to the periods of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. After a brief reflection on the soteriological 'legacy' of Roman Catholic theology, the authors will present the main course of the Augustinian and Boethian thought which forms a solid link between ontological and soteriological questions and the idea of music. The most important musical tractates will be presented in the following chapter with the aim of exploring the connection between the mentioned philosophical and theological ideas and the development of the church-polyphonic sound. In the final chapter, the authors will provide some concluding remarks on this topic.

The legacy of Roman Catholic soteriology

According to the soteriological legacy, the Roman Catholic Church understands salvation as healing, returning to the perfect, pre-Fall state which was disturbed by sin. The Latins correlated the notion of salvation to the experience of saving oneself from a threat, danger or catastrophe, and consequently equated it with the result of the saviour's actions.[3]

At the end of the second century and turn of the third century, Christian apologist Tertullian explained Christianity as the faith of the divine law, as a new legal regulation of the relationship between God and man as well as between people themselves. Tertullian insisted on the pessimistic image of the man-sinner in contrast to the perfection of the divine law. Consequently, in order to reach salvation, it was necessary to pay the debt requested by God's eternal justice. Tertullian concluded that the reason for the Incarnation of God was the need for redemption and restoration of the man who had disappeared due to Adam's fall.[4]

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[1] Jospeh P. Swain, *Sacred Treasure: Understanding Catholic Liturgical Music* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2012), 119.

[2] In Catholic documents, the term *polifonia classica* involves polyphonic works composed by the composers such as Giovanni da Palestrina, Josquin des Prez, Orlandus Lassus, Tomas Luis de Victoria, and William Byrd, which were created from the late fifteenth to the early seventeenth century. Swain, *Sacred Treasure*, 120.

[3] For more on the philological and conceptual assumptions regarding the word "salvation" in the Greek and Latin thought, see: Zlatko Matić, "Savremena uporedna (pravoslavno-rimokatolička) sotiriologija: problemi i perspektive," in *Zbornik radova: Naučni skup – kolokvijum Mesto sotiriologije u savremenom sistematskom bogoslovlju, 29. mart 2022.*, eds. Zlatko Matić, Rade Kisić, and Aleksandar Đakovac (Beograd: Institut za sistematsko bogoslovlje Pravoslavnog bogoslovskog fakulteta Univerziteta u Beogradu, 202), 157–70.

During the fourth century, Augustine, the bishop of Hippo, preached about the salvation as the destruction of the outer (sinful) man and emergence of the inner (cleansed) man whose existence was in accordance with God's law. Similarly to Tertullian, Augustine correlated salvation with the notions of punishment, redemption and law, but he supplemented this relation with the concept of number (*numerus*). Centuries after him, Anselm, the Archbishop of Canterbury, reinforced this soteriological course. Answering the question *Cur Deus homo?* [Why Did God Become Man?], Anselm wrote a systematic soteriological tractate where he highlighted the value of the reconciliating and redemptive dimension of salvation in Christ. Christ becomes primarily the Satisfactor, the one who soothes the wrath of God by paying the debt and fulfilling God's justice. The tractate was set as a logical analysis of the necessity in the being and acts of God whose will is absolute and unchangeable.[5]

The correlation of music with the ontological and soteriological questions in thoughts of Augustine and Boethius

The bishop of Hippo preached about God that embodied the most perfect, unbendable, and unchangeable music. In the sixth book of *De Musica* Augustine shares information with the reader about the idea of that which is eternal and unchangeable (*quod aeternum est et incommutabile*) and which was given to humans from the one, eternal and unchangeable God. In God there is nothing unequal, nothing unlike himself, nothing locally separated, nothing temporally varied.[6] Augustine believes that God is the most superior one, since He is the bearer of the highest, unshakeable, unchangeable, and eternal equality. Since there is no time, there is no change in God.[7]

Following the teachings from antiquity, Augustine equalised music with the "existence in concord", and positioned music in a context which was much broader than the auditory one. It can be noticed that Augustine correlates the proportionality of numbers with interlock and dynamism inside something static. Consequently, words such as rhythm, harmony or concord are often used as synonymous to the notion of proportion or number in the translations of Augustine's works. When it comes to specific terminology, another interesting writer in this respect is Boethius. He translates the Greek word *λογος* with the Latin *proportio* and uses it either as a technical term denoting mathematical ratio, or as a term marking the reality of the relation between body and soul understood as the ratio of numbers.[8]

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[4] "Vt hominem gestaret Christus, salus hominis fuit causa, scilicet ad restituendum quod perierat: homo perierat, hominem restitui oportuerat." [There was a reason for Christ to take the nature of man – the reason was man's health; it was obvious that what had been lost had to be restored: man had disappeared, man needed to be recovered] Tertullien, *La Chair du Christ*, SCh N°216, trad. Jean-Pierre Mahé (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1975), 268. See also: Zlatko Matić, *Da ne bude razdora u Telu: ogledi iz uporednog bogoslovlja* (Požarevac: Eparhija braničevska, Odbor za prosvetu i kulturu, 2018), 33.

[5] Matić, "Savremena," 163–64.

[6] Aurelius Augustinus, *De musica liber VI*, SLS XLVII, trans. Martin Jacobsson (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2002), 79, 93.

[7] Augustinus, *De Musica*, 66–67.

In Augustine's thought, the harmony 1:2 has an ontological value since it can be found in every interlock (*coaptatio*) that occurs during creation:

"This match — or agreement or concord or consonance or whatever the right word is for the proportion of one to two — is of enormous importance in every construction or interlock — that is the word I want — of creation. What I mean by this interlock, it has just occurred to me, is what the Greeks call harmonia."[9]

The consonant proportion of 1:2 has a far-reaching importance for Augustin:

"It is found extensively in us, and is so naturally ingrained in us (and who by, if not by him who created us?), that even the unskilled feel it whether singing themselves or listening to others. It is what makes concord between high-pitched and deep voices, and if anyone strays discordantly away from it, it is not our knowledge, which many lack, but our very sense of hearing that is painfully offended."[10]

The inherent concord is equally present in creation within which everything moves to the rhythms adjusted to the divine source. Therefore, music, or harmony of creation, originates from God that embodies the supreme and unchangeable law of equality, unity and order. God creates, sets in order, and modifies times in imitation of eternity, while:

"the celestial rotation returns to the same place and recalls the celestial bodies to the same place and through the days and months and years and lustra and the other orbits of the stars obeys the laws of equality and unity and order [...] In this way, through the rhythmical succession of their times, the orbits unite the terrestrial things, subjected to the heavenly ones to the hymn, as it were, of the universe".[11]

Similarly to Augustine, Boethius understood music as naturally united with human nature in such a measure that man could not be free from it even if he desired so. He also accepted the motive of the music of the spheres by recalling Plato's ideas presented in *Timaeus* about the Soul of the Universe which was joined together according to musical concord. At the same time, by continuing the teachings of Pliny, Cicero, Plutarch, Nicomachus, Censorinus, Macrobius, and Ptolemy, Boethius adopted the division of music by which the first kind of music can be called "cosmic". The music of the universe is especially discernible in those things which are observed in heaven itself or in the combination of elements or the diversity of seasons. For Boethius it is impossible that the extremely fast motion of cosmic bodies produces absolutely no sound considering that the courses of the stars are joined by such a harmonious union that nothing so perfectly united and fitted together can be realised.[12]

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[8] Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, trans. Calvin M. Bower (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1989), 7.

[9] Saint Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, O.P. (New York: New City Press, 1991), 155.

[10] Ibid., 155–56.

[11] Augustinus, De Musica, 66–67.

[12] Boethius, *Fundamentals*, 8–9.

Within the Boethian frame, human music represents a kind of a harmony that intermingles the elements of the body or holds together the parts of the body in an established order, by uniting the incorporeal nature of reason with the body. Boethius recalls Aristotle's teachings about the human soul which is composed of the rational and irrational part, along with Plato's teachings about the power of music in shaping the human character. For this reason the power of the intellect ought to be summoned, so that this art, innate through nature, may also be mastered and comprehended through knowledge.[13]

In Augustine's writings, the value of the double proportion was also highlighted in the soteriological context. In order to better explain the reality of Christ's act of redemption, Augustine used the notion of proportion 1:2. Owing to the invariability of this proportion, Christ was able to be born as the God-man, while man was able to become the partaker of the Word. The death of Christ alone paid for our double death. Christ became what we are by our nature and what we are not due to our sin. In other words, he became the Righteous Man in order to serve as a mediator between God and sinful man. In his death, the Inner Man (soul) obtained the sacrament, while the human body was given a soteriological model to be guided by. Therefore, the only salutary remedy for our soul is to love God, which means to direct all rhythms of human activity and movements towards the end, i.e. towards the encounter with the perfect God's justice. In return, God gives the rhythms of health (life) to the body, whose true joy man will feel in the future when the Kingdom of God comes. In this manner, the existence of an individual is secured or saved for eternity. Consequently, reason has to be prepared for the soul's entrance into a profound relationship with God and development of love for God's law.[14]

The need for imitating Christ, by which man deserves a pay, can be found as early as in Tertullian's writings. In the light of presenting Christianity as a religion of the "divine right", Tertullian saw salvation as the return to the original harmony and the establishment of the pre-Fall order. According to this view, man can be walked out from the path of salvation by his own free will, i.e. by breaking God's law and committing a sin (*peccatum*). For this he bears guilt (*culpa*) and receives punishment (*poena*). Accordingly, *aut poena – aut satisfactio*, "either punishment or satisfaction", as the principle derived from the juridical approach to salvation, provokes the actions of the ascetical character or at least the imitation of Christ by means of which the man earns the salary (*merces*) of soteriological importance.[15]

The meaning(s) of church polyphony during its development in the Middle Ages and Renaissance

It seems important to emphasize that the term "counterpoint", which is the main characteristic of the church polyphony, derives from the Latin phrase *punctus contra punctum*. Counterpoint can be defined as a composing technique which is, in its broadest sense, a skill of adding melodic parts to a given melody. More specifically, counterpoint is a composing technique of harmonising a theme by adding parts which are melodious themselves.[16] In the following text, we will outline the characteristics of some preserved manuscripts which can reveal the theological meanings added to the polyphonic sound during some periods of its development.

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[13] Ibid., 2, 8.

[14] Saint Augustine, *The Trinity*, 155-57; Augustinus, *De Musica*, 91.

[15] Matić, "Savremena," 162.

The key for interpreting the theological thread of the development of the medieval polyphonic sound and the counterpoint technique is the Augustinian belief in the soteriological necessity of incessantly directing reason towards God. In addition, another significant trace is the existence of the tendency towards interpreting Boethius's texts as Christian writings. In this regard, one of the important figures of the eleventh century was Bishop Adalbold of Utrecht, who read Boethius in the light of Christian philosophy. In Boethius's words about God's mind, in which the beauty of the world had been anticipated, the Ottonian bishop saw a description of Christ, the Word, by which everything came into existence. Adalbold resolved the problem of seeing God as *summi forma boni* by stating that the form was the creator's instrument by which he made his perfect goodness visible to the human eye. God, thus, does not enter the creation he shapes, but its form is the sign of the Master. This is the central point which we should bear in mind when thinking about the medieval development of meaning of the polyphonic sound.[17]

While writing about polyphony, the author of the treatise *Musica Enchiriadis* from the ninth century, talked about the existence of the most sublime principle of God's origin, which represents one of the most mysterious phenomena in nature. These are numerical relations which define creation and which enable dissimilar sounds to be synchronised. Similarly to Augustine and Boethius, the author wonders why some tones agree with each other and the others do not. The tones have their own will for commingling or disagreeing with each other, and this fact, according to the writer, has its ground in the divine explanation:

"This principle, whose operations in this realm (*in hac parte*) the Lord also permits us to penetrate, is treated in the writings of the ancients. In these is asserted, with most convincing arguments, that the same guiding principle that controls the concord of pitches regulates the natures of mortals. Through these numerical relationships, by which unlike sounds concord with each other, the eternal harmony of life and of the conflicting elements of the whole world is united as one with material things".[18]

Around 1025, Abbess Uta of the monastery of Niedermünster in Regensburg commissioned the Four Gospels, better known as *Uta Codex Quattuor Evangelia*. This work represents one of the most spectacular manuscripts of the eleventh-century Ottonian art. This manuscript preserves an illustration of the Crucifixion where the frame around crucified Christ is made of contrasting figures of the Sun and Moon, Grace and Law, as well as New Jerusalem and the torn temple veil. At the bottom of the cross on the side of the

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[16] John Stainer and William Barrett, eds., *A Dictionary of Musical Terms* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 112.

[17] A. H. Armstrong, ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early medieval philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 590–91.

[18] Claude Palisca, ed., *Musica Enchiriadis et Scolica Enchiriadis*, trans. Raymond Erickson (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1955), 30–1.

Moon, Law and torn temple veil, Death is represented abandoned by the Life-Giving Cross. Opposite to Death, the crowned Life is standing with its hands spread in the air as if in an embrace, gazing at crucified and crowned Christ.

Below Christ's arms, there is a diagram of all perfect consonances (fifths, fourths and octaves) representing harmony of the opposites (the sun and moon, life and death), caused by Christ and His death on the Cross. According to Bell, the presented diagram is very closely related to the symbols of Alpha and Omega written above Christ's head. In addition to the diagram, what attracted our attention were several inscriptions found around him. More specifically, it was the upper semi-circular inscription written in blue ink:

"Festa triumphorum dant celica iubila rerum [The feasts of triumphs give heavenly shouts of joy of the world]",

as well as the bottom one (also written in blue ink in a semicircle) stating:

"*Ritmus grammarum struit organa symphon[iarum]* [The number of letters orders the polyphonies of the symphonic intervals]".[19]

As early as in the ninth centrury, the term *organum* was already related to the earliest known type of Western polyphony. Anonymous treatises dating from the second half of the ninth century describe the addition of a new melody i.e. *vox organalis* ("organal voice") to the *vox principalis*. According to Swain, the new melody was a near copy of the chant but sung at the interval of a perfect octave, fourth, or fifth, note against note (*punctus contra punctum*).[20]

When writing about the first inscription, Bell highlighted the absolute correlation between the diagram and the inscription and concluded that the function of the perfect consonance was God's praise. When it comes to the second inscription, Bell underlined that its interpretation might be problematic.[21] From our point of view, the use of the expression *organa symphon[iarum]* seems to have been aimed at connecting the auditory appearance of polyphony with the teaching about God who *is* and within Whom there is the eternal Law. Should this be possible, the details on the illustration would reveal that this development phase of church polyphony was directed towards adding a specific meaning to the polyphonic sound. Namely, the being of the polyphonic sound should be a sign of God, in order to praise God effectively and to bring hope for future salvation, as well as to remind us about the eternal nature of God's law.

The development of polyphony spread simultaneously with the development of scholasticism, which resulted in some specific problems related to harmonising the speculative (*musica mundana, humana, instrumentalis*) and practical (*musica mensurabilis*) concepts of music during the thirteenth century. The aesthetical ideas of Thomas of Aquinas spread the view that a man is a man precisely because of his ability to experience the higher harmony of beauty, as opposed to all the other living beings that only fight for preserving life.[22] As Bell states, music theorists of the thirteenth century dedicated a generous amount of time to the discussion of technical details of performance, which eventually led to the development of a theoretical tradition which can be said to be detached from that of Boethius and others. Namely, "their purpose was not to discuss the place of music among the liberal arts, but more simply to enable the singing of increasingly complex music".[23] It seems that the need for evaluating the human being through its ability to cherish the beauty emerged in the spotlight.

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[19] More on the illustration and diagram can be found in: Nicolas Bell, "Readings and Interpretations of Boethius's De institutione musica in the Later Middle Ages," in *Sapientia et Eloquentia Vol.11*, eds. Gunilla Iversen and Nicolas Bell (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 367. We used the translations of Nicholas Bell found in the mentioned work.

[20] Joseph P. Swain, *Historical Dictionary of Sacred Music* (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2006), 158.

[21] Ibid., 367–68.

Nevertheless, despite the pronounced disassociation of the philosophical-theological approach and practical approach to polyphony, some of the theorists of this era felt the need to unite these two lines by referring to traditional authorities. For example, in his treatise *Ars cantus mensurabilis*, Franco of Cologne presented the theme of mensural music (i.e. polyphony) as something which had been preceded by Gregorian chant (*quam ipsa plana praecedit tanquam principalis subalterna*). In doing so, Franco explicitly confirmed the dogmatic authority of Gregorian chant established in the figure of Gregory the Great, and thus paved the road for introducing polyphony into the existing theoretical, practical and dogmatic authority of church music.[24] Along with him, the authors of the collection *Magnus liber organi* clearly showed this aspiration as early as on the first pages of this manuscript. This collection, whose organa represent transition from one-voice chorale melodies to the more complex polyphonic facture, begins with an illustration of Music which governs all types of music: *mundana, humana,* and *instrumentalis*.[25]

The end of the century brought new attempts to harmonise speculative theories of Augustine and Boethius with the practical and rhythmical tractates and tradition of Gregorian chant.[26] *Speculum musicae* represents the most significant work for this research, since here Jacobus Leodiensis created the broadest synthesis of the above mentioned. In the fourth chapter of the first book, the author described music as a perfection of a scientific soul ("musicam esse perfectionem animae scientialem"), giving it absolute power in governing the relationships within creation.[27] Soon, Jacobus assigned music to the very essence of God:

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[22] Danko Grlić, *Estetika. Povijest filosofskih problema* (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1983), 160-61.

[23] Bell, "Readings," 370.

[24] "Ars cantus mensurabilis," accessed January 5, 2024, https://chmtl.indiana.edu/tml/13th/FRAACM.

[25] "Antiphonarium. 1301-1400," accessed February 10, 2024 http://mss.bmlonline.it/s.aspx?Id=AWOHy_N-I1A4r7GxMB57#/book.

[26] Bell, "Readings," 376.

[27] "Quod si non sit possibile quin ex comparatione debita rerum quarumcumque distinctarum quaedam consurgat habitudo, quaecumque sit illa (habitudinem sumendo generaliter, ut est tactum), videtur quod musica, in sua generalitate sumpta, res quascumque invicem possit comparare, et quam inter se servent habitudinem intueri. [Even if no due comparison of different things can generate certain relationship, whatever this relationship may be (taking the relationship in general, as it has been touched upon), it seems that music in its broadest sense can compare all things and observe the relationship they maintain.]" "Speculum musicae," accessed January 5, 2024, https://chmtl.indiana.edu/tml/14th/JACSP1A.

"Is there not between the divine persons that differ in their real characteristics the greatest harmony, the supreme order without the prior and the posterior, an unbreakable bond, in essence, which is the simplest and the highest community?"[28]

Using theological discourse, Jacobus illustrated the final outlines of the theological image whose reflection would be noticeable later in the specific characteristics of the counterpoint technique:

> "The citizens of the heaven move to the sound of this music; they see all things intuitively; therefore, God is incessantly praised by music in this Victorious Church. For the instrument of celebrating God is music. [...] Now this song is common to all heavenly citizens and they confess in it the holy trinity in the persons, and in the essence united [...] They have their own different songs according to the quality of their merits and according to their different mansions: martyrs sing one song, teachers the other, while virgins sing the third one. [...] This distinction of songs does not bring any disagreement between them nor does it show any discord with God. For each melody, all harmony is found there; in God, who they relish and who they refer to. And when the condition accepts the nobleness from the one of whom it is (ab obiecto), and from the end of which it is, it becomes the music of heavenly citizens which is more noble than the rest, more perfect than the rest, more praiseworthy than the rest, and which is the one towards which all other music is ultimately directed. And so we took this music as a starting point for recommending music."[29]

During the period of Renaissance, the echo of Augustine's theology could be found in the tractate of Johannes Tinctoris named *De proportionale musices*. Here he stated that Christ was "the greatest musician" who had united two natures in the double proportion.[30] In the mentioned manuscript, Tinctoris indicated the divine source of musical (auditory) proportions, while in his tractate *Liber de arte contrapuncti* he stated that consonances had been created for the glory and honour of God, and that it was the counterpoint that offered a pleasant and graceful praise to God.[31]

The ontology of the essence regulating the relations between divine figures was part of the development of the counterpoint technique of the Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Baroque. The superior composing ideas of the church masters such as Palestrina generated the compositions which belong to the field of classical polyphony in the Roman Catholic Church today. In order to better argument the meaning that the philosophical and theological background gave to the counterpoint technique, and thus church polyphony, we quote here a contemporary explanation of church polyphony:

"Imagine a small group singing a Gregorian chant. Then imagine another, separate from the first, singing a different Gregorian chant. Imagine a third, fourth, fifth, and perhaps a sixth, all singing their own chants, which, while clearly different from one another in melody, have certain things in common […] Finally, imagine hearing all six different chants at once, and, rather than competing and clashing horribly with one another as randomly chosen melodies should do, by some miracle they coordinate and harmonize with one another in a breathtakingly beautiful fusion of tone. This is the essence of polyphony.”[32]

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[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid.

[30] "summus ille musicus Jesus Christus, pax nostra, sub proportione dupla fecit utraque unum in eius". "Proportionale musices," accessed January 5, 2024, https://chmtl.indiana.edu/tml/15th/TINPROM.

[31] Oliver Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History: From Classical Antiquity through the Romantic Era* (New York: W. W. Norton& Company, Inc., 1950), 195, 198.

Conclusion

The meaning(s) of church polyphony arose from the correlation between the usiological approach to triadology and juridical soteriology, on the one side, and music as the speculative science rooted in the cosmological discourses of ancient Greek philosophers, on the other side. The meaning of church polyphony consisted of giving glory and praise to God and expressing the understanding of future salvation. On the other hand, church polyphony sought to influence human consciousness at the auditory and psychological levels and thus direct it towards the concepts of eternity and morality that are the central determinants of salvation.

Musical tractates confirmed the presence of a tendency towards attributing the idea of God’s Presence to the notion of the polyphonic sound. This movement was in close relation with the development of the counterpoint technique of the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance. In the theological sense, development of the counterpoint technique was particularly related to the area of eternity and consequently to a specific aim: making an audible existence of the principle which unites numerous independent individuals while managing their relationships.

Although clear evidence is still lacking, it can be said that, in a certain sense, by allocating the octave proportion to Christ’s figure of the God-man, Augustine supported the future development of the associative connection between the consonant polyphonic sound and Christ’s righteousness and His act of redemption. From the ninth to the sixteenth century, the semantics of church polyphony developed in stages: starting from an auditory image of a principle, through Christ’s act of redemption, to the personified Music governing creation, which was soon to be transformed into the very Essence of God and Kingdom of God.

Reflecting on what has been presented in this paper from the Orthodox theological perspective, we can raise a question for potential further research: what happens with the divine quality in man – his free will, in and out of the encounter with music?

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[32] Swain, *Sacred Treasure*, 119-20.

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