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Becoming Friends of God: Practicing Philosophy of Religion and Theology in and for a Radical Spirit of Individuality and Humanity

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Approval of the Dissertation Committee

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Brandon Yarbrough as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Religion.

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Abstract

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We want to live well. For us, coming to live well involves learning to think well. The extent to which we can make the transition from death and misery to life and blessedness will depend on the extent to which we learn to truly think the transition. We are not free to truly opt for life unless we can truly distinguish between death and life, and we are not free to truly opt for blessedness unless we can truly distinguish between misery and blessedness. Toward these ends, we have much work to do. It is not the case that every human being is in possession of the truth. Indeed, "there is a way that seems right to a person, but its end is the way to death" (Prov. 14:12). Our freedom to decide for life and blessedness greatly depends on the extent to which we have come to know what it means for us to have life to the full. The extent to which we can know what it means for us to have life to the full depends on the extent to which we are free to carry out the process of knowing the truth. Thinking the transition from death and misery to life and blessedness involves coming to grips with the beginning and the end of this transition, or locating ourselves in relation to the beginning and end of our salvation. Finally, thinking the transition also involves ordering our steps toward life and blessedness, which will require us to become familiar with the way of salvation.

If we want to become completely free to opt for life and blessedness, we will have to practice the speculative intellectual virtues of understanding, science, and wisdom. The virtue of understanding is the power to grasp starting-points for acts of intelligence. The virtue of science is the power to proceed by acts of intelligence toward the stopping-point of knowledge, and the virtue of wisdom is the power to judge the results of acts of intelligence and set them in order so that one may move in the direction of true life and blessedness. Practicing understanding will require us to overcome our tendencies to become forgetful of Being, avoid discourse, and commit the fallacy of logical inversion and, instead, learn to let the discourse of the other speak for itself. Practicing sacred science will require us to beware of temptations to unbelief and bad belief (or idolatry) and, instead, practice obedience to and persevere in the contemplation of the Word of God. Finally, practicing the kind of wisdom that leads to true life and blessedness will require us to become familiar with the goodness of God – i.e., with what makes for true life and blessedness – by practicing faith, hope, and charity.

This dissertation clarifies what it means for us to practice human(e) intelligence, as opposed to artificial, inhumane forms of intelligence and why we must learn to practice more human(e) forms of intelligence than we are accustomed to practicing, today. This dissertation also clarifies what it means for us to come to have life to the full, or for us to fully develop individuality and humanity, and it explores how philosophers of religion and theologians can help us move in the direction of life and blessedness by teaching us to practice the speculative intellectual virtues and the theological virtues. In other words, this dissertation is a reflection on how we reflect on the relationship between intelligence and the good life and on how philosophers of religion and theologians can promote the good life by promoting the kind of intelligence that makes for true individuality and true

humanity. The extent to which we can decide to move in the direction of true life and blessedness will greatly depend on the extent to which we learn to think the transition from death and misery to life and blessedness. Learning to think well about what makes for life and blessedness will require us to come to grips with our deep passivity and begin to develop more robust conceptions of individuality and humanity. Philosophers of religion and theologians can help us develop more robust conceptions of individuality and humanity by teaching us to practice the speculative intellectual virtues and the theological virtues.

To and from:

Nicholas Yarbrough,
Brady Marston,
Sarah Bean,
Brandon Foskey,
Daniel Nelson,
JM and Rhonda McGinnis,
& Abbey Vermilya Yarbrough

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Introduction

Why stay in one place and think about living well (*eu zēn*), why not just get on with it? What counts as thinking well? Why is it important for us to learn to think well, or what does thinking well have to do with living well? And how can we be helped to think well and live well by philosophers of religion and theologians? These are questions of vocation and, as such, questions of orientation, as opposed to questions of explanation; so, in the following pages, I have not mainly set out to *explain* why some practice an intellectual way of life or value the speculative intellectual virtues. Instead, I have set out to *clarify* what it means for us to think well, or to practice intelligence, as humans, as philosophers of religion, and as theologians and to "unfold the orientation implicit in the practice of faith"[1] so as to help the reader *orient* herself in response to divine command "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God"[2] – or to "be perfect,"[3] "be merciful,"[4] and "be holy;"[5] or to become truly individual humans and truly human(e) individuals by the grace of the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead.[6]

We think by drawing distinctions, and we cannot live in the world without drawing distinctions so that we can orient ourselves in the world and become capable of action. To live in the world, or to have life, is to abide-in-self and pass-beyond-self. Someone who can no longer abide-in-self and pass-beyond-self is dead – i.e., to the extent that one is not free to abide-in-self and pass-beyond-self one does not *have life*. Now, unless we draw a distinction between self and not-self, we neither have an option to abide-in-self

[1] "On Distinctions," p. 179.
[2] Cf. Micah 6:8.
[3] Cf. Matthew 5:48.
[4] Cf. Luke 6:36.
[5] Cf. Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15-16.
[6] "On Distinctions," p. 179.

or pass-beyond-self. We cannot "choose life" until we draw such a distinction, but when we draw a distinction, or identify ourselves and our place in the world, "the action of drawing a distinction makes other actions possible that were not possible before."[7] The extent to which we can decide to live well depends on the extent to which we have learned to identify ourselves in ways that are right and true and good.

Every distinction that we make is made at some place *here* and distinguishes between *here* and *there*, but until we receive and accept the advent of the *there* to be distinguished from the *here*, we cannot make the distinction. We can only "choose life" after the advent of the *there*, or after life-options disclose themselves to us. Likewise, we can only develop the freedom of self-consciousness after our ways of orienting ourselves in the world have, to some extent, broken down. It is only after different characters have become a live option for him that "the seeker of his truest, strongest, deepest self must review the list carefully, and pick out the one on which to stake his salvation."[8] Likewise, it is only after we have suffered some dislocation that we can let others be *there* for us and learn to be *there* for others in ways that are better, more upright, and truer. Until our "truest, strongest, deepest self" discloses itself to us, we cannot abide-in-such-a-self, and until we have suffered some moment of dislocation in our lives, we cannot look at another sufferer, recognize "that the sufferer exists, not only as a unit in a collection, or a specimen from the social category labeled 'unfortunate,' but as a man, exactly like us, who was one day stamped with a special mark by affliction,"[9] and wish her well *for her sake*. Unless we are empowered by some word-event to truly recognize who she is in relation to me we cannot pass-beyond-self-so-humanely.

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[7] "On Distinctions," p. 174.
[8] *Psychology*, p. 53
[9] *Waiting for God*, p. 64.

If living is a matter of abiding-in-self and passing-beyond-self, living well is a matter of abiding-in-self well (individuality) and passing-beyond-self well (humanity). The extent to which we are free to practice individuality and humanity depends on the extent which we have developed good character, or have become disposed to acknowledge what makes a human life right and true and good as we identify ourselves and make our life-decisions. In other words, we become free to live "the good life" by coming to have "the good spirit" (*eudaimonia*) in us. The quality of our abiding-in-self and passing-beyond-self will depend on the quality of the spirit at work within us. What appears to us and how it appears to us is decisive for our ways of orienting ourselves in the world. We cannot truly say "no" or "yes" to the word of the other *until we have heard the word of the other and have come to grips with the word.*

In a secular world, we can forget our dependence on the word of the other. In our accounts of "the good life," for example, we can ignore "the distinction between actual and true identity," deny that my/our "'true identity' is only approximately realized by my actual identity at any given time," and simply busy ourselves with exploring and clarifying what counts as individuality and humanity given my/our actual contingent identity.[10] We can give these kinds of accounts of "the good life," and they are fairly common in our secular society, but these accounts do not silence the question as to my/our true identity or the question as to the true character of "the good spirit." We can "opt for different standards of orientation, entertain different views about what is human life at its best, and follow different ideals in our individual life,"[11] and each of us could be

[10] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 208.
[11] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 208.

better, more upright, and truer – each of us "squanders possibilities that could have been important, and not one fulfills all [her] promises."[12]

We may have a notion of what it means to become good-spirited and to live well but how can we "test the spirits"?[13] We are not in a position to "test the spirits" unless the truth has occurred to us. If we want to completely come to grips with what it means for us to become good-spirited and to live well, we will have to come to grips with the way that knowing the truth is, for us, always a matter of *knowing after*, or how "we feed on something beyond ourselves in making ourselves,"[14] and with the content of the truth that has occurred to us. In other words, if we want to think about living together well, or about my/our perfection, in a perfectly human way, we will have to attend not only to what it means for someone, given her/our actual contingent identity, to practice abiding-in-self and passing-beyond-self, but also to what it means for someone to receive "the good spirit" from the Giver (*ho theos*) of the Gift of eternal life.

We cannot give a complete account of the good life without giving an account of the good spirit and its Source. Thinking about human perfection, or about what makes a human life right and true and good, in a perfectly human way will require us to become mindful (by practicing both the speculative intellectual virtues and the theological virtues) of our dependence upon the occurrence of the truth and of the content of the truth which has occurred to us. Where such mindfulness of the Giver and the Gift of the truth takes place, life becomes transparent to the transcendence to which it owes its existence.[15] It is only by becoming so awakened and inspired by the Word of God who

[12] *Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 42.
[13] *Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 42.
[14] *Becoming Present*, p. 134.
[15] Cf. *Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 44.

makes "human life something into which it cannot make itself" that we can ever fully appreciate "what makes our life good, true and upright"[16] by becoming friends of God, who live together "in a radical spirit of shared humanity."[17]

Now, this dissertation does not pretend to offer a complete account of "the good life"; instead, it is a reflection on how we reflect one aspect of "the good life" – namely, the practice of human intelligence. It is a reflection on what counts as thinking well, the importance of thinking well to living well, and how we can be helped by philosophy of religion and theology to think well and live well. If we are going to think well and live well, we will have to become "good-spirited." There is no higher good for us. Every choice that we make should be made for the sake of my/our blessedness (*eudaimonia*). Everything we do should be done so that we may become a blessing to someone. Every word that is spoken and every page that is written should be determined to make someone blessed, but for different reasons, we have resigned ourselves to lesser ends. We struggle to walk the line, and we also hold many different opinions about what constitutes blessedness. Not only have we become unsure about the extent to which blessedness is even possible for us, given our histories and habits of inadequacy, but it also seems impossible for us to identify the conditions for the possibility of blessedness in a way that will secure widespread agreement.

Around the globe, and even within the same household, we live in very different situations and under very different pressures. How could we ever hope to come to a consensus or anything close to a consensus concerning what it will take for us to become "good-spirited"? And unless we are able to reach some basic agreement on the issue,

[16] *Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 42.
[17] *Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 82.

what basis do we have for organizing ourselves for the work of making our world a place where we can live together in the direction of blessedness? Perhaps it would be better for us to agree to disagree about what makes for blessedness and, instead, mainly aim to reach agreements about what makes for misery (i.e., "the bad spirit") and about how we might avoid and get rid of misery. After all, "we are familiar with lack and deficiency, but not with abundance and fulfillment,"[18] and it seems to be much easier for us to reach agreements concerning what makes for unfulfillment, or imperfection. In fact, nowadays the term "perfection" is almost always used to mean "without imperfection." We define perfection as the process of getting rid of all imperfections and, finally, as the absence of imperfection, but what can we say about the presence of human perfection, or about what makes a human life right and true and good? What cause and what hope do we have, in an age such as ours, for developing a robust conception of human perfection – of what it means for humans to become good-spirited and live well?

Given our inadequacies and our apparently irreconcilable differences of opinion about what makes for human perfection, is it not better for us to lower our expectations. Would it not be better for us to simply ignore the many dissatisfactions brought about by our imperfections so that we might use the limited time we are given to secure pleasures and advantages for ourselves? Would it not be better for us to face our imperfections with stoic resignation, so that we might at least win peace of mind for ourselves? Or, perhaps, to deny that anyone is in a position to *think* perfection *perfectly* so that we will not have to *suffer* through another lecture about which choices we should make, about what we should do, or about who we should become? After all, what kind of person is

[18] *Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 42.

in a position to write a dissertation on what makes for human perfection? Who would even try? Surely a presumptuous fellow, no?

Not necessarily. Aristotle, for example, gives an account of what makes for human perfection in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, and it would be strange to his call his account "presumptuous."[19] In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, he aligns the idea of human perfection with the idea of happiness (*eudaimonia*). According to Aristotle, there are many things that we want to have, but unlike other goods we desire, we wish for happiness "on account of itself" and for other goods so that we may become happy.[20] Furthermore, even among those things that we desire "on their own account," happiness is special for, according to Aristotle, "we always choose it on account of itself and never on account of something else."[21] While we choose honor, pleasure, intellect, and every virtue "on their own account" because "even if nothing resulted from them, we would choose each of them," we also choose them "for the sake of happiness, because we suppose that through them, we will be happy," but "nobody chooses happiness for the sake of these things, or, more generally on account of anything else."[22]

Now, we tend to think of "happiness" in terms of the satisfaction of my/our actual desires or in terms of the cultivation of ideal desires given my/our actual self-knowledge (i.e., in a secular way), but it is also possible for us to conceive of my/our perfection and to work to improve my/our standards of orientation by developing an understanding of

[19] If anything, one might argue that Aristotle's account of human perfection is more desperate than it is presumptuous. All accounts of the perfection of something x are rooted in an understanding x, and his account of human perfection is an account of the perfection of the human *substance* as opposed to an account of the perfection of the human *subject*. He limits the scope of his investigation to what we actually know about the relativities of this finite existence, rather than aiming to know ourselves as we are known by God. In other words, he aims at a knowledge of ourselves relative to the relativities of this finite existence, as opposed to an absolute knowledge of ourselves and everything else.
[20] *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1, Chapter 2, p. 2.
[21] *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1, Chapter 7, p. 11.
[22] *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1, Chapter 7, p. 11.

the understanding of God on the basis of the Word of God which we have received and accepted in faith (i.e., in a religious way). In other words, we can deny the distinction between my/our actual self-knowledge and my/our true self-knowledge made possible for us by the Word of God and simply busy ourselves with activities undertaken for the sake of secular self-realization, or we can accept this distinction and work to develop a passion for knowing ourselves as we are known by the Giver of "the good spirit." We can think about who we are and about our relation to "the good life" in accordance with the spirit of the age; or, by the grace of God, we may learn to think about who we are and about our relation to "the good life" in accordance with the Holy Spirit. So, we ought to distinguish happiness *as secular self-realization* from blessedness *as real union with God* and to recognize that our accounts of human perfection will be profoundly shaped by how we think about our relation to "the good spirit."

Whatever else we say about the good spirit, nobody becomes "good-spirited" for the sake of something else; rather we choose all other things for the sake of becoming good-spirited. But what does it mean for us to become good-spirited? What is the truth of a human life? And how should we *think* about such questions and about the answers that have been given to them? There are surely too many books promising happiness as a result of eight easy steps! This dissertation will not be one of those books; instead, it will challenge the reader to reflect on how we reflect on ourselves, our world, and on the conditions for the possibility of living together with others in a perfectly individual and a perfectly human(e) way. How have we arrived at our current standards of orientation? Have we been practicing the speculative intellectual virtues? And what would it mean for us to develop standards of orientation that are informed by an understanding of the understanding of God? What follows is "a matter of the clarification, always controversial,

of what it could and should mean to live a human life, and of the judgement, constantly under dispute, as to what human beings can and should orient themselves by in order to live out their humanness in a truly human way."[23]

Human Life after Artificial Intelligence

Once again, we think by making distinctions. When a need for distinctions arises, we distinguish *x* from *y* so that we can orient ourselves with respect to *z*. Said another way, when the need for interpretation arises, we interpret something as something for someone through something. We can do this more or less self-consciously. We can live with more or less freedom. Today, we have become accustomed to thinking and living in bondage. Our modern intellectual habits are characterized by excessive resignation. We have resigned ourselves to suffer certain ideas, institutions, and traditions as to something merely given, and we have ignored our own histories of splitting, fixing, and reifying certain categories of thought.[24] We have become forgetful. We forget that we have made the distinctions ourselves and that we have made them for someone in some particular context. Even where we have distinguished the universal from the particular, we have done this for someone through something.

At times in our history, particular groups have tried to make us forgetful, or tempt us to resign ourselves to certain splits. At other times, it seems we have become forgetful by sheer accident. In any case, nowadays, most of our attempts to establish standards of orientation are carried out in a mode of forgetfulness, or ignorance. All too often, we have uncritically accepted certain splits, or dualisms and have assumed that our only

[23] *Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 50.
[24] We tend to resign ourselves to dualisms, or contradictions, as opposed to faithfully participating in a dialectical process of thinking and working our way through the contradictions we face as we work toward "the good life."

options are to simply lie back and dream dreams (optimism)[25] or to simply busy ourselves with the work of making observations so that we may develop the kind of knowledge of world, other, and self that Paul Tillich has called "controlling knowledge" (naturalism).[26] As a rule, those who find themselves in power have preferred to focus our attention on, or limit our concern to, controlling what can be controlled in the name of progress, and in a very real sense, it is better for us to control what we can control than for us to simply lie back and dream dreams.[27]

In America, we mainly support and practice forms of intelligence that function to produce "controlling knowledge." The controlling knowledge that we crave is a product of technical reason, or a conclusion drawn from a series of "reasonings" that have been aimed at ends "provided by nonrational forces, either by positive traditions or by arbitrary decisions serving the will to power."[28] Today, intelligence has become synonymous with technical reason. The kind of intelligence that we have been practicing is supported by "the rulers and authorities,"[29] who are very much interested in producing workers who are both capable of helping them control what can be controlled and incapable of thinking beyond the notion that the world simply is what it is.

Dear reader, it does not have to be this way! The dominance of technical reason in our age is an artificial product, and one that prevents us from becoming able to *think*

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[25] A.k.a. "fantasy." In despair, some have claimed "that no distinction can be drawn between reality and fantasy, between what is sham and what is genuine" (*From Fantasy to Faith*, p. x). As a philosopher, I will aim to show *that* there *is* such a distinction to be drawn, and as a Christian theologian, I will aim to make a case for *how* it should be drawn.

[26] *Systematic Theology*, p. 97. Cf. *Creatures of Possibility*, pp. 15-17.

[27] As Rush (one of the greatest progressive rock bands) has repeatedly declared since 1976 in protest to sheer optimism: "You can't have freedom for free. You won't get wise with the sleep still in your eyes, no matter what your dreams might be" ("Something for Nothing," *2112*).

[28] *Systematic Theology*, p. 73.

[29] Cf. Colossians 2:15; Ephesians 6:12.

the possibility of human perfection in a complete way.[30] When we reason together about our prospects for blessedness in the forgetful mode of technical reason, we transform the object of our inquiry "into a completely conditioned and calculable 'thing.'"[31] Then, we take aim at something that we lack and set out to get this thing, but even when we get the very thing we set out to get, we remain imperfect because blessedness is not one thing among others. It is childish to think that one can become good-spirited in the same way that one can acquire pleasures or advantages; so, we should put away childish ways.[32] Those who set out on childish "pursuits of happiness" tend to make themselves to suffer further misery when the futility of their misguided pursuits are inevitably exposed to the light of day.[33] So, again, we should put away childish ways; but how can we? If we cannot become good-spirited by chasing after a thing called "happiness," what hope of blessedness do we have?

As I hope will become clearer throughout the course of my dissertation, if we want to learn to think (and speak) well about what it means to live well, *we* will have to develop

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[30] Our obsession with control is particularly harmful to our interpersonal relationships. It is conceivable that, during the night, as I sleep next to my wife, she could kill me. Our relationship would be greatly harmed if I were to try to secure my safety at night – for example, by locking my wife in a large chest, or in the trunk of my car. Thankfully, this is unnecessary. I am certain that my wife will not kill me in the middle of the night, and because I am certain that I am safe with her, I do not feel any need to secure my safety in a way that would make our relationship untenable. Eberhard Jüngel aptly characterizes the nature and importance of trust, and the relationship between trust and control, when he writes: "Trust can be defined accurately as *certainty which removes security*. It is true in many respects that 'trust is good but control is better.' Mastering the world through the production of the world is unthinkable without control, not to speak of actually doing it. Control provides security, and is thus indispensable within the structure of that which is securable. But every interpersonal relationship, every contact from person to person, would be destroyed by the performance of that securing process which provides for control. Man lives on trust. Trust is an existential factor which constitutes the humanity of man. For in trust man can rely on an instance outside of himself. In this sense, unlimited trust (not as a requirement, for trust cannot be required, but rather as an event which takes place, not without good reason) is the basic process between man and God. Man's relationship to God stands and falls therefore with trust in God, that is, with an event of certainty which removes security" (*God as the Mystery of the World*, p. 196).

[31] *Systematic Theology*, p. 97.

[32] Cf. 1 Corinthians 13:11.

[33] Cf. Ecclesiastes 1:1-12:14; Isaiah 45:23.

"receiving knowledge," as well as "controlling knowledge."[34] In other words, we will have to come to grips with our "deep passivity."[35] We become free to determine ourselves, or free to become who we want to become (and occasionally what we want to become), "only by relating to the possibilities played into our way," or by receiving "possibilities that break into our life," and then accepting them as "opportunities for us to change for the better (positive opportunities) or for the worse (negative opportunities)."[36] For humans, coming to have life to the full is not a mere matter of optimizing our uses of resources and maximizing our dominion over the earth. It is not only a matter of solving environmental and social problems by carrying out calculated, technological interventions, but also a matter of solving "heart problems" by way of inclusion and participation in the love of friendship. It is very much a matter of the way we *think* (and speak) of our world, one another, and ourselves.

So, we have to ask ourselves: is our concept of 'humanity' really conducive to the development of the truth of a human life? One might say: nothing is more important to our development than the *spirit* in which we live and the way it has determined "who we *think* we are."[37] So, if we are going to develop the truth of a human life, we are going to have to learn to think our relationship to the Giver of life and blessedness in ways that empower us to fully accept the opportunities that we have been given to come to know the truth of a human life and become true selves. Unfortunately, we are not in the habit

[34] *Systematic Theology*, p. 98.
[35] *Creatures of Possibility*, p. xii.
[36] *Creatures of Possibility*, p. ix.
[37] Cf. *A New Climate for Theology*, p. 43. I will have more to say on this later, but note that Sallie McFague is more interested in the relationship between "who we *think* we are" and our freedom of action, while my project is more concerned with the relationship between "who we *think* we are" and our freedom to determine ourselves autonomously and theonomously. To learn more about this distinction: keep on reading. For a helpful discussion of the relationship between autonomy and theonomy, cf. *System of the Sciences*, pp. 203-215; and *Systematic Theology*, pp. 83-86.

of cultivating true self-knowledge; so, we remain unable to consistently orient our lives in the direction of the truth of a human life.

This dissertation mainly aims to help the reader rethink the way that we have been thinking about human life and blessedness by helping the reader come to understand the essence of the speculative intellectual virtues, their importance for developing the truth of a human life, and how they themselves are bettered by habits of faith, hope, and charity. Christians, as such, try to become perfectly human by developing the truth of a human life in correspondence with (the possibilities that have been played into their way by) the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. As the reader continues to make her way through this manuscript, I hope she will become more familiar with what it means to think well and, more specifically, with what it means to practice philosophy of religion and theology *in a perfectly human way*.

For now, in anticipation of what it is to come, the process of learning to think and live well (by practicing philosophy of religion and theology) may, in summary fashion, be called "the creative process of *becoming friends of God*": becoming more than friends of religion, by practicing the virtue of understanding, even in the study of religion, as opposed to merely seeking to become "friends of religion," or persons who are mainly interested in making themselves and their religions appear more agreeable or who mainly aim to secure epistemological privileges for themselves or for members of a particular group; *becoming* friends of God by practicing "sacred science" and "sacred doctrine," as opposed to presuming that one is a friend of God by virtue of belonging to a particular society, tradition, or "sensibility" or despairing of our chances to become friend of God on account of our finitude, the contingency of our knowledge of God's Word, or our histories and habits of sin; and becoming *friends of God* by practicing not

only harmony (with respect to reason) and solidarity (with respect to action) but also the love of complete friendship in accordance with the wisdom of charity (with respect to affection).

Making the Transition from Death to Life

Newspapers around the world are testifying against us: we are in the habit of over-stepping categorical boundaries. We have been making ourselves and making others to suffer in grossly immoral ways. It appears that our histories and habits of error have left us with a deformed *spirit*. As long as our minds remain captive to distorted images of who we are and where we fit in the scheme of things, we will remain needy beyond the hope of satisfaction, and we can expect our neediness, which is itself a product of our distorted imaginations, to produce in us a "tendency toward death," or make us unconscionably self-destructive and destructive of others.[38] We have heard it said that the greatest threat to the possibility of human fulfillment is the corruption of the "heart," or of the "inner sense,"[39] for among those who have problems, those who have heart problems tend to become most miserable because of the persistent nature of their disorientation and the infinite distance between themselves and the possibility of true satisfaction. It has been said that human fulfillment is, above all, a matter of the heart. We have been duly warned, and yet our heart problems persist because the difficulty lies not only in coming to know *that* we have a heart problem but also in coming to know *why* and in committing ourselves to practices that promise to help us actually make the transition from having a tendency toward death to having a tendency toward life.[40]

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[38] *The Courage to Be*, p. 14.
[39] *On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 34ff.
[40] It seems to me that it is time for us, especially the "intellectuals" among us, to start taking the problem of sin more seriously than we have in recent years and to make an earnest effort to understand our (spiritual) situation and to commit ourselves to (spiritual) disciplines so that we may (help others to) move

The conditions for the possibility of making this transition have been analyzed and described in a variety of ways. Some have challenged us to give more attention to the economic factors that make it possible or impossible for some to "make a living." Some have challenged us to give more attention to whether or not "the powers that be," or the political forces of the age, "let others be" – that is, whether or not they support or frustrate the "will to power" of an individual or a group. And some have challenged us to give more attention to the many cultural influences that either empower us to "make meaning" in the direction of the truth of a human life or tempt us to resign ourselves to trivial pursuits and to a rather meaningless existence. We cannot afford to ignore any of these challenges. The extent to which we will make the transition from having a tendency toward death and misery to having a tendency toward life and blessedness will depend on the extent to which the economic, political, and cultural conditions of our lives can be and will be redeemed.

A human being is not merely a "thinking thing." A human being is a "concrete totality" of sociohistorical conditions.[41] It does not make sense for us to talk about the

toward "the good life." While the work of the forgiveness of sins belongs to the local church, this work should not simply be relegated to (the pastor of) the local church. Instead, the church and the academy should look for opportunities to work together for the forgiveness of sins. On account of their special roles in communities of faith, pastors are normally given many unique opportunities to have a wealth of experiences with the problem of sin and the work of helping others make the transition from being unfulfilled to full life. With respect to the problem of sin and the work of salvation, as a general rule, the pastor is in a position to help the academic better "know the *that*." At the same time, on account of their special roles in discussion groups, academics are normally given many unique opportunities to explore the relationship between particular experiences and the universals of human experience; so, with respect to the problem of sin and the work of salvation, as a general rule, the academic is in a position to help the pastor better "know the *why*." This is not to say that academics actually "know the *why*" better than pastors or that pastors actually "know the *that*" better than academics, it is only to say that academics are normally given unique opportunities to develop *knowledge* of the problem of sin and the work of salvation and pastors are normally given unique opportunities to have *experience* with the problem of sin and the work of salvation. Furthermore, both sides of this particular aisle should try to find ways to work together to (help others) make the transition from unfulfillment to fulfillment. We can do better together.

[41] As Anselm Min has put it: "The human being is a 'concrete' totality of these constitutive relations: a 'totality' because it is an internally united whole, not an external collection, of such relations; and

truth of a human life in a way that is totally divorced from any interest in the economic, political, and cultural conditions for the possibility of coming to have life to the full. If we really want to promote human life and blessedness, we will have to both dirty our hands by engaging in economic, political, and cultural practices of redemption and muddy our way of thinking with reflections on the difficulties inherent to those practices; and we will have to learn to do this without losing our grip on "that which by itself makes life choice-worthy" and a life "in need of nothing."[42]

There is much work to be done – more than one Ph.D. candidate could reasonably hope to accomplish. Everyone who sits down to write an article, a book, or the like hopes to say something to someone. This is how it should be. We should not try to say everything to everyone. First of all, those who sit down to write have selected a definite medium of communication, one which cannot speak to everyone (e.g., infants and person who are illiterate) except by teaching someone to care for such as these. Second, it is not prudent for someone to try to say to another everything that can be said. Not only would this prevent the writer from finishing her writings and the reader from finishing her readings, but the discourse of the one who tried to say everything that can be said would become either violently abstract or tedious. It is possible to say too much, and this is true for both

'concrete' because it is a whole internally differentiated and historically developing by virtue of the internal tensions and contradictions among the differentiated elements" (*The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World*, p. 103). To say that a human being is "an internally united whole," is to resist the appeal of dualistic ways of thinking, which "hold on to the irreducible double identity of human beings as physical and spiritual, body and soul, animal and rational[, etc.]" (*Creatures of Possibility*, p. 15). To say that a human is "internally differentiated and historical developing" is to resist the temptation to think of human beings in merely idealistic ways, which "seek to integrate the human being's animal nature into a more comprehensive concept of reason [or some other ideal]" (*Creatures of Possibility*, p. 15). In addition to avoiding excessively dualistic and idealistic ways of thinking about who we are and about where we fit in the scheme of things, we should also avoid excessively naturalistic ways of thinking, which "attempt to comprehend every aspect of humanness, including human reason and spiritual activity, on the basis of a dynamic evolutionary understanding of the human being's animal nature" (*Creatures of Possibility*, pp. 15-16).

[42] *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1, Chapter 7, p. 12.

logical reasons and for rhetorical reasons. One who says more than she knows commits a kind of logical injustice, and someone who says more than her conversation partner should hear commits a kind of rhetorical injustice. Instead of trying to say everything to everyone, we should ask ourselves whether or not what we have in mind to say is good *for someone* and, for the sake of conversational justice, in our discussions with others, we should focus on what is most important to the good of someone. This is what I try to do in the following pages: say something that s*omeone should hear* (for example, students of religion, theologians, and members of the church) and focus on what is essential to the goods I have in mind.

The extent to which *we* can make the transition from a tendency toward death to a tendency toward (the truth of a human) life will greatly depend on the extent to which we can *think* the transition. Unless we somehow develop the freedom to think divine redemption, we will remain unable to engage in courses of human action for the sake of divine redemption. Unfortunately, as stated above, our ability to think divine redemption has been undermined by our histories and habits of error. Now, we could work to identify our situation by analyzing and describing our many economic failures, our many political failures, or our many cultural failures. This dissertation focuses on a problem most closely tied to a cultural failure – namely, the proliferation of artificial intelligence and the decline of human(e) intelligence in the world, today.[43] It appears that we have become largely ignorant of what it means for us to practice "the speculative intellectual virtues," or for us to *think in a perfectly human* way. I have written this dissertation, in large part, so that *we*,

[43] In order to give a full description of the problem "artificial intelligence" and to fully recommend the work of cultivating human intelligence, I will proceed in the following way: in chapter one, I examine the relationship between human intelligence and the actuality of history; in chapter two, I examine the relationship between human intelligence and the possibility of transcendence; and, in chapter three, the relationship between human intelligence and our necessarily social lives.

especially those of us who practice philosophy of religion and theology, might come to more fully appreciate what it means for us to practice *truly human(e) intelligence*.[44]

The Importance of the Speculative Intellectual Virtues for Human Culture

The extent to which we will become free to live well will depend on the extent to which we develop the necessary virtues. A virtue is a perfection of a power, and a power is a determination toward an act.[45] Aristotle has definitively named and analyzed three spheres of human activity: thinking (*theoria*), doing (*praxis*), and making (*poiesis*).[46] An intellectual virtue perfects the speculative intellect for knowing the truth.[47] There are, in Aristotle's view, five intellectual virtues, but only three are specifically called "speculative intellectual virtues": understanding, science, and wisdom. The other intellectual virtues – prudence and art – indirectly perfect the speculative intellect for knowing the truth, for we are in a better position to know the truth if we do and make certain things at certain times; but, prudence and art are not called "speculative intellectual virtues" because they do not mainly pertain to right thinking but, instead, to right doing and right making, respectively. Today, since we tend to think about intelligence in a narrow way – almost exclusively in terms of cognition and "getting results" – we tend to lose sight of the importance the speculative intellectual virtues for human life and blessedness. With the following pages, I hope to set the record straight: the extent to which one can live well greatly depends on the extent to which *we* learn to practice and support more human(e)

[44] Throughout my dissertation the phrase "philosophy of religion and theology" will refer to three distinct, but complimentary, practices: (1) philosophy of religion, (2) philosophy of (the) science (of theology), and (3) theology. One way for the reader to understand the structure of my dissertation is to interpret chapter one as an exercise in philosophy of religion, chapter two as an exercise in philosophy of (the) science (of theology), and chapter three as an exercise in theology. While this is not the only way to look at the structure of my dissertation, it may prove helpful to some.
[45] *Summa Theologiae (ST) I-II*, q. 50, a. 1, response.
[46] *Paths to the Triune God*, p. 131.
[47] *ST I-II*, q. 57, a. 2, response.

forms of intelligence than the artificial forms of intelligence that we mainly support and practice, today.

Someone might complain that the work that I have undertaken is not of *central* importance, today. One could argue that our grossly immoral domination of the poor or that a particular catastrophe or threat of catastrophe, such as global warming or nuclear disaster, are far more urgent threats. Here, I think we have to respect the force of such arguments. It would be an unfortunate outcome if, in the long run, my dissertation were to draw attention away from such issues. I do not hope that my work will merely de-center the works of liberation theologians and replace them at the center of the debate; instead, I hope that my work will make it possible for liberation theologians and for other theologians and students of religion to give more complete attention to the issues that they have been given eyes to see. For this reason, I am more inclined to characterize my own work as having a kind of *foundational* importance as opposed to having a kind of *central* importance to practices of philosophy of religion and theology. My dissertation is of foundational importance insofar as it aims to "present, not doctrines, but the horizon within which the meaning of doctrines can be apprehended."[48]

[48] *Dialectic of Salvation*, p. 168. Note that, while I have used the term "foundational" to describe the importance of my work, my dissertation is not an exercise in "foundationalism" in the epistemological sense – i.e., "the basically Cartesian search for an indubitable, presuppositionless, absolutely prior epistemological basis and starting point from which all else could be logically derived" – nor is it an exercise in "fundamental theology" in the traditional sense – i.e., "a philosophical discipline that deals with the *preambula fidei*" (*Dialectic of Salvation*, p. 168). As Rahner puts it, "a fundamental theology of the traditional kind, despite its formal clarity, precision, and cogency, very often remains unfruitful for the life of faith because the concrete person, and indeed with a certain theoretical justification, has the impression that the formal event of revelation is not really all that absolutely clear and certain" (*Foundations of Christian Faith*, p. 12). My work does not render one inordinately suspicious of revelation and is intended to prove fruitful for the life of faith. It aims to produce fruit by clarifying the basic horizon that governs the interpretation of religion and particular Christian dogmas and to raise further questions about existing interpretations.

Now, as I work to "elaborate the basic horizon" that should govern our practices of philosophy of religion and theology, I will have to negate, transcend, and preserve the sense of the claim that "nothing is more important than who we think we are."[49] The idea that it is so crucially important for us to learn to *think* the truth of a human life is far from self-evident. As noted above, some have argued that the most important work we can undertake is to secure the economic conditions necessary for human life and happiness. They have argued that, in every age of history, the "struggle to satisfy their basic material needs" has been "*the* presupposition of everything else."[50] They have argued that in every epoch, "economic production and the structure of society . . . constitute the foundation for the political and intellectual history of that epoch."[51] Unlike mere angels, human beings only live if they "make a living," and unlike mere animals, human beings have, have had, or are in the process of coming to have the option and the obligation to decide to make a living in a human(e) way. If we accept the freedom that we have been given and decide to make a living in a human(e) way, we can become greater than the beasts. Humans can come to enjoy a depth and intensity of blessedness (and a power to make others blessed) which is not possible for mere animals. But, if we decide to make a living in an inhuman(e) way – for example, by pretending we are angels from birth or by striving for pleasures and advantages – we may become much lower than the beasts. Our lives can become characterized by a depth and intensity of misery (and a power to make others suffer misery) which is not possible for mere animals. Though the range of options may be severely limited, human persons, as such, ordinarily get to decide and have to decide how they will make a living.

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[49] Cf. *A New Climate for Theology*, p. 43.
[50] *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World*, p. 157.
[51] *The Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 472.

This freedom, however, is not simply given. It is true that no one can have or come to have the option and obligation to make a living unless they have been given life; but it is also true that no one can opt to live in a more or less human(e) way except "in a definite constellation of sociohistorical conditions"[52] and that we have a role to play in making it possible for ourselves and others to make a living. The extent to which it is a *live* option for us to practice the freedom of choice will depend on the extent to which we are given the materials we need to make a living. To say this is not to deny that human freedom is truly exemplified by the one who lays his life down for his friends.[53] It is only to say that someone cannot give to another what one does not have to give. Unless one has an option, one cannot make a choice. Unless someone has a life to give, she cannot lay her life down for her friends. Who can deny this? Before we can develop the truth of a human life, we must receive the gift of life. One must come to have life before one can have life to the full, and for us, having an opportunity to make a living is a condition for the possibility of having life. So, it seems that, as a rule, those who want to promote human life and fulfillment should prioritize the (economic) work of making it possible for human persons to make a living, or at the very least, the effort to restrain ourselves from proposing and pursuing political and cultural changes that would make it more difficult for us, especially the poor among us, to make a living. Indeed, to knowingly plan and execute courses of action that would make it extremely difficult for the poor to make a living is basically immoral.

That said, some have warned us that we can forfeit conditions for the possibility of transcendence by becoming so fascinated with "basic" rules that we begin to develop

[52] *Dialectic of Salvation*, p. 166.
[53] Cf. John 15:13.

a backwards obsession with morality. With a view to the possibility of freedom, some have challenged us to acknowledge that "one does not live by bread alone."[54] It is surely true that there is more to "having life" than "making a living." With *the MORE* in mind, some have insisted that we give renewed attention to the way "a living thing seeks above all to *discharge* its strength," or "power of being," and have argued that while it is important for us to further come to grips with the little things that belong to the struggle to satisfy our basic material needs, it is also important for us to come to acknowledge that "life itself is *will to power*; self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent *results*."[55] As one works to (help others) make a living, one should be careful that one does not, in the process, forfeit the freedom to live, or to abide-in-self and pass-beyond-self.[56] If we want to become and remain free for life and blessedness, we must avoid political practices that are characterized by decadence and *ressentiment* and, instead, (put negatively) make space for and (put positively) work to develop free spirits. A human being is not merely an animal in need, we are "creatures of possibility."[57] As we develop, we normally inherit not only the (animal) task of *making a living*, but also the (divine) task of *making ourselves and our situation*.

The extent to which we can *make ourselves* in the direction of the truth of a human life will not only depend on the extent to which we can establish the necessary political structures, for it is not only the case that we need space to be *what we are* but also that we need help to become subjects, or "selves," and help to discover *who we are* and,

[54] Cf. Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4.
[55] *Beyond Good and Evil* §13; *Basic Writings*, p. 211. Cf. *Love, Power, and Justice*, pp. 35-40.
[56] Cf. *The Christian Faith* §3, p. 8.
[57] Following the lead of Ingolf Dalferth, here: To say that we are "creatures" is to commit oneself to understanding ourselves from a theological perspective, and to say that we are creatures "of possibility," is to say "we are creatures in the making whose actual becoming depends on possibilities beyond our control that occur in our lives as opportunities and chances that we can neglect and miss or take up and use" (*Creatures of Possibility*, p. ix).

given our histories and habits of error, special help to recognize and become *who we truly are*. The extent to which we can accept what others might give us and give what others might need will depend on the extent to which we learn to "make meaning," or practice culture, in ways that encourage human life and blessedness. A culture that only, or even mainly, emboldens us to pursue pleasure-friendships or advantage-friendships to "compensate for the weaknesses of [our] biological nature," or to "wrest from the hostile world . . . a human-friendly world in which [we can] live together in tenuous security" will become an obstacle to human life and blessedness.[58] If we continue to stop at nothing to shape and reshape our world for the sake of our own pleasures and advantages, we will continue to find ourselves overstepping categorical boundaries and making unholy contributions to the many environmental problems (e.g., global warming) and social problems (e.g., excessive poverty) and heart problems (e.g., personal corruption) in our world, today. How we might work to overcome these problems is "not simply a question of perfecting the human being; it is a question of the concept of the human by which one is orienting oneself."[59] Human life and blessedness will require us to build our cultural practices upon a more adequate concept of humanity than is made possible by an "anthropology of lack." We are not merely "rational animals."[60]

We are "neither merely animals nor gods"; instead, we are "related to worms but also to angels."[61] If we want to move in the direction of the truth of a human life, we will have to learn to locate ourselves between animals and God and order our lives not only on the basis of our great fear of becoming "the culinary delight of terrestrial worms" but

[58] *Creatures of Possibility*, pp. 1-2.
[59] *Creatures of Possibility*, p. 3.
[60] Cf. *Creatures of Possibility*, pp. 9-15; *Paths to the Triune God*, pp. 161-162.
[61] *Creatures of Possibility*, p. 14.

also, and mainly, on the basis of our great hope of becoming "messengers of the good news" of the blessedness made possible for us by the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead.[62] This is not to say that we should pretend to be perfect angels. Those who pretend to be perfect angels tend to become less than human(e);[63] and those who pretend that their children are perfect little angels and teach them to identify themselves as such are, by doing so, encouraging future generations to practice a culture of inhumanity. Nevertheless, it is to say that, even though we cannot become perfect little angels, more than the other animals, we can become free to live lives of grace.

Freedom, though, is not a property of man. Instead, we are only free if we practice freedom by choosing, acting, and determining ourselves, or by practicing freedom of choice, freedom of action, and freedom as autonomy, and we can only practice these freedoms by relating to possibilities that break into our lives and by accepting some as opportunities for us to move in the direction of life and blessedness and rejecting others as temptations to move death and misery.[64] Unless we receive such gifts of possibility and then accept (at least some of) those gifts as opportunities for life and perfection, we cannot participate in life and perfection. Which possibilities we receive is mostly beyond our control, but we should work to develop the power to fully embrace the possibilities

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[62] The philosopher and the theologian, especially, must not try to anaesthetize herself to experiences of *death*, *meaninglessness*, and *guilt*. She must not require that a space be deodorized before she will enter into it. Insofar as her task is to encourage others to live *above* human misery, she must become willing to acknowledge human misery – to acknowledge that "we're beings towards death, we're featherless . . . creatures born between urine and feces whose bodies will one day be the culinary delight of terrestrial worms" (http://m.imdb.com/title/tt1279083/quotes). She must renounce the temptation to indulge in the "strange, wicked, questionable questions" of philosophers and must, instead, commit herself to remembering "the little things" that make for *life* (*Beyond Good and Evil* §1, p. 199). At the same time, the theologian must not become so enamored with "the things of the world" that she refuses to reflect on the beginning and the end of "all things" from the perspective of faith. Instead, the Christian theologian should operate "by faith that [the Word of God] makes us to feed like angels on the light of his presence" (*On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 92).

[63] *Creatures of Possibility*, pp. 14-15.

[64] Cf. *Creatures of Possibility*, p. ix.

that do occur and to "make every effort to do what leads to peace," or every effort to "enter God's rest."[65] This is the task of human culture: to cultivate among us habits of "making meaning" that encourage us *to practice freedom as autonomy* and to embody tendencies to *choose and to do what leads to true peace*, not only so that we may live together but so that we may *fully* live together.[66]

The Importance of the Virtue of Understanding for the Study of Religion

Many contemporary scholars have been working to prepare us to live together by making us aware that whenever we interpret something, we interpret it *as something* and that we do this *for someone*. They have made us aware that when we interpret God *as* "almighty King, Lord, and Father,"[67] for example, the interpretans both "is and is not" appropriate to the interpretandum, and they have called us to acknowledge the limits of the models that we use when we engage in *sacred science* and *sacred doctrine*. Furthermore, they have made us aware that some of our habits of interpretation have generally worked to the advantage of certain classes, races, and genders more than others – for the advantage of wealthy, European men, for example, more than for poor, non-European women.

Hoping to promote justice and peace, some have advocated for a "destabilizing, inclusive, nonhierarchical vision" of the saving power of God,[68] and they have proposed alternative models of God *as* Friend, *as* Lover, *as* Mother, and so on. Finally, they have made us aware that "the process of constructing and dismantling meaning leads to no intrinsically determinable end but rather toward an always more differentiated meaning

[65] Romans 14:19; Hebrews 4:10-11; cf. Ephesians 4:3; 12:14; 2 Peter 1:4-5; 3:14.
[66] Cf. John 10:10
[67] *Models of God*, p. 55.
[68] *Models of God*, p. 56.

and toward more diverse interpretation."[69] So, they have challenged us to find new ways to practice autonomy. They have challenged us to "think experimentally" and to "risk novel constructions in order to be theologians *for our time*,"[70] and they have called for the production of a diffuse variety of "new metaphors and concepts for expressing the salvific power of God."[71]

Many of these scholars have been performing important services. However, while many have clearly understood that whenever we engage in interpretation, we interpret something *as something*; it appears that few have come to grips with the notion that we interpret *something* as something. It does not appear that we have made sufficient time and space for the question of the self-disclosure, or Being, of beings to come to mind. It seems that, today, we have lost the will to let the discourse of the other speak for itself with the hope that the truth of authentic interpretations might prevail against untruth and against inauthentic interpretations. It is one of the main objectives of this dissertation to clarify some conceptual issues pertaining to the cultural task of *thinking* in a perfectly human(e) way, especially by drawing attention to the problem of artificial intelligence, or the problem of the sort of autonomy that "has lost its depth and has become empty."[72]

In chapter one, I argue that it is possible for us to participate in conversations in ways that cannot lead to "authentic interpretations." It is possible for us to develop habits of misunderstanding that keep us out of touch with one another. If we want to become free to determine ourselves in the direction of the truth of a human life, we must develop

[69] *Radical Theology*, pp. 102-103.
[70] *Models of God*, p. 6.
[71] *Models of God*, p. 31. Cf. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Preface, § 9, pp. 5-6: "Whoever seeks mere edification . . . may look where he likes to find all this. He will find ample opportunity to dream up something for himself. But philosophy must beware of the wish to be edifying."
[72] *Systematic Theology*, p. 85.

true self-knowledge; and if we want to develop true self-knowledge, we must develop the speculative intellectual virtue of understanding; and if we want to develop the virtue of understanding, we must learn to practice conceptual justice. In other words, if we want to become free to determine ourselves in the direction of human perfection, we will have to learn to restrain our desire to "get results" so that we may "let others speak"; and we will have to "let others speak," so that we may give attention to who others are "in themselves"; and we will have to give attention to who others are "in themselves" so that we may develop more mature understandings of who they are "for us"; and we will have to develop more mature understandings of who they are "for us" so that, in and through our relations with them, we may discover and become who we truly are.

If we are going to live together and, together, come to have life to the full, we are going have to learn to grieve our histories and habits of errors in more appropriate ways than simply multiplying a diffuse variety of counter-narratives. Instead, if we are going to learn to locate ourselves and order our lives in ways that lead to true peace, we must, to some extent, learn how to practice the virtues of understanding, science, and wisdom. First of all, unless our "more or less dumb sense of what [human] life honestly and deeply means" has been well-formed, we will not be able to respond appropriately to our world/history; or, said another way, until "our individual way of just seeing and feeling the total push and pressure of the cosmos" has become truly human(e), we will remain unable to fully correspond with reality.[73] Unless we develop the speculative intellectual virtue of understanding, our efforts to orient ourselves toward human perfection will be off from the start. In his *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas describes (the virtue of) understanding as "the habit of knowing principles," or the perfection of the power to

[73] *Pragmatism*, p. 5.

grasp something "as known in itself."[74] We cannot proceed to orient ourselves toward the truth of a human life unless we are able to grasp some "starting-point" for the process of "knowing the truth," and we cannot proceed to know the truth unless our starting-point is conducive to knowing the truth – i.e., unless our starting-point empowers us to grasp something not only as it immediately exists for us but also "as known in itself." If we do not practice the virtue of understanding, we cannot even begin to appreciate our world/history.[75]

In every age, a particular aspect of something appears to be *the central* truth, or the decisive aspect, of the subject matter for those who inhabit that particular age, or *Kairos*;[76] and yet, every act of concentrating on a particular aspect of something is a mature act of knowing, as opposed to an adolescent act of arbitrary differentiation or a childish act of sheer consumption, only if we are able to grasp something "as known in itself," even if only in a limited way, and only if we are willing to allow what is available for us to know about "the thing itself" to limit, or direct, the way we imagine what it is *for us*.[77]

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[74] *ST I-II*, q. 57, a. 2, response.

[75] It is possible for us to give attention to the actuality of our world/history in a way that is deficiently focused (i.e., unfocused) or excessively focused (i.e., narrow). Not only is it the case that those who ignore history are destined to repeat it, but it is also the case that those who only pay attention in a one-sided way are destined to develop a kind of "artificial intelligence" that renders one incapable of true freedom and true peace. Between the alternatives of ignorance and stupidity, there lies a golden mean, which has been called the speculative intellectual virtue of understanding. In chapter one, I argue that coming to have "human intelligence" will require us to work to discover the truth by seeking to understand history, and I argue that the work of "seeking understanding" will require us to practice (conceptual) justice in our studies, even religious studies.

[76] This is not to say that we are all fated to simply follow after whatever is fashionable. To fully acknowledge the depth of our dependence upon that which comes to us during *this* time involves coming to feel for our future generations a sense of responsibility to decide who we will become, to make a way for our children and our children's children. To fully appreciate the way thoughts come to us will require us to engage in "a thinking that is conscious of history," in "a consciousness of history whose roots reach down into the depth of the unconditional, whose conceptions are created from the primordial concerns of the human spirit, and whose ethos is an inescapable responsibility for the present moment in history" ("Kairos," p. 327).

[77] For a classic example of intellectual maturity, I refer the reader to the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, "who reflects and argues rather than shouts and claims, who withdraws himself so as to let the matter speak for itself rather than intrude his own subjectivity at every available turn, and who presents a balanced, comprehensive vision of the whole *sub ratione Dei* – or, in light of God's logic – without a

Knowing the truth involves both the intellectual virtue, or power, to grasp something "as known in itself" and the moral virtue, or power, to respect what it is "in itself" as we make our choices, take our stands, and determine ourselves in the world. So, while, indeed, it is one thing to have the intellectual virtue of understanding and another thing to have the moral virtue of justice, the extent to which *we* can develop the intellectual virtue of understanding will be limited by the extent to which *we* have practiced the moral virtue of justice.[78] If we want to become perfectly human we will have to learn to practice both the intellectual virtues and the moral virtues.

Now, if we want to develop the freedom of self-consciousness, or become selves, we will have to resist the temptation to seek, above all else, to achieve and settle for the freedom of independence. Instead of mainly trying to become "free from" external constraints and "free for" the realization of our immediate desires, our efforts to develop the gifts we have received should be characterized by an appropriate fear of death (lest we become stuck in a moment); by an appropriate fear of the lord (lest we forget the need for self-discipline); and by appropriate works (so that we may "find ourselves" in what we have done and in what we have produced). We become selves only if: (1) we risk living in a self-determined way; (2) we risk letting others be there for us; and (3) we risk

selective, one-sided 'concentration,' whether christological, Trinitarian, existentialist, or liberationist, making room for everything in its proper place in the divine scheme of things rather than reduce everything to its place in the human" (*Paths to the Triune God*, p. 2). Furthermore, his writings, especially his *Summa Theologiae*, are not typically characterized by an "ultimately unsustainable and unhappy preoccupation with one thing considered necessary for the time" (*Ibid*., p. 5). Though it is the case that "the Truth must be seasonable," otherwise it will not be met with acceptance or put to good use (*Adventures of Ideas*, p. 243), it is not the case that our efforts at "knowing the truth" must therefore be "seasonal," in a one-sided fashion, as opposed to "catholic," or "according to the whole."

[78] Here, one might add that we can only come to enact justice as possibilities for just action are played into our way, or come to us from beyond ourselves. Furthermore, all this is not to say that justice is a *sufficient condition* for understanding. Here, I am arguing that justice is a *necessary condition* for the further development of understanding. This is not to say that a rogue cannot practice understanding. *She* may understand very well what she is doing, but she could not have come to understand what she is doing if *we*, or at least someone among us, had not practiced justice – e.g., by disciplining ourselves so that we might know what she is doing and teaching her how to understand what she is doing.

producing goods that bear witness to who we actually are and that enable us to live together with others who can help us discover and become who we truly are.

Furthermore, we cannot become true selves by merely practicing stoic resignation or skepticism. The problem with stoicism is that the stoic, as such, settles for freedom *in thought* and does not get on with "the transformative activity of work."[79] The problem with skepticism is that the skeptic, as such, does not practice the fear of the lord, so she does not adequately *suffer* the word of the other, or adequately accept *the demand* of the word of the other. Instead, the skeptic wants to say less than we know about possibilities of discourse so that she can say more than we know about possibilities of deception. If we cannot distinguish between an authentic word and an inauthentic word, then we cannot trust in the word of the other, which gives one license to disregard the judgment of the lord. This is not to say that one cannot have any good reasons to practice skepticism, within reason. It is only to say that we will have to transcend (and preserve the truth of) skepticism if we are going to let others be there for us, and unless we let others be there for us, we cannot relate to others in ways that empower us to become truly human(e) selves.

If our "fear of error" become excessive such that we constantly mistrust the word of the other and neglect the judgment of the lord, we may "take our directives from the sphere of readily available intentions and needs." For example, we might try to secure standards of orientation by practicing foundationalism or conversationsalism. In the case of foundationalism, someone might insist that "all areas of discourse are answerable to a common criteria of rationality."[80] In the case of conversationalism, someone might insist

[79] *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 138.
[80] *Introducing Philosophy*, p. 186.

that the purpose of discourse is to secure agreement. In both cases, our enthusiasm for securing some starting-point or stopping-point for our discourses in accordance with the given world-order, renders us ill-disposed to do conceptual justice to the word of the other. Though we gain the ability to plan our lives by means of a worldly reason, we lose the ability to accept possibilities that do not jive with the spirit of the age as opportunities, whether positive or negative opportunities, for transcendence.

We may sincerely believe that we are practicing the virtue of understanding and yet be deceived. It is possible for us to unwittingly engage in conversations in such a way that we "prevent the discourse from being itself or from saying what it wants to say."[81] The problem may lie in our preoccupation with some particular hope, or ambition.[82] On account of some unexamined bias, we may get into the habit of violating the logic of a certain kind of discourse (e.g., religious discourse or theological discourse) such that we effectively exclude the word of the other from taking place in our conversations. When this kind of misunderstanding, or (self-)deception, has taken place and has perhaps even become commonplace, if we are going to recover possibilities of sense that have been concealed by our histories and habits of error, we will have to learn to practice a kind of contemplative attention to sense "beyond the sensibleness of common sense."[83] In my view, to do this kind of work for the sake of the truth of our religions is the task of philosophy of religion, and carrying out this kind of work will require one to place "all inordinate desire under the control of the mind,"[84] even the desire to be "a friend of religion," where such

[81] "The Fallacy of Logical Inversion," pp. 173-202.
[82] Cf. *Philosophy's Cool Place*, especially pp. 157-166.
[83] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 116.
[84] *On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 15.

a desire would tempt one to mainly aim to achieve some pleasure or advantage through her studies and her conversations with others.

The Importance of the Virtue of Science for the Practice of Theology

If we want to move in the direction of human life and blessedness, we will not only need to keep watch over ourselves, lest we fall into error; we will also have to receive and accept the Word of God so that we may begin to move in the direction of the truth of a human life *in spite of our histories and habits of error*. We can only come to have life to the full by relating to the possibilities played into our way. Christian theologians, as such, take this "deep passivity," of human existence,[85] or our absolute dependence on God,[86] seriously, and ask the question: what possibilities for coming to have life to the full have been played into our way by the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead? We cannot move in the direction of the truth of a human life *in spite of our histories and habits of error* unless we are given the condition for learning (or form of) the truth and also (the content of) the truth. Christians believe that God, in and through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, has decided for us so that we can decide for God. In other words, Christians believe that we can develop true self-knowledge by coming to know ourselves as we are known by God.

Christian theologians reflect on the possibility of developing true self-knowledge with the awareness that we can make ourselves incapable of truthfully carrying out the operation of knowing ourselves as we are known by God. Since we can and often do fail miserably at knowing the truth, it is important for us to develop "disciplined ways of knowing," or sciences,[87] so that we may avoid unnecessary errors and may transcend

[85] *Creatures of Possibility*, p. xii.
[86] Cf. *The Christian Faith* §4, pp. 12-18.
[87] *The System of the Sciences*, p. 21.

our histories and habits of errors and the problems that our errors have caused.[88] An adequate understanding of our world/history is the necessary starting-point for human intelligence, but it is not the end of human intelligence. As it is written: we are destined for a peace "which surpasses all understanding."[89] We seek to understand world/history so that we may transcend world/history. If understanding is the starting-point of human intelligence,[90] orientation towards acts of transcendence in the direction of the truth of a human life is the "stopping-point," as opposed to orientation toward transcendence in the direction of sheer consumption or arbitrary differentiation, or in the direction of mere pleasure or advantage, as in the case of artificial intelligence.

In our efforts to know the truth, we can not only miss the starting-point but also the stopping-point of knowing. In more exact terms, our knowledge may remain incomplete not only because (1) we have not been sufficiently grasped by or have not sufficiently grasped an appropriate starting-point but also because (2) we have not been sufficiently grasped by or have not sufficiently grasped an appropriate stopping-point for a course of study, or reflection. Life demands that, at some point, we put an end to *this* course of reflection and make a decision. We can fail to earnestly accept the *demand* of what has been revealed to us (a problem of the will)[91] such that we overextend the course of our reflections and fail to make a decision to live in the light which we have received. At the same time, whether or not we become free to move in the direction of the truth of a

[88] Cf. *ST* I, q. 1, a. 1.
[89] Philippians 4:7
[90] I recognize that understanding is made possible by "sense-certainty" and "perception." Here, I only mean to say that "reason" takes its "starting-points," or "principles," from acts of understanding.
[91] We must resist the temptation to merely speculate about the *meaning* of the Word of God for human understanding and make an attempt to appreciate "the *demand* of that message for human praxis" (*Solidarity of Others in a Divided World*, p. 158). Cf. *Zettel* § 314, p. 58e.

human life will depend on whether or not *we* carry out the work of reflection far enough.[92] We can fail to sufficiently grasp the stopping-point, or misconceive the *telos* of this work of reflection (a problem of the intellect), and when this kind of error takes place in our theological reflections, we may be tempted to foolishly elevate a "preliminary concern to ultimacy"[93] such that we totally surrender ourselves (and mislead others to surrender themselves) to something that does not promise total fulfillment.[94]

By way of reflection and argument, theologians try to help us avoid such failures and learn how to orient ourselves (and help others orient themselves) toward the truth of a human life. Theologians do this so that we may become true, or come to have life to the full. In *my* life, becoming true is a mainly a matter of faithfully walking in the light that I have received. The extent to which we can develop ourselves depends on the extent to which we have learned to *think* paths for development; but we are only in a position to know the truth if we have "the requisite condition."[95] So, the question may arise among us, 'Do we have what it takes?', which may lead some to ask: 'How can we learn the truth of a human life so that we may become true?"[96] Is the truth too hard for us or too

[92] This is not so say that only intellectuals can become perfectly human. It is only to say that the extent to which *we* become perfectly human will depend, in part, on the extent to which those who can carry out the work of reflection do carry it out far enough.
[93] *Systematic Theology*, p. 13.
[94] *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 2.
[95] *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 11.
[96] E.g., something may happen to someone that makes them ask: "Who am I?" For example, someone who has lost her children and her home in an earthquake may, in the weeks to come, begin to ask: "Who am I if I am not a mother and homeowner?" She knows where she is (on the surface of a planet that has fault lines) and who you think she is (a friend who is the victim of a natural disaster; a foe who is making an insurance claim), but these events have led her to ask: "Who am I, truly?" Her freedom to choose (where she lives) and her freedom to act (as a mother) have been taken from her, and she may begin to wonder whether there is a kind of freedom she can have *no matter what happens* and to ask: "Ultimately, what makes a life a success or a failure?" These are the kinds of "limiting questions" to which religions are responses. Cf. *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God*, p. 131.

far away?[97] Must we lie back and wait for Marduk to defeat Tiamat,[98] or is the truth of a human life near to us, so that we can "choose life" and become good-spirited?[99]

Some have argued that we are not without hope, that we do not have to "go up to heaven" or "cross to the other side of the sea" to learn how to become truly human[100] because, they say, "the truth is not introduced to the individual from without, but was within him."[101] Now, there is something to this claim. As one becomes more familiar with what he knows, as he comes to know that and how he knows what he knows, that which he becomes familiar with is something that "was within him" *before he became familiar with it*. To become fully human(e), we will have to become self-conscious (in the positive sense), and before someone can be self-conscious, she has to be conscious; however, it is misleading to say, "the truth is not introduced to the individual from without." Not only is it the case that we become free for human life and blessedness only by relating to the possibilities that are played into our way but it is also the case that our histories and habits of sin prevent us from fully accepting the possibilities played into our way as opportunities for life and blessedness. We have separated ourselves from the Giver of eternal life; so if it is true that we do not have to "go up to heaven" or "cross to the other side of the sea" to become perfectly human, or to have life to the full, it is not simply because "at bottom every human being is in possession of the truth."[102] Instead, if this is true, it is true *in spite of* what we have become.

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[97] Cf. Deuteronomy 30:11.
[98] Cf. "Enuma Elish," in *Readings from the Ancient Near East*, pp. 31-50; *The Powers that Be*, pp. 37-62.
[99] Cf. Deuteronomy 30:14, 19-20.
[100] *Cf.* Deuteronomy 30:12-13.
[101] *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 8
[102] *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 10.

If hope for truly living well has come to us *in spite of* what we have become, this is *good news*. Christians proclaim such good news. We believe that we can think the truth of a human life and work together to become true because the truth has "come near" to us.[103] Now, the extent to which we will become true depends on the extent to which we will "repent and believe in the good news."[104] It is not enough for us to simply rely on our "immediate sense-certainty"[105] or for us to simply lean on our own understanding[106] – both because the spirit of the age has been deformed by our histories and habits of sin and because we will not develop the freedom of self-consciousness if we simply rely upon our own insights and traditions. Instead, if we are going to learn to *think* human perfection perfectly, so that we may work together to become truly human(e), we will have to leave our nets and follow the Word of God.[107] Again, we cannot move in the direction of the truth of a human life *in spite of our histories and habits of error* unless we are given the condition for learning the truth and also the truth.

Christians believe that God has decided for us so that we can decide for God; and Christian theologians reflect on God's decision and on "all things" in the light of God's decision so that we may (help others) more perfectly *know* and *proclaim* the good news of God's decision, so that some might come to have life to full by accepting the Gift of "the faith of Jesus Christ."[108] Now, the truth *comes* to us, if it comes; but this is not

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[103] Cf. Mark 1:15a.
[104] Cf. Mark 1:15b.
[105] A "here" that is merely pointed out or a "now" that is a simple history of a movement or experience cannot provide me with the orientational knowledge that I need to *live* (Cf. *Phenomenology of Spirit* § 108-109). In order to orient ourselves in the world, we must work to identify the universal truth of *this*, by way of acts of perception and understanding and reason made possible by way of our participation in spirit.
[106] Cf. Proverbs 3:5-6.
[107] Cf. Mark 1:16-20.
[108] In his letters to the Romans and the Galatians, the Apostle Paul proclaims that an opportunity for us to make the transition from misery to blessedness has been given to us δια (or εκ) πιστεως Ιησου Χριστου or *by the faith of Jesus Christ* (see Romans 3:22 and Galatians 2:16; 3:22). This phrase can be taken as

to say that we are simply relieved of duty, or that we are not obligated to work out our salvation. We can reflect on the truth that has occurred to us and work together in disciplined ways to develop new standards of orientation. As we reflect on the truth that has occurred to us, we must learn to avoid the pitfalls of *un*belief (a problem of the will) and un*belief* (a problem of the intellect) and, instead, work together to develop a culture of true individuality and true humanity. We can promote true individuality and humanity by reflecting on what it will mean for us to receive and accept an *infinite, personally interested passion* for real union with the Giver of eternal life. Christians identify the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead as the Giver of eternal life, and we understand our relationship to the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead by interpreting "the resurrection . . . with the cross in mind, the cross with God in mind, God with the message of Jesus in mind, and God's actions on the cross and in the resurrection with us and our world in mind."[109] In this way, we seek to allow the self-revelation of God to speak for itself.

Regrettably, though, some scholars have not wanted to bother themselves or their audiences with the work of carefully distinguishing between "authentic interpretations" of the Word of God and "inauthentic interpretations." Instead, they have mainly busied themselves with the work of securing certain pleasures or advantages for someone, or some group, by appealing to immediate certainties. In this manner, they have largely ignored the problem of sin and have, instead, supposed that true self-knowledge is simply

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an objective genitive and translated as "by faith in Jesus Christ" or be taken as a subjective genitive and translated as "by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ." It seems to me that Paul has made the most of this ambiguity to indicate that it is God's activity in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ that has brought about the faith we have in Jesus Christ and that we are saved by the activity of God in the life, dead, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (in the sense that God's decision for us is the origin of our salvation) and by our reception and acceptance of the possibilities that have been played into our way by God's acts (in the sense that faith is the existential condition for the possibility of deciding for blessedness).

[109] *Crucified and Resurrected*, p. 27.

given to each of us and that coming to have life to the full mainly consists in acquiring the materials we need to "make a living" and the space we need to "be ourselves"; but while it is true that we need to gather materials for "making a living" and to give others space to "be themselves," we also need to become selves who are free to determine themselves for eternal life by accepting and sharing the Gift of God's grace. We must not forget that it is possible for us to secure the wealth of nations in a way that does not promote the well-being of even one whole person.

Still, it is also possible for us to develop a tendency toward life and blessedness by faithfully practicing *sacred science* and *sacred doctrine*. We can work to transcend inauthentic interpretations of the Word of God so that we may come to know ourselves as we are known by God, and we can help our students to move away from untruths in the direction of the truth of a human life. Christian theologians practice a disciplined way of knowing the unique freedom and destiny Christians have received and accepted by faith. It is possible for us to lack the freedom of choice, when we do not have options to choose from – i.e., when we do not have the materials we need to "make a living." It is also possible for us to lack the freedom of action, when we do not have the space we need to "be ourselves." However, even when someone is no longer able to "make a living" or "be herself," if she has the freedom of self-consciousness, she can determine herself for eternal life. One who has the inner freedom of self-consciousness can "choose life" in a religious sense.[110] On the basis of our faith in the Word of the Cross, Christians trust that this is possible for us; and on the basis of our faith in the One who raised Jesus

[110] There are, indeed, occasions for someone to say, "I had no choice," and occasions for someone to say, "There was nothing I could do," but we are always "without excuse" whenever we fail to practice autonomy (Cf. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, especially Book 1, Chapters 16-17), for "autonomy is an activity that cannot fail to achieve its end – if we practice it" (*Creatures of Possibility*, p. xi.).

Christ from the dead, we hope that, by "choosing life," we are drawing nearer to real union with the Giver of eternal life.

As we work to *know* and to *teach* the truth of a human life, we have to beware the problems of *un*belief and un*belief*. The problem with *un*belief is that one becomes too objective, or unconcerned with "choosing life." She does not passionately guard her heart; so, she does not develop the freedom of self-consciousness, or come to practice freedom as autonomy. Instead, she simply receives and accepts the law of the land and the spirit of the age. She simply takes her directives from the sphere of readily available intentions and needs and busies herself with technical reason so as to "get results." Since she does not have an *infinite* passion for someone, a passion for unconditionally saying "yes" to someone and "no" to all others, she is not free to practice individuality. Instead, she is liable to become attached to incompatible goods, such that it becomes impossible for her to be perfectly satisfied, for whenever she seeks to unite herself with one of the goods that she desires, she separates herself from the other.

The problem with un*belief* is that one becomes passionate about something that cannot provide true fulfillment, or one elevates "preliminary, finite realities . . . to the rank of ultimacy."[111] One wagers everything on a losing hand, or risks her life for something that cannot give her eternal life. For example, someone might develop a proud obsession with "secret knowledge." Someone who is willing to "yes" to her "secret knowledge" and "no" to all others on account of her "secret knowledge" practices freedom as autonomy, or moral self-determination, but she does so in an empty way that ultimately threatens to "split" her, or "divide her against herself."[112] An inner division takes

[111] *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 13.

[112] For this reason, Tillich criticizes American fundamentalism. He rightly observes: "it splits the conscience of its thoughtful adherents (*Systematic Theology*, p. 3)." From one point of view, such

place as one seeks to both live in the real world and to remain attached to "secret knowledge" that is too far removed from what is actual (or too abstract) and opposed to the demands of life. The one who clings to such "secret knowledge" cannot become a true self because her own attachment to the mediocre good of having "secret knowledge" compels her to orient herself "toward empty form without import."[113] She has become a self, and she may take pleasure in this achievement, but she has not yet become a true self. Furthermore, the more she conforms herself to her "secret knowledge," which she feels entitled to do, or distorts herself to maintain her privilege, the more she separates herself from the Giver of eternal life,[114] and her desire to separate 'the haves' from 'the have-nots' on the basis of her "secret knowledge" threatens to destroy her community.[115]

Upon further reflection *un*belief (a problem of the will) may seem prior to un*belief* (a problem of the intellect) in *my* life. After all, had my own heart not *become attached to* some false image of who I am, I would not have become so miserable. If we take *un*belief (will) to be the root of the most pressing errors that we make in our attempts to orient ourselves toward the truth of a human life, then it seems our interventions should mainly aim to reform the will by participation in right worship. However, one might argue that while *un*belief (will) is prior to un*belief* (intellect) in *my* life, un*belief* (intellect) is prior

"splits" will tend to make someone "fanatical because they are forced to suppress elements of truth of which they are dimly aware" (*Ibid.*, p. 3). See Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* § 206-230; and *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 140-148. From another point of view, one only becomes overconcerned about this over here by becoming underconcerned about that over there. See William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Lecture 8, pp. 166-188. Cf. Luke 11:17.

[113] *The System of the Sciences*, p. 203ff.

[114] As Mary Elizabeth Hobgood warns: "people with an arrogant sense of entitlement, built on ignorance of how their entitlement comes at the expense of others, suffer a moral pathology in need of relief and repair." (*Dismantling Privilege*, p. 24).

[115] Against this worldly tendency, Paul argues that appeals to natural, social, economic, and political distinctions are not grounds for division in the Body of Christ (cf. Galatians 3:28).

to *un*belief (will) in *a* life, for a heart cannot be moved by some false image unless a false word is *addressed to* someone. If a lie does not occur, a heart is not in danger. If un*belief* (intellect) is taken to be the root of the most pressing errors we make in our attempts to orient ourselves toward the truth of a human life, then our interventions should mainly aim to reform the intellect by participation in justice and understanding. We may be tempted to reduce all problems of the intellect to problems of the will, or vice versa, so that we may get busy advocating for the one kind of intervention which we take to be *the one thing needful*, today. However, in reality, we can point to a multiplicity of interventions that should take place. Nonetheless, we can sum up the cultural interventions that should take place by saying: we can only live well, or have life to the full, by learning to practice true individuality and true humanity.

A theologian, as such, has committed herself to practicing *sacred doctrine*, or to preventative and corrective teaching interventions. A good theologian will accept her role as a teacher and will not presume that her work is all that matters. Instead, she will practice a disciplined way of knowing the truth of a human life so that she may teach others to move in the direction of the truth of a human life. As a theologian, she is mainly concerned with the occurrence of the truth in divine revelation and with its reception in faith. When the truth occurs to someone, it commands her to go beyond untruth. The theologian, by way of sacred science, follows the truth beyond untruth, and by way of sacred doctrine, she aims to communicate to others the truth which has been mediated to her. By doing so, she hopes to prepare her students for the journey to the truth and to encourage those who are living in the direction of the truth to resist temptations to fall back in the direction of untruth.

This work requires her to show others the credibility of the truth which she has come to know and to show others the incredibility of the untruth she has transcended. In order to show others the credibility of the truth that she has come to know, she will have to find "middle terms" that will help her to "bridge the intelligibility gap" between her new vision and their obsolete vision, and in order to encourage some to give up certain illusions (and to avoid similar confusions in the future), she will have to unfold the route that has led the student into confusion so as to bring the student to the place where she no longer wants to hold onto her illusions, or to utter such confusions to others. The work of finding "middle terms" that will interest her students requires her to maintain an openness to her students and to make an effort to understand their unique situations, and she cannot do this work effectively if her attention becomes too concentrated on an object. At the same time, the work of teaching others will require her to know the truth or the way toward the truth, and this requires her to concentrate on the truth that has occurred to her so that she may adequately carry out the operation by which we come to know the hope we have for transcending the present age in the direction of life and fulfillment.

The Importance of Wisdom for the Life of the Church

In chapter two, I focus on how we may *come* to have true knowledge of ourselves in and through the occurrence of the truth. In chapter three, I mainly attend to how we might learn to truly locate ourselves between the beginning and the end of a human life so as to develop wisdom. Wisdom empowers us to order our lives, or makes it possible for us to truly carry out the work of "judging the conclusions of science and the principles on which they are based."[116] One who is wise "considers the highest causes,"[117] decides for

[116] *ST* I-II, q. 57, a. 2, reply 2.
[117] *ST* I-II, q. 57, a. 2, response.

"the highest good,"[118] and, in service to the highest good, she "teaches [others] how to direct their intentions and actions to the ultimate end."[119] Someone may become wise by becoming familiar with the highest causes, or with what makes a human life right and true and good, and by working for the sake of the highest good. Within the perspective of Christian faith, true wisdom only becomes possible for someone through her reception and her acceptance in faith of the self-revelation of the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, or the Giver of eternal life. It is by receiving "some foreknowledge of their end" so that they may "direct their lives according to that end" that some come to participate in the Wisdom of God.[120] In other words, to become truly wise is to become familiar with the demand of the Word of God by corresponding to the Word of God.

The demand of the Word of God seems foolish when viewed from the perspective of unfaith.[121] Those who are in the habit of prematurely breaking off the work of reflection by simply declaring "it is what it is," rather than asking God "what is it?",[122] will lack the depth of self-consciousness that is characteristic of true wisdom. If we simply insist that human nature "is what it is," we will not become fully present. We become fully present by acknowledging where we come from and where we are going. Coming to have true self-knowledge will require us to learn to locate ourselves between the beginning and

[118] *On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 15.
[119] In the words of Rudi Te Velde, "Sacred Doctrine includes . . . the practical science of morals, in which human reason, in the light of the Christian promise of salvation and happiness in God, reflects about the nature of the good life and the means of attaining it. . . . [Theology] is a practical science insofar as sacred doctrine teaches men how to direct their intentions and actions to the ultimate end" (*Aquinas on God*, p. 21).
[120] *Aquinas on God*, p. 21.
[121] Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25.
[122] If we want to learn to *think* rightly, we have to learn how to draw sustenance from "manna" in the wilderness (i.e., from the experience of disorientation and the question, "what is it?") and how to resist the temptation to turn stones into bread, or to deny the raggedness of that which is ragged where making an "effective" or "responsible" transformation would contradict what wisdom has declared to be ultimately right and good for us.

the end of our lives so that we may stand firm and order our steps toward our true destiny by thinking paths to perfection theologically. We may become truly present to ourselves and our situation by learning to locate and order our lives theologically.[123] The one who is wise knows the same things as the one who is unwise, but the one who is wise knows that she knows what she knows and knows that she does not know what she does not know. She is able to truly locate her knowledge and her lack of knowledge by reflecting on where she comes from and where she is going. Someone who knows where she comes from and where she is going is especially present to herself and her situation, and her unique presence enables her to practice a unique kind of work in the world and to live a unique form of life.[124] It is to perfectly human life in the ultimate presence of the triune God that the church is called.

The Importance of the Theological Virtues for Christian Perfection

The theological virtues are faith, hope, and charity. In order to clarify the nature of the "gain in being asserted by the Christian faith,"[125] in chapter three, I speak of the importance of becoming children of God, becoming servants of God, and becoming friends of God. First, if we are going to become truly *individual* humans, we are going to have to squarely face the mediocrity of our birth, our self, and our death[126] and, *in spite of* our mediocrity, make a strong effort to become a "self-affirming self."[127] This will involve squarely facing our experiences of *thrownness* – namely, that we find ourselves thrown

[123] By thinking theologically, we aim to not only know what is present (e.g., to know that we know what we know) but to know it "as it truly is" (*Becoming Present*, p. 95). We work toward this end theologically by crafting "critical and reflective" understandings of understandings, developed from the perspective of faith, of God's understanding of what something truly is (*Radical Theology*, pp. 75-76).
[124] One might also say that she becomes, by virtue of her wisdom, uniquely capable of what Theodore Runyon, Jr., has called "orthopathy," or "right feeling" (*The New Creation*, pp. 146-167).
[125] *Theological Essays*, p. 70.
[126] Cf. footnote # 41 from Introduction.
[127] *The Courage to Be*, p. 29.

into a finite life with limited chances, that we experience this as a burden, a challenge, or a gift, and that "the way it appears to us is decisive for our way of orienting ourselves in the world and in dealing with the chances given to us."[128] If we tend to experience *being-there* mainly as a burden, we will tend to resign ourselves to our fate, as opposed to passionately practicing freedom as autonomy. If we tend to experience *being-there* mainly as a challenge, we will tend to dominate others in inhumane ways. However, by receiving and accepting the self-revelation of God, we can develop a tendency to experience *being-there* as a gift – i.e., by learning to interpret our emotions and feelings in the light of our faith in the goodness of God. In other words, we can become children of God.

Second, if we are going to become truly *human* individuals, we are going to have to come to believe that even our burdens and challenges are, contrary to our immediate sense-certainty, *more* than burdens and challenges – namely, that they are opportunities for us to draw nearer to the Giver of eternal life – and we are going to have to get to work making the most of opportunities that are *hidden beneath their opposite*. Letting others be there for us *as they truly are* will require us to learn to look for the goodness of God at work in and through them *in spite of* their inadequacies. Reducing ourselves or others to mere have-nots and becoming complacent in the ways that we separate the haves from the have-nots amounts to an escape from freedom and a loss of humanity. Even though we live under conditions that destroy us, we do not have to forfeit our souls. We can work to make the most of our lives by participating in the goodness of God. With humility, we can face our own mediocrity and the mediocrity of others. With gratitude, we can accept the opportunities we have been given to participate in the life of God's

[128] *Becoming Present,* p. 133.

grace, and by participating in the life of God's grace, we can have eternal life. In other words, we can become servants of God.

Third, if we are going to become *truly* human individuals, we are going to have to practice the wisdom of charity so as to become friends of God; for it is only by becoming friends of God, or by accepting our being accepted *in spite of* our unacceptability and accepting others *in spite of* their unacceptability, that we can practice individuality and humanity with perfect continuity and intensity. The power, or disposition, to *continue to live* is given to us in and through our participation in friendships, and not all friendships are equally good for us. Friends who are friends for the sake of living-in-virtue are much more stable, and we can immerse ourselves in wishing them well and delight in doing good for them and with them. Friends who delight in doing God's will are ready to accept others *in spite of* their unacceptability in ways that are foreign to the wisdom of the world. It is by accepting our being accepted, or by practicing the wisdom of charity, that we come to delight in living a life of grace, and it is by living a life of grace that one comes to have eternal life. We cannot have life to the full unless, by the grace of God, we transcend the kind of artificial intelligence mainly practiced in the world, today, and learn, instead, to practice more human(e) forms of intelligence. With this in mind, I have tried to (help others) come to grips with what it means to practice philosophy of religion and theology in and for a radical spirit of shared humanity. I hope that my dissertation will become an occasion for some, even philosophers of religions and theologians, to aspire to human(e) intelligence and to eternal life.

More than Friends of Religion:
The Question of Truth and the Importance of Practicing Conceptual Justice for the Formation of the Virtue of Understanding in the Study of Religion

We are not free to understand one another whether or not we practice justice. If *we* do not practice justice, our eyes will be shut, our ears will be closed, our minds will be dulled, and we will misunderstand ourselves and our situation. We will not fully appreciate what something means "for us" because we have not come to appreciate what it is "in itself." In this chapter, I will discuss three ways we might fail to practice conceptual justice: (1) by becoming inordinately forgetful of our dependence on the self-disclosure of that which discloses itself to us prior to reflection or judgment; (2) by becoming inordinately skeptical about the possibility of sense, in general, or about the possibility of sense in *this* kind of discourse, in particular; (3) by becoming so accustomed to using a particular method or so preoccupied with the attainment of some particular good that we lose "the ability to stand back from our desires [and opinions and products], so as to be able to enquire rationally."[1] The danger in each case is that the "starting-point" of our efforts to *think* the truth and *work* to become true is corrupted. Having failed to appreciate what something is "in itself," we cannot develop a mature conception of what it is "for us," and it is by developing a mature understanding of another that I become free to develop a mature understanding of who I am.

As I have argued above, the extent to which we can come to have life to the full will greatly depend on the extent to which we learn to *think* the transition from death to life, from misery to blessedness. It is possible for us to develop bad habits, or tendencies

[1] *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 83.

to move in the direction of death and misery. For example, we can develop habits of misunderstanding. This chapter has been written to help the reader come to grips with the nature and importance of human understanding so that the reader might come to practice the virtue of understanding in the study of religion and, by doing so, work to more perfectly correspond to the Giver of eternal life.[2] What it means for us to perfectly correspond to the Giver of eternal life will, I hope, become clearer to the reader by the end of my dissertation. In this chapter, my main objectives are to show the reader (1) *that* we can fail to practice conceptual justice as we engage in the cultural work of making ourselves and our situations, (2) *how* we can, and often do, fail to do justice to the word of the other by becoming "forgetful of Being,"[3] by "avoiding discourse,"[4] and by committing "the fallacy of logical inversion,"[5] (3) *why* it is important for us to transcend such habits of misunderstanding, and (4) *what* kind of attention we must learn to give to others if we want to transcend our habits of misunderstanding.

Unfortunately, these bad habits are not only possible; they have become rather commonplace. Since the Enlightenment, many "friends of religion" have tried to "design a rational religion that was not 'one sect among other sects' but public both in the sense

[2] This is not to say that someone can come to perfectly correspond to God simply by studying religion; nevertheless, I do believe that it is helpful for some to study religion, provided that they do so with the speculative intellectual virtue of understanding.

[3] We become "forgetful of Being" when we become inordinately inattentive to our relation to and our dependence upon that something (whatever it may be) which calls forth and makes possible our interpretations of *something* as something – i.e., when we fail to appreciate the relationship between that *something* that calls for interpretation and our interpretations of this something *as something*.

[4] We "avoid discourse" when we become inordinately inattentive to the word of the other because their interpretation of something as something does not immediately appear to be good *for us* or to make sense *to us* – i.e., when we fail to appreciate the sense that interpreting something as something has *for someone*.

[5] We commit "the fallacy of logical inversion" when, on account of attachments to certain methods or goals, we become inordinately inattentive to "the surroundings" of the discourse of the other and then only refer to the discourse of the other in ways that violate the 'logic' of that discourse – i.e., when we fail to appreciate the relationship between the sense that some interpretation has for someone and the medium of this sense, or that *something through which* the sense of her interpretation is mediated to her (e.g., the difference between the Holy Spirit and the spirit of the age).

of being 'open equally to all' and of being supported by reasons that are reasons for everyone.'"[6] These "friends of religion" have tried to win respectability for religion and have hoped to foster agreement among religions by defending a picture of religion that is, in reality, only an "idealized construction in the line of the tradition-free reasoning of Enlightenment rationalism."[7] These "friends of religion" have tried to win respectability for religion by participation in modern "epistemological preoccupations,"[8] and they have tried to secure agreement by reacting to problems of cultural and religious diversity in ways defined by modern strategies for securing agreement – i.e., in ways that aim to "privatize difference and cultivate common ground."[9] These efforts to defend religion have led to a proliferation of religious fantasies and anti-religious counterfantasies, both of which "are removed from the requirements of religious life and the intellectual challenges of actual religious practices."[10] In both cases, "friends of religion" have all too often sought to achieve victory by sheer abstraction, by attempting to provide an Idea, or "reason for everyone," that has been separated from the concerns of *someone* in a particular situation and then "safeguarded" (or rather made to suffer a kind of death) by a thousand qualifications. However, whenever we "sever the connection between ideas and practice, it becomes impossible [for us] to give an account of what ideas they are,"[11] and the "public religion" that we end up defending is, ironically, "of no interest to the public."[12]

[6] *Becoming Present*, p. 1.
[7] *Becoming Present*, p. 2.
[8] *Religion and Friendly Fire*, p. 27.
[9] *Becoming Present*, p. 4.
[10] *Becoming Present*, p. 2.
[11] *Religion and Friendly Fire*, p. 30.
[12] *Becoming Present*, p. 2.

All pictures are developed against a background. What we regard as the truth of religion will stand against a background of other notions. Coming to have the virtue of understanding involves coming to picture the truth of something against a background of authentic interpretations.[13] We can develop habits of inauthentic interpretation that put us out-of-touch with the reality of the word of the other. We can fail to understand the understanding of the other, and when such misunderstandings take place, we are liable to picture the truth of ourselves and our situation against a background of abstract, or inauthentic, notions. By picturing the truth in such an illusory fashion we may come to harm ourselves and others unwittingly. We run this risk when we interpret the word of the other, but we cannot abstain from understanding and live a human life. To understand is "our characteristically human way of being, our fundamental mode of being-in-the-world."[14] While we cannot abstain from understanding, we can misunderstand. We can develop notions that are not conducive to knowledge. In other words, it is possible for us to render ourselves incapable of truthfully carrying out the "operation by which we come to know."[15] We can do this by misunderstanding the word of the other, or by taking as our starting-point for the process of knowing the truth some abstract notion that has no basis in reality, or no application in the life of the other.

If we want to develop true self-knowledge and to become perfectly human, we will have to learn to practice human(e) acts of correspondence. For us, becoming true

[13] We can come to have inappropriate "second-order beliefs" about what *kinds* and *types* of beliefs belong to the perspective of the other. When inappropriate "second-order beliefs" are widespread, "an age's conception of what an intellectual problem is can be shoddy," and it is possible for "that shoddiness [to consist] precisely in the inability to see a problem in terms other than seeking answers to it, seeking solutions, getting things done." Where such "shoddiness" becomes commonplace, our culture will tend to cultivate scholars, like Frazier, who "could see [primitive] rituals only instrumentally, as ways of getting things done, just as, in a wider context, he thought of the science of culture as essentially a reformer's science" (*Philosophy's Cool Place*, pp. 46-47).
[14] *The Revelatory Text*, pp. 17-18.
[15] *The Revelatory Text*, pp. 17-18.

is a matter of corresponding to reality in a human(e) way, and the extent to which we will become free to correspond to reality will depend on the extent to which we practice the virtue of understanding. Unless someone grasps an adequate starting-point for an act of correspondence, she cannot proceed to correspond with another. Practicing the virtue of understanding will require us to "keep watch" over ourselves, lest we be tempted to become forgetful of Being, avoid discourse, or commit the fallacy of logical inversion. We will have to learn to interpret s*omething* as something without numbing ourselves to the import of this basic something; learn to interpret something as something *for someone* without numbing ourselves to the import of this interested someone; and learn to interpret something as something for someone *through something* without numbing ourselves to the import of this mediating something. Instead of merely seeking to promote peace by anesthetizing ourselves in various ways to the import, or being, of the other, we will have to learn to give fully human(e) attention to the word of the other. What it will take for us to give this kind of attention to the word of the other should become clearer to the reader by the end of this chapter.

The Question of Truth

I have said the intellectual virtues perfect the intellect for knowing truth, but one might ask: 'What is truth'? The question 'what is truth' is related to the problem of error. We begin to search for the truth in response to some feeling of dissatisfaction. I may come to see that I have made some mistake. As I apply the ratchet, I becomes apparent that a 12 millimeter socket is too small for *this* nut. So, I reach for the 13 millimeter socket. As her lecture unfolds, I start to suspect that I have not understood how the professor is using *that* term. So, I raise my hand, ask a question, and hope that her answer will bring me to a point of sufficient clarity and comprehension – sufficient enough for me to continue to

follow the lecture. We could multiply examples, here, but the point that I want to make is that I start looking around for (some path toward) the truth in response to a feeling of dissatisfaction. This is how the question of truth arises, and when it arises, I can respond by moving in the direction of the absence of error (e.g., by placing myself under arrest for fear that I might commit a serious crime) or by moving in the direction of the presence of truth (e.g., by accepting the occurrence of this feeling of dissatisfaction as a gift of opportunity to draw nearer to the truth). The one who wishes to move in the direction of the absence of error might, for example, begin working to establish some set of abstract, or purely formal, criteria for determining what will count as *correct*, or *proper*, for us. In this way, one might try to eliminate certain conditions for the possibility of error.

Now, there is surely a time and a place for us to operate in the "fear of error," but those who set out to eliminate conditions for the possibility of error may, in the process, end up eliminating conditions for the possibility of truth, or fulfillment. A "fear of error" becomes excessive whenever one "gets fixated on the antithesis of truth and falsity" such that she simply accepts a (kind of) proposition as 'true' or rejects it as 'false' by merely appealing to given criteria for determining the "correctness of statements," or abstract criteria for determining what counts as an "adequate representation" of the way things are or the way things should be, and in this way, simply bypasses the task of working her way into the kind of relationship with the subject matter that would allow her to "grasp" the truth of the subject matter.[16] In such a case, someone's "fear of error" functions like a "fear of truth." By simply positing a "being-for-us," or insisting on our imagination of what something can or cannot be, or what it must or must not be, we may render ourselves incapable of appreciating its "being-in-itself." By splitting, fixing, and reifying certain

[16] *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 2-3, 46-47; § 2-3, 73-74.

categories of thought, we may become unable to *attend to* the actual subject matter and unable to truly *think* for ourselves. Indeed, where "the fear of falling into error sets up a mistrust of [our ability to work our way into a relationship with the subject matter in and through which we may come to grasp the truth of the matter for ourselves] . . . it is hard to see why we should not turn round and mistrust this very mistrust."[17] Where this kind of mistrust has become normal, where correctness is valued more than attention to what is actual, a philosopher might have some occasions to say to her students, "Don't think, but look!"[18]

Still, we should not pass too quickly over the moment of the "fear of error"; for error and the pain often suffered by or because of those who are in error is a substantial problem. Indeed, it is because I want my words to be "adequate" that I have rewritten this sentence (and others like it) several times. Likewise, I hope the reader will reread this text, or at least some parts of it, several times with the hope of coming to fully understand the meaning of the text. It is undoubtedly good for us to look for criteria for judging which propositions are "adequate." What we need to avoid are fixations with abstract, purely formal criteria. Instead, if we want to come to know truth, we need to cultivate a passion for receiving feedback and working our way into a good relationship with objective content. Rather than becoming fascinated, we need to practice "getting real." Toward this end, some have argued that we should work to "make contact with reality," but here the question may arise: given the possibility of (self-)deception, how can we know that we have *really* "gotten real" or *really* "made contact with reality." One might propose a measure (e.g., clarity or sensibility). Another might propose a measure of the measure;

[17] *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 47.
[18] *Philosophical Investigations* §66, p. 36e.

but one could conceivably ask for additional measures *ad infinitum*. Since we are finite, at some point, we will have to become *serious* about the way we use this or that measure. In other words, at some point, we will have to *act* in accordance with some measure. When we act, we may encounter serious objections from others. In such a situation, one might wish to prevent further questions by insisting that others must not look beyond the measure that we have recommended. One might assert, for example, that it is "turtles all the way down." Nevertheless, though we may wish to prevent it, still the question may arise: 'why turtles?' or 'why is *this* measure beyond questioning?' We may be surprised that others cannot "find themselves" in the products of our imaginations.

Here, someone might object that the very idea of "making contact with reality" tempts us to look for truth "out there." Instead of relying on picture-thoughts, which are *given to me* by something "out there," one might argue that we ought to press forward toward true self-knowledge by conceiving, or positing, our own unity with that which appears to us. The fundamental difference between an image and a concept is that an image is *its* image, but "the Notion for me is straightway *my* Notion" – in self-aware *thinking*, what presents itself to my mind is a distinct "being-in-itself" but a being that is also recognized as "not anything distinct from [the mind]," or as a "being-for-self."[19] With the hope of becoming a true self in mind, one might propose that the "correctness of statements" should be measured not so much by whether or not the statement-maker has presumably "made contact with reality" but by whether or not the statement-itself adequately "realizes the ideal" – e.g., the liberal ideal of freedom for self-realization by way of the limitation, or even the elimination, of external constraints.

[19] *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 120.

Insofar as the truth, or fulfillment, of consciousness is self-consciousness, it seems the idealist is in a better position to know truth than is the naïve realist. Nevertheless, the idealist still has to come to terms with the way each ideal is ideal *for someone*; so, the question may arise: 'by taking what is good for someone in particular and regarding it as *the* measure of truth, have we not, in reality, abandoned the search for truth, or at least truth "according to the whole?"' One may try to rebut this claim by asserting that the ideal she has proposed is universally good, or that it is good *for all*. However, someone else – for example, someone like Nietzsche or an individual belonging to a certain class, race, gender – might argue that a world filled with people pursuing abstract universals, or ideals that are only "good for everyone" in a formal way, is a world that is not, in the concrete circumstances of my life, good *for me*.[20] It is, indeed, possible for us to focus our gaze on the accomplishment of what is "good for all" such that we become blind to the reality of the other – blind to who someone *standing right before us* is "in herself."[21] This is

[20] Some teachers have begun to take an interest in how students gather. They have come to understand that their influence can (and, in some cases, should) extend into this time, the gathering time. One way to influence students during this time is to provide a "transitional object" such as music playing softly in the background to encourage students to talk to one another by helping them endure moments of silence (or preventing "awkward silence"). One way to do this would be to select songs that are suggestive of the "kinds of realities" or the "kinds of ideas" that will be topics for in-class discussion that day (or that week or that month, depending on how much time one has to produce soundtracks for her students), songs that might "prime" students for discussion. To anyone interested in taking such a course of action, I recommend Bob Dylan to those who are about to lecture on Nietzsche's *AntiChrist*, especially the song "It Ain't Me, Babe." One of Nietzsche's main concerns is that a God *for all* cannot be a God *for me*. A preeminently agreeable God is not one who knows me. If I understand myself from the perspective of such a God *for all*, I am made blind concerning my difference from others and robbed of opportunities to celebrate myself. Much like Nietzsche, Dylan feels obligated to reject someone because "it ain't me you're looking for." For example, in the second verse of the song, Dylan writes: "You say you're looking for someone who will promise never to part; someone to close his eyes for you; someone to close his heart; someone who will die for you an' more; but it ain't me babe; no, no, no; it ain't me you're looking for, babe."

[21] This has happened in the study of religion where some have set out to design "a rational religion that was not 'one sect among other sects' but public both in the sense of being 'open equally to all' and of being 'supported by reasons that are reasons for everyone'" (*Becoming Present*, p. 1). Where "friends of religion" have set out to defend "an idealized construction in the line of the tradition-free reasoning of Enlightenment rationalism," they have tended to produce arguments which do not have much to say about actual religious beliefs and which are far "removed from the requirements of religious life and the intellectual challenges of actual religious practices or the widespread disinterest

not just a problem *for her*. It is also a problem for me, for it is only possible for me to become truly self-aware (and thereby possibly aware of what is truly good *for me*) by becoming truly aware of who others are, "in themselves." In chapters two and three, I will say more about what it means to come to have true self-knowledge.[22]

The Meaning of Truth

For now, it is important that we slow down and consider the meaning of truth in greater detail. In his lectures on the topic of *Pragmatism*, William James argues that it is prudent for us to ultimately adjudicate between the answers given to questions like 'why should I use *this* criterion to measure "agreement with reality"?' or 'why should I regard *this* belief or proposition as true or as false?' – by inquiring about "the practical value" of using *this* measure or having *this* belief or making *this* proposition. Following Kierkegaard, in his lectures on pragmatism, William James is well aware that "we live forwards . . . but we understand backwards."[23] We only self-consciously try our hand at "knowing truth" when a "fact," or event, in our experience somehow "calls for" interpretation. Unless we encounter the problem, the question does not arise. In a fundamental way, "knowing truth" is always a matter of "knowing after." This is not to say that we must simply wait for problems to occur and then deal with them on the fly. We can prepare ourselves for the

in participating in them" (*Becoming Present*, p. 2). The reader will observe that chapter one of my dissertation is written in agreement with Ingolf Dalferth's assertion that "the proper task of philosophy of religion . . . is not to lay the epistemological foundations of rational religion according to the Enlightenment paradigm, but to explore and elucidate the reasonableness of actual religions and religious traditions" (*Becoming Present*, p. 19).

[22] There we will see that the process of developing true self-knowledge does not so much proceed by way of generalization – i.e., by way of "seeking to overcome the contingent particularity of our actual communicative relationships by generalizing our partial interaction with *some* others to total interaction with *all* others" – as by way of universalization – i.e., by way of seeking "to ground the communitive relations that we have with *some* others in the constitutive relationship all of us have with the *same* Other by universalizing the singular relationship which we find to constitute our existence" (*Theology and Philosophy*, p. 209).

[23] *Pragmatism*, p. 98.

advent of new problems by learning about *kinds* and *laws* and building up our stock of *concepts*. We are not like the baby who drops his rattle and looks for it not. For the baby, the rattle "has 'gone out' . . . as a candle-flame goes out; and it comes back, when you replace it in his hand, as the flame comes back when relit."[24] We are not like the baby because we share in "common sense" and preserve the memories of our culture through our use of language. As we become more mature participants in our natural and social worlds, we become aware of the relative permanence of "things" like rattles. A concept of 'things' helps us to make many transitions in our lives, but not every concept or idea is so helpful *for us*. William James is keenly aware that not every act or product of reflection has a *living reason*. In his view, some reflections are undertaken because we *want* to "lie back" and are not interested in making a change in order to deal with real problems right in front of us, and some minds, having become "debauched by learning," are prone to "lie back."

In order to prevent us from developing a tendency toward such backwardness and to provide "a mediator between tough-mindedness and tender-mindedness," or between those who are predisposed to demand "agreement with reality" by way of (tough) contact with the reality of the other and those who are preoccupied with crafting an "agreeable ideal" by way of imagining that which is yet to be realized and, thereby, coming to have the (tender) comfort of "seeing" (a path to) the ideal yet to be realized,[25] William James proposes "pragmatism." What is more crucial than the nature of one's given temperamental disposition, he argues, is whether one engages in a kind of philosophical practice that promotes "the spirit of life" – i.e., whether, as one goes

[24] *Pragmatism*, p. 77.
[25] *Pragmatism*, p. 118.

about "seeing and feeling the total push and pressure of the cosmos,"[26] one comes to adopt an attitude that "looks forward" (or what Paul Tillich would later call "the courage to Be") as opposed to an attitude that causes one to "lie back."[27]

So, for example, in the practice and the study of religion, James argues that a genuinely human(e) attitude (one that "looks forward" to our good, for our good) is one that looks for religious meaning and fulfillment "not in the unity of all things;"[28] or by rehearsing agnostic pretensions;[29] or by seeking "safety from this everlasting round of adventures of which the world consists";[30] but by "identifying *live* possibilities . . . some gap we can spring into and act";[31] by trusting ourselves and other agents enough to "face the risk";[32] bravely making our decisions and, thereby, "adding our *fiat* to the *fiat* of the creator";[33] by paying with "[my] own person . . . for the realization of the ideals which [I] frame";[34] and also taking moral holidays from time to time."[35] All of our efforts at "looking backwards," all of our reflective efforts to understand and to judge what is true and what is false in this situation should serve the two-sided purpose of abiding-in-self and passing-beyond-self – that is, they should yield advantages for life. One might say: the will to live, as opposed to what Nietzsche called "the will to truth"[36] and to what Hegel called "the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself,"[37]

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[26] *Pragmatism*, p. 5.
[27] *Pragmatism*, p. 128.
[28] *Pragmatism*, p. 123.
[29] *Pragmatism*, p. 125.
[30] *Pragmatism*, p. 128.
[31] *Pragmatism*, p. 126.
[32] *Pragmatism*, p. 127.
[33] *Pragmatism*, p. 128.
[34] *Pragmatism*, pp. 130-131.
[35] *Pragmatism*, p. 37.
[36] Cf. *Beyond Good and Evil*, Part One ("On the Prejudices of Philosophers").
[37] Cf. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 115.

ought to come to self-consciously govern the process of "the selection of objects" for reflective judgment.[38]

Whenever I interpret something *as something*, my interpretation should, in William James' view be regarded as true only insofar as it is good *for someone*, or only insofar as it becomes for someone a "*leading that is worth while*." An interpretation is good for me in this way if it helps me relate to the particulars of my experience in such a way that I am empowered to make advantageous connections between my beliefs.[39] According to James, truth is "one species of the good" and "*the true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite, assignable reasons*."[40] In this way, James reminds us that whenever we interpret something *as something*, we interpret it as something *for someone*. Furthermore, he has instructed us to "find out what definite difference it will make to you and me, at definite instants in our life, if this world-formula or that world-formula be the true one" – that is, if this or that belief is good *for us*.[41] Prudence requires that we "become able to reflect on and to pass judgment on our reasons" and to ask if this or that opinion or desire is best for us to hold to or act upon here and now.[42]

But, the question may arise: 'who are we?' Whenever we judge that something is good *for us*, have we not already interpreted ourselves *as something* – for example, as deficient beings primarily characterized by our need to secure a future for ourselves or

[38] Concerning this "pragmatic principle of selection," Tillich writes: "man is not only a knowing being, he is also a living being, and his will to knowledge is limited by his will to live. Only that which can somehow enter into the context of human life, whether through use, through emotional influence, or through relations to spiritual values, actually becomes an object of knowledge. This is the *pragmatic* nature of human knowledge. The pragmatic element is not the formulation of concepts, as philosophical pragmatism contends, but the selection of objects." *The System of the Sciences*, p. 80.
[39] *Pragmatism*, p. 90.
[40] *Pragmatism*, p. 36.
[41] *Pragmatism*, p. 25.
[42] *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 57.

creatures of possibility primarily characterized by a basic attitude of trust in the Lord? If we do not know who we truly are because we have become confused about or have otherwise become estranged from who we truly are, then are we in a position to judge what is *good* for us? And will we not make these judgments *through something*, as well; for example, by way of fantastic conversation or by way of authentic discussion? Even though we may have an immediate certainty that our judgments are "beings-for-us," i.e., that in making our judgments we wish some good for ourselves, how do we know we have gone about making our judgments in the right way? Admittedly, such questions as 'who are we, truly?' and 'how can I come to have true self-knowledge?' may not arise in the course of a life, but where they do arise, we are in danger of missing the difficulty present in the question if, in response to them, we only think about what is *good for us* in accordance with our prejudices concerning who we are and our immediate certainty that 'I am who I am,' 'you are who you are,' and 'it is what it is' – i.e., in accordance with the abstract assurance that A = A.

"On the Essence of Truth"

In his essay, "On the Essence of Truth," Heidegger suggests another way to think about the notion of 'knowing truth.' He makes it known, at the outset of the essay, that his topic is the *essence* of truth and that he is not so much concerned with 'what is reasonable' but, instead, with 'what is actual' and that he hopes to engage in "a radical thinking in terms of what is actual" and not in a thesis defending that must appeal to practical, economic, technical, political, scientific, artistic, or religious [i.e., particularly useful] reasons.[43] He acknowledges from the start that "a radical thinking" concerning essences will surely conflict with the "obviousness" of sound common sense and with the

[43] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 115.

reasonable demand to conform our thoughts to some "palpable utility" and that "philosophy cannot refute common sense," and yet, he contends that philosophy, in every age, ought to preserve possibilities of sense beyond "the sensibleness of common sense" – for example, philosophy ought to preserve those possibilities of sense beyond the kind of unspiritual identification of truth with 'the actual' that understands 'the actual' "only by 'feeling' and 'in a general way.'"[44]

To help us participate in "radical thinking," Heidegger makes a move to "translate *alētheia* as 'unconcealment' rather than 'truth" because such a translation "contains the directive to rethink the ordinary concept of truth in the sense of correctness of statements and to think it back to that still uncomprehended disclosedness of the disclosure of beings."[45] By making this move, Heidegger overplays his hand. He mistakes a condition for the possibility of truth for truth itself. Without unconcealment there can be no correspondence, but it is possible for someone to (think so as to) see the reality of x and yet fail to fully correspond to the reality of x. We are, indeed, "thinking things," but this is not the whole story. I will have more to say about this matter in due time, but at present, we must not lose sight of the importance of "the directive to rethink the ordinary concept of truth" contained in his essay, "On the Essence of Truth."

In the essay, Heidegger, like James, wants to encourage a kind of "thinking that turns toward what is actual," but Heidegger, more than James, does not think we have very well understood our relationship to actuality. He argues that this is the case with us, in part, because we tend to define truth in terms of accordance with "what, always and in advance, we 'properly' mean" by x as "true" and "genuine" x.[46] When we speak of

[44] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 116.
[45] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 125.
[46] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 117.

the truth of proposition *p* in relation to thing x, one may wonder what kind of conformity, or accordance, is possible between *p* and x. The classical answer "brought to light by the traditional definition of truth [as] . . . *adaequatio rei et intellectūs*" is that *p* and x may conform insofar as we see some "consonance [*Einstimmigkeit*] of a matter with what is supposed in advance" when we look at x or insofar as we somehow are acting in "accordance of what is meant in the statement of the matter" when we say and think *p*.[47] However, one may come to wonder why we ought to privilege, in this way, "what is supposed in advance."

Christian theologians, who have sought to understand the essence of truth, above all, in relation to the reality of God, have traditionally supposed "on the basis of the unity of the divine plan of creation" that the idea of x and the idea of *p* are fitted together in the mind of God such that the *coming* of truth is, for us, entirely a matter of *becoming* connatural with God, or coming to enjoy the conformity of vision with God enjoyed by the blessed; in other words, they have traditionally supposed that "*veritas* as *adaequatio rei (creandae) ad intellectum (divinum)* guarantees *veritas* as *adaequatio intellectūs (humani) ad rem (creatum)*."[48] As modern intellectual activity has made clear, though, it is also possible to conceive of the relation between x and *p* in a way "detached from the notion of creation" and, instead, attached to some world-order "in a general and indefinite way," such that "the order of creation is replaced by the capacity of all objects to be planned by means of a worldly reason which supplies the law for itself and thus also claims that its procedure is immediately intelligible" and the essence of truth is then supposed to consist in "the correctness of statements."[49] As Heidegger points out, the

[47] "On the Essence of Truth," pp. 117-118.
[48] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 118.
[49] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 119.

problem with such modern approaches to the question of the essence of truth is that they forget to question the relation of truth to untruth and therefore bypass the work of coming to grips with, or working our way into, "the inner possibility" of truth.[50]

When we consider the relationship between *p* and x, the term 'correspondence' "cannot signify a thing-like approximation between dissimilar kinds of things" because *p* can never succeed in becoming x but only in standing in relation to x in such a way that *p* allows x to be what x is – that is, a proposition can only, at best, present a thing *such as* the thing really is.[51] The proposition *p* that presents thing x must "let the thing stand opposed as an object," and this must take place in such a way that x becomes present to someone without ceasing to be the unique something, the x, that it is.[52] This can only happen if x presents itself to someone whose *p* is formed in such a way that it speaks of x such as x really is. Only such "open comportment" in relation to x makes "correctness" a real possibility in and through *p*, and what makes such openness to x possible is the self-disclosure, or Being, of the being x.[53] The self-disclosure of the being x is, in other words, the "ground" of real "correctness." Unless being x interrupts the flow of "worldly reason" conducted on the basis of given prejudices and discloses itself to us we have no way to "correspond with" being x.

For us, for beings-in-the-world, the decisive issue is, therefore, whether or not we are *free* to participate in the self-disclosure of beings. The *freedom* of being-in-the-world in such a way that we abide in "the open comportment that pregives a standard" is essential to truth in the sense that such an open comportment is "the ground of the inner

[50] "On the Essence of Truth," pp. 119-120.
[51] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 121.
[52] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 121.
[53] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 122.

possibility of what is initially and generally admitted as known."[54] This freedom is not "a property of man" that we *possess* but, instead, something that must ever be won by "letting things be." This "letting things be" is not to be confused with "letting it alone," or with indifference to beings; this "letting things be" refers to the "with-structure" of our existence. By "letting things be" we mean engaging with beings in such a way that we do not merely manage, preserve, tend, and plan things. "Letting things be" is not to be confused with simply immersing ourselves in things such that we lose ourselves in them; instead, by "letting things be" we mean "[withdrawing] in the face of beings in order that they might reveal themselves with respect to what and how they are, and in order that presentative correspondence might take its standard from them."[55] So, Heidegger does not use the term 'freedom' to mean "what common sense is content to let pass under this name," namely, "the caprice . . . of inclining in this or that direction" brought about, negatively, by "an absence of constraints" and, positively, by "mere readiness for what is required and necessary."[56] "Prior to all this," Heidegger argues, is "engagement in the disclosure of beings as such."[57] Some (exposure to) self-disclosure comes first, such that we can never hope to privately possess freedom but can only hope that disclosive Da-Sein makes our paths straight.[58]

Furthermore, the possibility of exposure to disclosure comes to us from before us – "the rare and simple decisions of history arise from the way the original essence of truth essentially unfolds"; but this also means that a decision "*not* to let beings be the beings which they are and as they are" could result in the concealment, or covering up and

[54] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 123.
[55] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 124-125.
[56] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 126.
[57] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 126.
[58] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 127.

distorting, of beings and the rise to power of "semblance."[59] Nevertheless, because we only become capable of history through exposure to self-disclosure, "untruth must derive from the essence of truth."[60] So, even though the *question* concerning the essence of truth arises only when we have become aware of the problem of untruth, or the possibility of concealment, truth is ontologically prior to untruth.

Throughout our lives, we are constantly engaging in "being attuned" to beings as a whole, even though "from the view of everyday calculations and preoccupations this 'as a whole' appears to be incalculable and incomprehensible," and this always "in a particular comportment that . . . conceals beings as a whole."[61] This is so because, in the words of Ingolf U. Dalferth, the whole of the world is so complex that we have to reduce its complexity by developing perspectives on the world "which are less complex than the world and precisely for this reason are capable of providing orientation and guidance for our actions."[62] So, *that* the concealing of what is concealed, or mystery, surrounds "the open region" is not simplistically good or bad; rather, it is something that is necessary. What is concealed in our understandings of essences may be called non-essence, and about such concealments, Heidegger warns us "nonessence remains always in its own way essential to the essence and never becomes unessential in the sense of irrelevant."[63] So, when we use models, which are the models they are because they bring to mind certain possibilities and obscure from view other possibilities, for the sake of "knowing truth," we have to "justify the models which [we use]" and we have to "delineate the

[59] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 127.
[60] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 128.
[61] "On the Essence of Truth," pp. 129-130.
[62] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 7; cf., *Becoming Present*, pp. 15-16.
[63] "On the Essence of Truth," pp. 130-131.

limits of [our] models in order to not confuse [the reality of being x] with the limitations of model-bound concepts [of thing x]."[64]

Heidegger's dialectical accounts of truth-in-relation-to-untruth, unconcealment-in-relation-to-concealment, and essence-in-relation-to-nonessence, remind us of the warning given in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, where he calmly stated: "before one is ready to proceed [toward knowing truth] . . . one must be done with one-sided forms."[65] With this in mind, Heidegger does not wage holy war against every act of concealment. Nevertheless, he does warn us that we ought to remain aware of our tendency to eagerly take "directives from the sphere of readily available intentions and needs" and become inordinately forgetful of the mystery that surrounds our world-orders, such that we are given up to those anxieties that come with the need to secure ourselves by "replenishing the 'world' on the basis of the latest needs and aims and [filling out] that world by means of proposing and planning" and with decisions to take our standards of orientation from such considerations as opposed to acting to cultivate openness in the direction of the self-disclosure of being.[66]

It is true to an extent that, by way of oversimplification or concealment, by taking our own standards and so turning away from the mystery of being-in-the-world, we are always *erring*; however, we are not simply dominated by or given over to *error*, or to "the realm . . . of the history of those entanglements in which all kinds of erring get interwoven."[67] It is possible for us to be led astray and dominated by error, but it is also possible that "by experiencing errancy itself and by not mistaking the mystery of Da-Sein,

[64] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 25.
[65] *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, p. 98.
[66] "On the Essence of Truth," pp. 131-132.
[67] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 134.

[we] *not* let [ourselves] be led astray."[68] From "the glimpse into the mystery out of errancy," the "unique question of what being as such is as a whole" may arise, and we may thereafter pursue the possibility of not letting ourselves be led astray by thinking through "the question of the *Being* of beings" – i.e., by engaging in the kind of activity that "since Plato has been understood as 'philosophy,' and [which] later received the title 'metaphysics.'"[69] Or, we may enter into a time when the "domination of common sense (sophistry) begins," and Heidegger warns us that where philosophy takes place, there sophistry is liable to rise up and interpret "all thoughtful questioning as an attack on, an unfortunate irritation of, common sense."[70] Philosophy is no mere "ornament of productive mankind," but the true value of philosophy in any given age depends on whether philosophical activity does or does not make time and space for the question of the Being of being to come to mind and on whether "the course of the questioning is . . . a thinking which, instead of furnishing representations and concepts, experiences and tests itself as a transformation of its relatedness to Being."[71]

At the same time, "a reflection on what truth is . . . must not try to reflect itself out of the tradition whose binding force it has recognized."[72] Trying to *become radical* is an adolescent goal, not a philosophical one.[73] Instead, as one engages in reflections for the

[68] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 134. Likewise, Simone Weil emphasizes the importance of giving attention to our errors and exhorts us to: "take great pains to examine squarely and to contemplate attentively and slowly each . . . task in which we have failed." As Weil observes: "there is a great temptation to do the opposite, to give a sideways glance at the corrected exercise if it is bad and to hide it forthwith"; and she claims "most of us do this nearly always." However, she encourages us "withstand this temptation" so that we may come to receive correction and, above all, so that we can come to have "the virtue of humility," which, in her view, "is a far more precious treasure than all . . . progress" (*Waiting for God*, p. 60).
[69] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 135.
[70] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 135.
[71] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 136.
[72] *Truth and Method*, p. xxiii.
[73] It is not my intention, here, to take a shot at any and all who call for a "radical theology." It seems to me that theology is "by itself always already radical" insofar as theology is "oriented toward that which calls us beyond ourselves and our myopic worlds and into the newness of radical love" (*Radical*

sake of knowing truth, one "must be aware of the fact that [her] own understanding and interpretation are not [only] constructions based on principles, but [also, and more basically] the furthering of an event that goes far back."[74] Indeed, many conditions for the possibility of knowing truth come to us through a kind of history of effect, and "we are always engaged in a conversation in which that which is to be understood takes part as it has already been understood."[75] Therefore, for us, the work of cultivating openness to the self-disclosure of beings involves becoming certain kinds of participants in conversations informed by our various traditions and their "definitive intuitions"[76] – participants who practice virtue in conversation, both when we receive the discourse of others and when we address discourse to others. In the following pages of this chapter, I introduce some key conditions for the possibility of receiving the discourse of others in a way that makes it possible for us to cultivate genuine (dis)agreements with others through authentic participation in discussion.

The Possibility of Freedom

Theology, back cover). At the same time, there are certainly some who would call their work "radical" who are only interested in "controversy" or "difference" or in promoting a particular "ideology" that would presumably yield advantages to them or to a particular interest group. Thinking does not become radical simply because one affixes the adjective "radical" to the words one uses, and radical thinking is not good thinking if it is made to serve adolescent ends (e.g., sheer differentiation) or childish ends (e.g., sheer consumption).

[74] *Truth and Method*, p. xxiii.

[75] *Radical Theology*, p. 37.

[76] As David Kelsey has argued: an utterance may fail to make a real contribution to a discussion "not by being falsified by evidence, but – to use a quasi-technical term J. L. Austin employed when he drew attention to these matters – by being infelicitous. It may suffer 'infelicity' if I am insincere, lacking the attitude or intention I express. Or it may suffer 'infelicity' if what I involve myself in is a promise and, however sincere I may be, I am unable to carry it out. Clearly, then, if the community that uses the doctrine to help elucidate its creedal expression of its own self-identity lacks deep dispositions toward the relevant attitudes and intentions (say, gratitude or a commitment to care for the well-being of creatures), then its doctrine of creation fails by 'infelicity.' Affirming the doctrine would no longer be an authentic expression of the truth of the community" ("The Doctrine of Creation from Nothing," p. 64).

In discussion, it is important for us to think and not merely have opinions. We can speak "without thinking."[77] Often we say that we have acted, or spoken, without thinking when we have done, or said, something unreasonable. However, it is possible to act, or speak, in a *reasonable* fashion without engaging in (theoretical) thinking. Someone who has *reasonable* opinions can act reasonably well without "having a theory" or "making an argument" – that is, someone can have (practical) grounds for acting in a particular way and yet not herself hold or share (theoretical) reasons for acting in that way.[78] The same can be said about production. We can produce, or make, *reasonable* products without (theoretical) thinking. If our production processes are sufficiently determined by reasonable opinions, we can get apparently good results without having to examine ourselves. However, this is no way for us to live, and it is certainly no way to for us to work our way into knowledge of the truth. We can examine ourselves, and we ought to give our (justifying) reasons and, with support and feedback from others, examine our reasons for action, because through participation in argument and in the kind of self-examination made possible by way of argumentation, we may become free for a fuller knowledge of the truth and for a greater enjoyment of a more complete peace.[79]

Here, it is important that we remember that freedom is not "a property of man." It is, no doubt, the case that unlike other animals, humans normally develop beyond an

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[77] For example, concerning the distinction between the one who is thinking and the one who acts without thinking, D. Z. Phillips has argued: "what shows that [one] is thinking is the connection between his acceptances and rejections and the rest of his day's work; it is this that shows that [another] that [one] is thinking" (*Death and Immortality*, pp. 7-8). If, throughout the day, a carpenter keeps accepting windows that he should have rejected, we might say "you can't have been thinking about what you were doing?" In this way, we can see that someone has been working "without thinking" if, as they work, they fail to make appropriate distinctions.

[78] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 5.

[79] Through self-examination, one might even come to acknowledge that contemplation is "the most excellent thing in a human being" and "more proper to a human being" than action or production because it is (potentially) more enjoyable than action or production (*Paths to the Triune God*, p. 148; cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* [Book 10, Chapter 7], pp. 223-226).

"initial state of *having reasons for acting in this way rather than that* towards the specifically human state of *being able to evaluate those reasons, to revise them or abandon them and replace them with others*."[80] However, while this is *normal* for us, it is not automatic, or simply given. We do not have a capacity to be free whether or not we practice freedom; instead, "we are not free unless we practice our freedom"[81] by identifying the reasons for our opinions, actions, and productions, by "[evaluating] reasons, to revise them or abandon them and replace them with others," and by doing all this in such a way that we "let things be." If we do not practice our freedom in these ways, we will not become free to proceed toward a greater knowledge of the truth and toward a more complete peace. So, while our actions and productions may be inspired by *reasonable* beliefs and may "get results" whether or not we engage in contemplation, or thinking, this is not to say that unexamined actions and productions are *humane*, or ultimately good for us *as humans*.[82] Instead, our actions and productions *become* good for us *as humans*, "by the intellect that proposes the right object for desires and actions and distinguishes between good and evil."[83]

Indeed, it is possible for our unique natural capacities to become the very source of our bondage. It is possible for one to come to regard something as *reasonable* that is

[80] *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 91.
[81] *Creatures of Possibility*, p. x.
[82] It may make sense to say that our actions and productions can be *reasonable*, whether or not we engage in contemplation and that person *A* may spend more time *thinking about* topic *Y* than person *B* and yet enact actions and produce products which are less *reasonable* or desirable than those produced by person *B*, even where her actions and productions relate to topic *Y*. The quality of the thinking matters. Bad thinking will eventually lead to bad actions. At the same time, whether our actions are good or bad, our actions are not human actions apart from the presence of the thinking of thought. We can participate in the thinking of thought; so, we should (self-consciously) participate in the thinking of thought insofar as perfection at a lower level of adventure is not always more desirable for us than imperfection at a higher level of adventure. An orientation toward "perfection" can, indeed, become "backward-looking" and can give birth to an imagination that is "limited to one type of social excellence" (*Adventures of Ideas*, p. 273).
[83] *Paths to the Triune God*, p. 148.

really base. It is all too possible for us to shut our eyes, stop our ears, and dull our minds.[84] We can dislocate ourselves, misplace our certainties, and disorder our priorities, and it is, possible for us to degenerate, to decline, and, finally, to come to nothing as individuals and societies. Our much-celebrated linguistic capacities may become for us a source of deception, paralysis, and duplicity. Indeed, it is not *in spite of* our natural capacities to produce signs and participate in sign-events but *because of* them and our cultural tendencies toward deception, paralysis, and duplicity that we are, at least potentially,[85] and one might even argue that we are actually, the most miserable and the neediest of all creatures. Our powers of self-destruction should not be overlooked or underestimated.

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[84] Cf. Isaiah 6:9-10; In Isaiah 6:9, the LORD commands Isaiah to draw his people's attention to their current incapacity to recognize the truth. He is called to point out to them that though they listen and look, they neither understand nor see. In Isaiah 6:10, the LORD calls Isaiah to speak truth to them prophetically, or in a prophetic way. One can set about the work of communicating a knowledge of truth to others in a number of ways. The way I should speak to others depends on 'who I am' and 'what kind of situation I am in.' Now, a prophet is called to speak boldly to those who have power. A prophetic word spoken to someone has a way of making that someone "show her true colors." As a prophet, Isaiah is not called to speak in a way that will immediately "bring peace to the earth" but in a way that will "bring a sword" (cf. Matt. 10:34). The role of the prophet is different from the role of a teacher or a priest. The prophet works to expose others to truth. The teacher works to help others grasp truth, and the priest encourages others to appropriate truth. When a prophet speaks a word of truth to power that exposes their injustices, it is not uncommon for those in power to "harden their hearts." Since God has called Isaiah to the work of prophecy and since his people who have not practiced justice have therefore become incapable of coming to know the truth, God forewarns Isaiah that speaking a prophetic word to them will:

"Make the mind of this people dull,
and stop their ears,
and shut their eyes.
so that they may not look with their eyes,
and listen with their ears,
and comprehend with their minds,
and turn and be healed."

Why, then, should anyone speak in a prophetic voice if speaking to others in this way is likely to result in a hardening of hearts? I will not take the time to provide a full answer to this question here, but I encourage the interested reader to give special attention to the sections of this chapter that highlight our dependency upon "disclosure." I also invite the reader to consider the ways carrying out the duties of a priest or teacher for group *A* might require me to carry out the duties of a prophet for group *B*. We are finite beings, who are not always in a position to "go to the chalkboard," and we are complex persons, who inhabit a number of different roles in different social situations. I will have more to say about the role of the teacher in chapter two (on science) and the role of the priest in chapter three (on wisdom).

[85] Cf. *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 20, a. 4, ad. 2.

Our actions and our productions, and among them especially our utterances, have the power to "set on fire the wheel of birth."[86] "Reasonable" opinions and speeches have inspired us to self-righteously prosecute our fathers, abandon our mothers, crucify our brothers, degrade our sisters, and abuse the earth – to enact and produce the means to enact ten thousand forms of violence. It is possible for us to become higher than the other animals; however, it is also possible for us to fall farther and suffer more deeply than any other animal. While we can enjoy the happiness of heaven, we can also suffer the misery of hell.

Now, "absolutely no one wills to be unhappy."[87] All want to be happy, but some are miserable. So, some are not free. Some are "in such a state that unhappiness must follow" even though they do not want unhappiness.[88] About this, Augustine says: "those who are happy, who must also be good, are not happy simply because they will to be happy – even the wicked will that – but because they will it in the right way, whereas the wicked do not."[89] So, many are miserable and unfree because "not everyone has the will to live rightly, which must accompany the will to live happily."[90] In order for us to come to "will to live rightly," we need each other. Not only do we need support from one another. It is certainly true that "it is most often to others that we owe our survival, let alone our flourishing, as we encounter bodily illness and injury, inadequate nutrition, mental defect and disturbance, and human aggression and neglect."[91] We also need confrontation with one another, for we only become free thinkers, or persons capable of

[86] Cf. James 3:5-6.
[87] *On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 23.
[88] *On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 23.
[89] *On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 23.
[90] *On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 24.
[91] *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 1.

independent practical reasoning, "by having our reasoning put to the question by others, by being called to account for ourselves and our actions by others."[92] We only become free for true self-knowledge and true peace and happiness, if we face one another and hear the word of the other.

When we engage in relations with one another, we begin with an initial desire to *have* (to possess, or consume) a certain kind of relationship with another. When I desire to *have* something, I treat it as nothing *in itself* but as something *for me*. I think that I am *essential* and that it is *inessential*. However, what I desire to have resists my efforts to reduce it to a *being-for-me*, and its *being-in-itself* then appears as a negative limit on my ability to reduce it to a *being-for-me*. Its independence, in relation to me, is a limit on what is *possible* for me. I begin to acquire self-knowledge by coming to know what is *not possible* for me, but any assertion concerning who I am (i.e. concerning my own essence) made solely on the basis of what I am not (i.e. on the basis of my nonessence) will remain groundless – an arbitrary, empty abstraction. I am only able to discover the *content* of my essence by becoming *self-aware* through witnessing how the *actuality* of my desire becomes a limit on the desire of another self-conscious, desiring being. The limits of my *being-for-another* reveal the content of my *being-in-myself*, and I am able to discover this content, i.e. my actuality *as individual*, by witnessing the self-negation of the self-conscious other in my presence.[93]

[92] *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 148.

[93] In our interactions with other individuals, "each is for the other the middle term, through which each mediates itself with itself and unites with itself, and for the other, an immediate being on its own account, which at the same time is such only through mediation" (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 112). Each comes to know itself as "they *recognize* themselves as *mutually recognizing* one another" and as they recognize the need to negate the so-called "recognition" of the other.

Of course, the face and word of the other have not only the potential to reveal my actuality but also to hide, or conceal, my actuality. I can be deceived by the other. Furthermore, I am only able to discern the difference between the face or word that reveals and the face or word that deceives because I have some "spirit" within me, guiding my judgments. It is more than likely that I will make some judgments in error; so, if, in spite of my errors, I am to become free for knowing the truth and becoming true, the "spirit" within me must be characterized by a certain openness to accept help from others and give help to others. In other words, we do not merely *have* (true) *selves* whether or not we practice discussion; instead, we *become* (true) *selves*, in large part, by participation in authentic discussion. More will have to be said about these matters later, but for now, it is enough for us to acknowledge that "genuine and extensive self-knowledge becomes possible only in consequence of those social relationships which on occasion provide badly needed correction for our own judgments,"[94] that the work of coming to have "genuine and extensive self-knowledge" demands that we cultivate the speculative intellectual virtue of understanding, and that all of this is terribly important to my/our well-being. After all, what does one gain if she gains the whole world (whether in terms of world-historical significance or speculative knowledge) and yet is not herself, thereby, oriented toward her own highest good?[95]

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[94] *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 95.

[95] Cf. Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36. Furthermore, Kierkegaard warns us that the possibility of moving toward our highest good is endangered by our countless preoccupations with advancing toward *security* in the world and *significance* in history. The problem with world-historical concern is that it directs our gaze toward only objective "approximations" and no amount of knowledge *about* world-historical matters helps us come to have the "personal, infinite interestedness in one's own eternal happiness" that Kierkegaard calls "faith" (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 24). The problem with an interest in speculation is that it strives for objective certainty concerning *what* is said and ignores the role of personal appropriation in our lives, or the importance of *how* something is said, and in this way, it tempts us to forget that the truth, or fulfillment, of knowledge is self-knowledge. Contrary to this tendency, Kierkegaard insists that "*an objective uncertainty, held fast through appropriation with the most passionate inwardness, is the truth*, the highest truth there is for an *existing* person" (*CUP*, pp. 202-203).

The Possibility of Peace

At this juncture, I have said more about what freedom is NOT than what freedom is, though I have hinted at the idea that true freedom is freedom for what I have called complete, or perfect, peace. Likewise, at this early stage, I will say more about what peace is NOT than what peace is, though I will have more to say in chapters two and three about what, in my view, constitutes freedom and peace. Even so, I have already suggested that coming to enjoy complete peace, or happiness, is positively linked to the task of becoming truly free, which necessarily involves becoming true selves. In order for me to say what needs to be said about what peace is NOT, at this point, I will have to (positively) say more about what it means for us to become true selves, though I warn the reader that, again, at this early stage, I will say more about what becoming true selves is NOT. Having acknowledged as much, I hope the reader will recognize that, in my negativity, I have not been preoccupied with "differentiating and passing judgment on various thinkers" or on the aims and results of their works, even though I have practiced much negativity. Instead, I have been making an effort to attend to the nature of the virtue of understanding and its relationship to knowing the truth and becoming true. I also hope the reader will understand that so much negativity is appropriate to the task of working our way into a relationship with the subject matter – into a relationship that will enable us to "grasp" its truth; after all, if I were to simply posit "meanings" at the outset and use those "meanings" to explain the aims and results of my inquiry and to pass judgment on the aims and results of the inquiries of others, then what I would have produced "should be reckoned as no more than a device for evading the real issue [*die*

Sache selbst], a way of creating an impression of hard work and serious commitment to the problem, while actually sparing [myself and my reader] both."[96]

Now, until we become free, we live in bondage. Unfortunately, today, not only has it become customary for us to turn things around and suppose that until we come to live in bondage we are innately free (i.e., to reduce the *presence of freedom* to the *absence of bondage*), it has also become customary for us to suppose that one will suffer bondage unless one becomes a boss (i.e., to reduce the *absence of bondage* to the *presence of lordship*). Today, many are in the habit of imagining that coming to have freedom – and through coming to have freedom, coming to enjoy peace – is mainly a matter of discovering and developing techniques that will empower us to master the earth and her masses. So, everybody wants to rule the world; but is Napoleon really a paragon of freedom?[97]

Napoleon is both "free from" external constraints and "free for" the realization of his immediate desires. He certainly has his "independence," which is quite evident in his

[96] *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 2. What Hegel immediately goes on to say is, here, worth quoting: "For the real issue is not exhausted by stating it as an aim, but by carrying it out, nor is the result the actual whole, but rather the result together with the process through which it came about. The aim by itself is a lifeless universal, just as the guiding tendency is a mere drive that as yet lacks an actual existence; and the bare result is the corpse which has left the guiding tendency behind it. Similarly, the specific difference of a thing is rather its limit; it is where the thing stops, or it is what the thing is not. This concern with aim or results, with differentiating and passing judgment on various thinkers is therefore an easier task than it might seem. For instead of getting involved in the real issue, this kind of activity is always away beyond it; instead of tarrying with it, and losing itself in it, this kind of knowing is forever grasping at something new; it remains essentially preoccupied with itself instead of being preoccupied with the real issue and surrendering to it. To judge a thing that has substance and solid worth is quite easy, to comprehend it is much harder, and to blend judgment and comprehension in a definitive description is the hardest thing of all" (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 2-3). If I were to state my aim in writing these pages, it would be to accomplish this hardest thing, as much as such an accomplishment is possible for me.

[97] Contrary to Nietzsche, I would argue that Napoleon is not a true "concrete universal" because the freedom, or "independence," that he embodied is only strategically necessary for the realization of "life" in contexts where one has a preponderance of might on her side. While Napoleon might be considered a savior to some, his life does not offer guidance to all; and while Napoleon was able to accomplish some remarkable feats, one might argue that the goods he attained to were not the highest good(s) of a human life.

domination of the other; however, with respect to the possibility of coming to enjoy "the freedom of self-consciousness," his "independence" becomes a disadvantage. In the process of acquiring his identity through his domination of the other, the master's identity becomes dependent upon the subjugation of the slave and his attention fixed upon the possibility of consuming the goods produced by the slave's labor. Therefore, in contrast to the slave, who develops her identity in and through the fear of death (in which one comes to see that whatever is present in consciousness may be regarded as a vanishing moment), the fear of the lord (in which the need for self-discipline remains present to the slave), and work (in which she imprints her subjectivity on an object and "finds herself" in what she has done and what she has produced), the master only aims at the satisfaction of his immediate desires and the prevention of his immediate fears; so, he does not *develop*.[98] By playing the role of the master, he may be on his way to becoming a powerful *person*, but he is also becoming a weak *individual*.[99] In this way, the one who

[98] This is not to deny that the master does, indeed, "transform" himself and his world, including his fortunes and the fortunes of those whom he encounters; nevertheless, to the extent that he lacks self-knowledge, he is not in a position to "develop" himself and his world. Here, I have in mind the distinction Tillich makes when he says of two types of technology: "in the organic group, technology can avoid destroying gestalts by realizing only those goals that correspond to the inner tendencies of these gestalts. If we call all of these tendencies 'development,' including protection and preservation as its negative presuppositions, then we can call technology in the organic group "the technology of *development*." Physical things are not inherently related to goals. For them, a goal is something alien, something that has nothing to do with their inner tendencies – something, indeed, that contradicts these tendencies. Accordingly, physical technology can be called "the technology of *transformation*. Obviously, this form of technology always depends on the native laws of its forces and materials, but it compels these forces and materials in a direction that is foreign to their nature; it is therefore in constant conflict with the natural direction of its objects" (*The System of the Sciences*, p. 102). Insofar as the master does not *develop* but only *transforms*, he is destined for misery and the works of his hands are destined to become a source of misery for others to the extent that he acts "in a direction that is foreign to . . . nature." Finally, as Augustine remarks, wherever inordinate desire has come to rule the mind, this is "no small punishment" (*On Free Choice of the Will*, pp. 17-18).

[99] When I say that the one who plays the role of the master becomes a powerful person, but a weak individual, the term *person*, here, designates, in its positive use, a unit of production (i.e., someone is a *person*, as opposed to a mere human being [e.g., an infant], to the extent that they possess certain productive capacities [e.g., intelligence]) and, in its negative use, an address for distribution (i.e., someone is a *person*, as opposed to a machine, who possesses rights under the law). *Personality*, in this sense, refers to one's power to produce and to one's right to receive certain legal protections. The master has more power to produce and more property to protect. Individuality, though, as I am using

inhabits the mind of the master is characterized by a more persistent kind of bondage. His life will lack the sort of self-transcendence that has been called "the freedom of self-consciousness." Someone who continues to practice this kind of independence will suffer self-deception and stagnation and is certainly in no position to claim that he is 'a slave to none.'

Unlike 'the master,' 'the Stoic' has a right to claim to be 'a slave to none.' Unlike the master, the Stoic acknowledges that her immediate desires and fears often conflict with "the courage of wisdom" and the hope of peace.[100] She is aware that:

> Desire as such is not unlimited. In undistorted nature it is limited by objective needs and is therefore capable of satisfaction. But man's distorted imagination transcends the objective needs ("When astray – your wanderings are limitless") and with them any possible satisfaction. And this, not the desire as such, produces an "unwise (*inconsulta*) tendency toward death."[101]

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the term here, refers to our infinite power to negate "self-externalities," or determinations alien to "being-for-self." It is not that the master is not an individual, but his ability to actually negate "self-externalities" is limited by his relative lack of self-knowledge. The master, as such, becomes a weak individual, first of all, because he does not "risk his life" for the realization of his ideal and "it is only through staking one's life that freedom is won; only thus is it proved that for self-consciousness, its essential being is not [just] being, no the *immediate* form in which it appears, not its submergence in the expanse of life, but rather that there is nothing present in it which could not be regarded as a vanishing moment, that it is only pure *being-for-self*" (*Ibid*., p. 114) Secondly, the master becomes a weak individual because, by making the slave into someone who is dependent on him, he encounters in the slave "not an independent consciousness, but a dependent one" (Ibid., p. 116). He receives recognition from the slave, but either because the slave is not allowed to speak freely or her feedback is not taken seriously, the recognition that he receives from the slave does not reveal to him the truth. Thirdly, insofar as the master seeks only to enjoy what he commissions the slave to produce, he does not work on the thing that he desires; so, whereas the slave, who works on things, may come to truly recognize himself in and through the work that he has done, the master only "works" to make and keep the slave his slave. In other words, the slave lives in such a way that she may become a "self" to an extent that the master cannot, for, as Ingolf Dalferth has summarized the matter, we become "selves" if we "seek to live [our lives] in a self-determined way," if we "are able to understand [ourselves] as human beings among human beings," and if we "are willing to orient [our] self-determining on the principle that a good human life aims at living in a selfless and not selfish way together with others" (*Radical Theology*, pp., 19-20). In each case, the slave is in a better position to realize the antecedent condition for the possibility of becoming a "self."

[100] *The Courage to Be*, p. 13.

[101] *The Courage to Be*, p. 14.

Aware that a serious threat, if not the greatest threat, to peace lies within, she takes on the task of self-discipline. Above all, the Stoic is committed to becoming "a being that *thinks*"[102] because, in spite of the threat to her well-being posed by death and fate, she hopes to steal victory from them by way of cultivating inner unity and she knows that "in thinking, I *am free*, because I am not in an other, but remain simply and solely in communion with myself."[103] She commits herself to discipline because she realizes that winning such a victory over the anxieties of death and fate will require her to surrender "the personal center to the Logos of being" and to do this by way of "participation in the divine power of reason, transcending the realm of passions and anxieties."[104]

In a very real sense, the Stoic may come to "have the victory" over death and fate. The peace she wins is real, but it is not complete. It is not complete because the Stoic, as a Stoic, does not acknowledge the problem of sin and "does not experience the despair of personal guilt."[105] Though she does not, like the master, reduce the absence of bondage to the presence of lordship, she virtually reduces the presence of freedom to the absence of bondage by reducing freedom to freedom *in thought*. As Hegel puts the matter, "freedom in thought has only *pure thought* as its truth, a truth lacking the fullness of life."[106] This kind of freedom is abstract and, upon winning this kind of freedom, one is tempted to announce victory prematurely such that one "neglects the activity that would have both kept [her] in touch with reality and brought reality under [her dominion]"; indeed, someone who settles for peace *in thought* does not get on with

[102] *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 121, § 198.
[103] *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 120, § 197.
[104] *The Courage to Be*, p. 13.
[105] *The Courage to Be*, p. 17.
[106] *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 122, § 200.

"the transformative activity of work."[107] Furthermore, in this way, by insisting "that consciousness holds something to be essentially important, or true and good only in so far as it *thinks* it to be such,"[108] the Stoic may tempt others to aim at something that is, in fact, incompatible with true peace – at "its bastard substitute,"[109] at a kind of "private perfection" characterized by "anesthesia," or an inhibition of feeling.[110] Those who win this kind of victory and settle for it are "in a general way no doubt uplifting," but since they do not *work* to set others free or to address their own need to be set free from their complacency in histories and habits of sin, their lives lack the adventure of redemption and "[their words to others] soon become tedious."[111]

The Possibility of Discourse

As stated above, in order for us to come to enjoy complete peace, we will have to become *true selves*, and becoming true selves will require us to resist the temptation to resort to anesthesia and, instead, acknowledge our need for correction – i.e., we will have to come to acknowledge that "genuine and extensive self-knowledge becomes possible only in consequence of those social relationships which on occasion provide badly needed correction for our own judgments."[112] In order for us to win true peace, we need each other, but we are only in a position to receive and provide correction if we can *say* something to one another. We often take for granted our ability to *say* something. We may even be tempted to think that our ability to *say* something to others is simply given, a "property of man." We are very much accustomed to questioning *what*

[107] *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 138.
[108] *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 121, § 198.
[109] *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 285.
[110] *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 256.
[111] *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 122, § 200.
[112] *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 95.

is being said when we hear someone talking, but we are less accustomed to questioning whether or not anything is being said. Nevertheless, from time to time, it may become clear to us that, even though someone is talking, nothing is being *said*, nothing is "getting across" (a rhetorical problem); or worse, from time to time, we may suspect that what is being passed along is itself a kind of confusion, that nothing is *really* "getting across," or that what is supposed to be "getting across" is unreal (a logical problem). If the other is giving attention, as opposed to simply ignoring the one who is talking, we might say the one who is talking is "not making sense" to the one who is listening. By this we do not necessarily mean that the deficiency is on the side of the speaker, but moments like these teach us this lesson: not every utterance participates in discourse. At the same time, exposure to moments like this may tempt us to become inordinately skeptical concerning whether or not it is possible for someone, especially someone like *that*, to *say* something to us.

The challenge of skepticism is a serious one. One only needs to recall our histories and habits of error, or remember that we have often made mistakes and have often been confused, to begin to feel the weight of the challenge. In the face of our many errors, how can we hold any opinion with certainty? When we fail to make sense to someone we respect; when someone whom we have held in high esteem ceases to make sense to us; when we come to recognize that we have, for some time now, been mistaken or have misunderstood something or someone; whenever we think about how often such events have occurred in human history; then we may suffer uncertainty. In many different ways, we can become unsettled, and it is possible for this uncertainty to go deep within us. One may begin to suffer profound disorientation, insecurity, anxiety.

In response to one's own sufferings or to the sufferings of others, one may want to secure a reliable path to certainty, or stability of some kind. One may begin to make distinctions between 'what we know' and 'what we believe.' One may begin to look for standards, or measures, of what will count as knowledge. So far, so good – we are often in a better position to learn from our experiences after we have made some critical distinctions and measurements. In general, it is undoubtedly good for us to learn from our experiences; however, it is possible for the learning process to go sour. As William James warned, it is possible for us to become "debauched by learning," such that we may lose the ability to speak to others (e.g., common folks) or the desire to speak to others (e.g., we may begin to deny the possibility of "meaningful" discourse where discourse is actually taking place [e.g., among religious folks]).[113]

In our desire to establish a picture or make a recommendation, in our desire to promote certainty or security in a particular situation, we may begin to say more than we know about some things and also less than we know about other things in the same

[113] Concerning those who have become "debauched by learning" in a bad way, Hegel remarks: "Point out likeness or identity to [them], and [they] will point out unlikeness or non-identity; and when [they] are now confronted with what [they] have just asserted, [they turn] round and [point out] likeness or identity. [Their] talk is in fact like the squabbling of self-willed children, one of whom says *A* if the other says *B*, and in turn says *B* if the other says *A*, and who by contradicting *themselves* buy for themselves the pleasure of continually contradicting *one another*" (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 125-126). Vicki Hearne, a philosopher and animal trainer, calls them "natural bitees," and about these folks, who have become "contaminated by epistemology," and the effects their actions have on others she remarks: "They are – sometimes only momentarily – incapable of beholding a dog. . . . And dogs read this with the same uneasiness we feel when we walk into a room and find that our spouse, or a friend, has plainly been sitting around inferring something about us – welcome has been withheld. This creates in dogs and people an answering skepticism, an answering terror. The dog starts casting about for premises, making inferences back, tries to reach certainty, fails to reach certainty and sometimes bites, just as we do" (*Adam's Task*, pp. 59-60). In contrast to this kind of engagement with otherness, Hearne urges us to earnestly practice "respect for language" and reminds us: "command of language turns out to be useless without respect for language. If I respect your words that means I give myself to responding meaningfully to what you say – that I won't suddenly decide in the middle of a lunchtime conversation to withdraw or to scream you into a terrified silence so that I can grab your wallet" (*Adam's Task*, pp. 20-21). Indeed, conversations may harm where decency is in short supply. Perhaps this is why we are so often exhorted to hold our tongues if we cannot maintain a minimum of decency.

situation. As D. Z. Phillips rightly remarks, "we are enabled to say more than we know about some things only because we are prepared to say less than we know about other things in the same situation."[114] For example, some have been tempted to "say more and less than we know" by way of "foundationalism," or by insisting that "all areas of discourse are answerable to common criteria of rationality."[115] One kind of discourse, the propositions of logic and math, for example, is set up as a paradigm of knowledge. The important distinction between 'what we know' and 'what we believe' may then be misused, or used in a misleading way. One may want to say that we only 'know' propositions that *must always be so*, or which *could not turn out to be false* – like '2+2=4.' One may insist that we do not 'know' propositions like 'there are students in the lecture room' because the contradictory 'there are no students in the lecture room' is conceivable – perhaps, we are mistaken and are really only caught up in a dream or a hallucination.

Here, we have to make an important distinction between what is, for us, conceivable in the abstract and what is possible in a concrete situation.[116] If I was giving

[114] *Religion and Friendly Fire*, p. 161.
[115] *Introducing Philosophy*, p. 186.
[116] In a chapter entitled "Conceivability and the Cartesian Argument for Dualism" in *The Way Things Are: Basic Readings in Metaphysics* (1998; pp. 239-244), James Van Cleve distinguishes between a proposition that is "weakly conceivable" and one that is "strongly conceivable" for someone. According to Van Cleve P_1 is "weakly conceivable for S_1 if and only if S_1 does not see that P_1 is impossible" and is "strongly conceivable" for S_1 if and only if S_1 sees that *P* is possible. He goes on to argue, "whatever is strongly conceivable for me is something that I am prima facie justified in believing to be possible." Of course, the question may arise: what kind of subject is in a position to really "see" or truly know that something is possible? One might argue that insofar as one is unwilling to respect, or do justice to, the natural contexts in which words have their sense in our lives, he is not in a position to "know truth." Furthermore, whether one is able to "see that *P* is possible" depends on whether she exists *en kairo*, or at the right time. As Paul Tillich has expressed the matter: "Time is an empty form only for abstract, objective reflection, a form that can receive any kind of content; but to him who is conscious of an ongoing creative life it is laden with tensions, with possibilities and impossibilities, it is qualitative and full of significance. Not everything is possible at every time, not everything is true at every time, nor is everything demanded at every moment" ("Kairos," p. 328). The intellectual challenge ever before us is to take responsibility for seeing what we can see and recognizing what we can re-cognize at *this* time. This is not a call to become fascinated with whatever happens to be fashionable. Instead,

a lecture and someone was to claim 'there are no students in the lecture room,' apart from dismissing the claim as a joke, I could not do anything with it – it would have no application, no sense. If someone were to somehow convince me that the room was empty, what then? D. Z. Phillips asks: "Do I go home and say, 'I made a rather big mistake today. I thought I was lecturing to two hundred students when in fact the room was empty'? Of course not. I would be terrified! I would think I was going mad!"[117] The skeptic wants to say more than we know about possibilities of deception; so, he is prepared to say less than we know about possibilities of discourse.

The warnings of the skeptic may fail to do justice to the natural contexts – the orienting practices and whole forms of life – in which our words make sense. Instead, the skeptic may come to hold a "magical conception of signs," or to imagine "that the meaning of a sign, a sound or a word is given 'all at once,'" as if the meaning of the sign were "an atmosphere accompanying the sound, word, or proposition."[118] It is tempting to think that the numbers 2, 2, and 4, are responsible for the truth of the proposition '2+2=4', and yet "it is not the numbers that generate the arithmetic, but the arithmetic which gives meaning to the terms."[119] What makes our discourses possible is not the (psychological) presence of presuppositions about "basic" propositions but the kind of orientation that "goes deep *in* our thinking, to what is not questioned in our thinking, to what holds fast there."[120] We do not talk about trees and other physical objects in the ways we do because we presuppose, for example, that 'that's a tree'; rather, "that we

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it is a summons to own our thoughts and to decide to think as *existing* thinkers – to acknowledge that, inwardly, we are who we become.

[117] *Introducing Philosophy*, p. 13. In another place, D. Z. Phillips adds that "the philosophical importance of the distinction between 'mistake' and 'insanity' is missed by those who say it is logically possible that we are wrong, or mistaken, in *any* situation" (*Religion and Friendly Fire*, p. 48).

[118] *Religion and Friendly Fire*, p. 71.

[119] *Introducing Philosophy*, p. 9.

[120] *Religion and Friendly Fire*, p. 48.

do not raise questions about that being a tree *is what characterizes our thinking*."[121] What is "basic," or "ungrounded," is not a proposition, but a practice, or a way of living our lives.

If we want to do conceptual justice to the discourse of the other, we will have to pay attention to how one thing leads to another in their lives and in their discourses. We will have to exercise self-restraint and not presume to know in advance what *must* come next (i.e., what *can* be said) or despair because it is often difficult to understand one another; instead, we will have to give attention to what *does* come next (i.e., what *is* said).[122] It would be a kind of violence for someone to suddenly impose the laws of France upon a citizen of Germany. Likewise, it is a kind of violence to impose the grammar, or logic, of one kind of discourse on a discourse of quite another kind. I will say more about this kind of injustice in my sections on the problem of logical inversion.

Before moving forward, though, it should be pointed out that one can reject the kinds of "foundationalism" and "skepticism" that I have been discussing and still engage in conversations in ways that fail to let the discourse of the other "speak for itself." This may happen where one insists that "agreement" is the point of conversation. However, it is possible to insist on agreement in such a way that we fail to acknowledge the real distances and differences between us. Those who insist on agreement sometimes speak as though we are all taking part in a single conversation. In reality, we find "a hubbub of discourses," and we also find that "some of these may not be on speaking terms with each other."[123] Ironically, it is possible to insist on making progress toward agreement in such a way that we prevent understanding, but unless I understand the other I cannot

[121] *Philosophy's Cool Place*, p. 53.
[122] *Philosophy's Cool Place*, p. 51.
[123] *Introducing Philosophy*, p. 187.

genuinely agree or disagree with her. In discussion, or "genuine conversation," or "serious conversation," it is not what is said which is determined by a need for agreement, but what is said, and what we think of it, that determines whether or not we are prepared to agree."[124] If we insist that our only commitment should be to agreement, then we will engage in conversation in such a way that we prevent ourselves from understanding each other's commitments. It is possible for us to engage in conversation in such a way that we encourage understanding and genuine (dis)agreement; however, there are no guarantees in discussion. In discussion, someone may stand condemned out of his own mouth and yet refuse to change his ways; and in discussion, we may discover that the other is a complete enigma to us.[125] Still, "serious conversation," or discussion, is a way for us to move in the direction of understanding, even if we only come to understand that we do not very well understand the other.

The Possibility of Discussion

When we recall that we do not discuss everything with everyone, the question may arise: "What makes discussion possible?" As it was important for us to acknowledge that not every utterance participates in discourse, it is important for us to acknowledge that not every sequence of discourses constitutes discussion, or a discourse-situation wherein genuine (dis)agreement has been made possible. It is possible for us to engage in conversations in ways that ensure that we will misunderstand the understandings of others. First, someone can prevent discussion from taking place by refusing to practice basic conversational justice. For example, if the other is unwilling to share her reasons or in any substantive way make herself accountable to me, if she refuses to practice

[124] *Introducing Philosophy*, p. 187.
[125] *Philosophy's Cool Place*, p. 51.

truthfulness, if she takes out a pistol and begins firing at me, or if like Andy Kaufmann or a filibustering senator, she suddenly decides to read The Great Gatsby aloud, from cover to cover, then discussion will not be possible between us.[126] Second, we can engage the other in a way that prevents us from being able to understand the other. It is this second possibility that I want to focus on in this section. It is possible for us to deceive others and ourselves by picturing what counts for us as truth and falsehood against an unreal, or distorted, background of conceivable falsehoods we have errantly attributed others.[127] It is possible for us to develop a perspective on the perspective of others that keeps us out of touch with the reality of the other. Where this has taken place and has, perhaps, become commonplace, we will need to practice a kind of philosophical attention to possibilities of sense "beyond the sensibleness of common sense" if we are to recover possibilities of sense that have been concealed by our histories and habits of error.[128]

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[126] For an interesting discussion of possible "offenses against truthfulness" see chapter twelve of Alasdair MacIntyre's *Dependent Rational Animals*, entitled "Proxies, friends, and truthfulness" (pp. 147-154).

[127] Here, I acknowledge that, with respect to other individuals, I am always understanding them in a way that is, in some degree, in error insofar as I can never completely comprehend the reality of another individual; nonetheless, my errors do not have to be rooted in negligence. Indeed, at a certain point, it may become necessary for me to ask God to grant me serenity in my relations with another, but this essay is about what we can do to develop intellectual virtue.

[128] When I speak of attention in the following pages, I ask that the reader keep in mind the key distinction between the positive effort of *focusing on* something, or someone, and the "negative effort" of *attending to* something, or someone. The first is an act of hope. The second is an act of love. When I 'focus on' something, my action is directed *toward some end other than the good of that which I am focusing on* – e.g., I focus on my instructor's lecture *for the sake of a grade*. I 'focus on' something *toward* some pleasure or advantage; but when I 'attend to' something, I am doing this *toward the good of that something to which I am giving my attention*. With this distinction in mind, it would be inappropriate for me to say that I 'attend on' something, or even to speak of "paying attention" since this suggests that my act of attention is payment in exchange for some good external to the inherent goodness of the act of attention. For this reason, I will speak of 'giving attention' as opposed to 'paying attention.' Another way to put all this would be to say that when I 'pay attention' or 'focus on' something, I do this *toward the end of transformation*; whereas, when I 'give attention' or 'attend to' something, I do this *toward the end of development* (see footnote #98). Concerning the distinction between 'focusing on' and 'attending to,' Simone Weil, in an essay entitled "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God," remarks:

> Most often attention is confused with a kind of muscular effort. If one says to one's pupils: "Now you must pay attention," one sees them contracting their brows, holding their breath, stiffening their muscles. . . . We often expend this kind of muscular effort in our studies. As it ends by making us tired, we have the impression that we have been

The problem that I am describing can be hard to detect in our lives. Whenever someone sets out to build a house, whether or not she is actually building a house soon becomes clear. The increasing presence of certain structures indicates that the builder is building a house. Whether or not such structures are becoming increasingly present can be ascertained by someone with sufficient knowledge of what constitutes house-

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> working. That is an illusion. Tiredness has nothing to do with work. Work itself is the useful effort, whether it is tiring or not. . . . Will power, the kind that, if need be, makes us set our teeth and endure suffering, is the principle weapon of the apprentice engaged in manual work. But, contrary to the usual belief, it has practically no place in study. The intelligence can only be led by desire. (*Waiting for God*, pp. 60-61).

Now, contrary to Simone Weil, one may want to argue that we cannot desire anything unless the intellect apprehends something to be desired; therefore, we should not say that the intellect is "led by desire," but it is, rather, the other way around – desire is "led by the intellect." This argument, however, misses the point of Simone Weil's essay. She is not saying that 'the will' is *ontologically prior* to 'the intellect.' Instead, she is saying that 'having goodwill' is *virtually prior* to 'having true intelligence.' In other words, we must cultivate the capacity for attention if we want to come to have (the virtue of) understanding.

According to Weil, the act of attention is the act of "suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object," and this "means holding in our minds, within reach of [the thought of an object], but on a lower level and not in contact with it, the diverse knowledge we have acquired which we are forced to make us of" (*Ibid*., p. 62). Weil warns that we are liable to make "faulty connections" whenever "thought has seized upon some idea too hastily, and being thus prematurely blocked, [thought] is not open to the truth," and she contends that when such "faulty connections" take place, "the cause is always that we have wanted to be too active; we have wanted to carry out a search" (*Ibid*., p. 62) So, while it is true that "*before you can search for truth you must be interested in finding it*" (*Exclusion and Embrace*, p. 254), our desire to "search for truth" is precisely what has to be bracketed, or restrained, according to Simone Weil, in order for us to do the work of attention.

When we read Simone Weil, we have to remember that she is not very much interested in giving explanations or "getting results." She does not promise that by *paying attention* to some subject matter, I will come to "correctly" understand the matter. Such an understanding of understanding would not do conceptual justice to our dependence on the self-disclosure of that which we might come to understand. Unless someone, or something, discloses herself, or itself, to us, we are not in a position to "correspond" with her, or it. Someone may make every effort to understand another only to find out that the other remains an enigma to her. When Simone Weil speaks of the way inattention causes "faulty connections," she is mainly concerned with making the *ethical* point that we, ourselves, are *at fault* for misunderstandings that come about from our lack of moral character, from our deficient concern for (conceptual) justice and our excessive concern for giving explanations and getting results. That her concern is to make a contribution to the ethics of study is clearly indicated in the title of her essay – "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to the Love of God." Finally, that she wants her contribution to the ethics of study to be theological is manifested in her moral commitment to the idea that "we do not obtain the most precious gifts by going in search of them but by waiting for them" (*Waiting for God*, p. 62) and her anthropological commitment to the idea that "those who are unhappy have no need for anything in this world but people capable of giving them attention" (*Ibid*., p. 64). I will have more to say about the merits of these moral and anthropological commitments in chapter three.

building provided that she is given sufficient access to the relevant information (like site visuals, blueprints, activity reports, etc.) However, when someone sets out to participate in discussion, whether or not his or her discourse is really participating in, or contributing to, discussion cannot be determined in this manner. Whether or not discussion is taking place is not merely a function of whether or not formal structures have become present in conversation. Whether or not we are having a discussion pertains more to *how* we are speaking to one another than *what* is being said, but with respect to what is being said, the increasing presence of genuine (dis)agreement, or (dis)agreement characterized by adequate understandings of the understandings of others, made evident in the ability of conversation partners to continue the of discourse the other, reveals that discussion is taking place. In the world of construction, we can only go on fooling ourselves and others about our house-building abilities for so long; however, in our conversations, we can continue, perhaps for centuries, to "avoid discourse" and foolishly think that we are participating in authentic discussion when, in reality, our many discourses are incapable of producing genuine (dis)agreement because they remain out-of-touch with the reality (including the [self-]understanding) of the other.

For example, today, it is widely recognized that processes of globalization have outpaced our ability to cultivate enough genuine agreement to compensate for our growing abilities to destroy ourselves, our neighbors, and our environments. Many have thought that sufficient agreement could be cultivated among persons and peoples by appealing to the deep structures of the human mind or by narrating inspiring tales concerning the destiny of all humankind. Many have supposed that cleverly designed technologies and social controls would provide us with whatever salvations we might come to need. However, it is becoming clear that far too many of our conversations and

communities have been insufficiently funded by such modern "starting-points" and "stopping-points." They have not equipped us to attend to one another well enough; instead, they have tempted us to gloss over important differences among others in pursuit of modern ideas and hopes. About this, we have been warned by Lyotard, among others, that:

> The thought and action of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are governed by the Idea (in the Kantian sense): the idea of emancipation. It is, of course, framed in quite different ways, depending on what we call the philosophies of history, the grand narratives that attempt to organize this mass of events: the Christian narrative of redemption from original sin through love; the *Aufklarer* narrative of emancipation from ignorance and servitude through knowledge and egalitarianism; the speculative narrative of the realization of the universal idea through the dialectic of the concrete; the Marxist narrative of emancipation from exploitation and alienation through the socialization of work; and the capitalist narrative of emancipation from poverty through technological development. Between these narratives there are grounds for litigation and even difference. But in all of them, the givens arising from events are situated in the course of a history whose end, even if it remains beyond reach, is called universal freedom, the fulfillment of humanity.[129]

Having been confronted now by such "postmodern" protests, many have learned to suspect that "each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the type of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanism and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements; the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true."[130]

One may appeal to the plausible universality of her own ideas of rationality and justice, claiming that she has had a vision of rationality and justice *for all* persons, but this does not yet settle the question of whether she has had a vision of rationality and justice

[129] *The Postmodern Explained*, p. 24f.
[130] *Power/Knowledge*, p. 131.

for me, as an individual.[131] The best way for me to come to know whether or not my solution works for you, as an individual, is by participating in discussions with you which have been funded by our participation in acts of solidarity and, where possible, friendship with one another.[132] So, as we work to cultivate sustainable peace, we should commit ourselves to practices of discussion, solidarity and friendship. I will have more to say about practices of solidarity and friendship in chapter three. Here, I want to emphasize the point that, as we participate in discussion, we should give attention to the contexts in which certain concepts actually have applications in our lives and in the lives of others. Otherwise, we will misunderstand the understanding of the other, make ourselves incapable of genuine (dis)agreement with others, and will, therefore, remain unable to live together with others in peace.

The Need for Philosophical Attention and Discussion in Cases of Confusion

Once we have acknowledged that some of our conversations have unwittingly fallen short of authentic discussion, or once we acknowledge that our conversations with one another have not made it possible for us to come to genuine (dis)agreement, we have to determine how we will address this problem. What will serve as our "starting-point," and how will we proceed from there? In *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, for example, Alasdair MacIntyre observes that "modern academic philosophy turns out by and large to provide means for a more accurate and informed definition of disagreement rather than for making progress toward its resolution," and he then seeks

[131] For a comment on the difference between a "person" and an "individual," see note #90.
[132] Here, I regard discussion as a *necessary* condition for "coming to know" what "works for another." However, I do not think that discussion is a *sufficient* condition. One can only "come to know" on the basis of the occurrence, or self-disclosure, of the truth. Until the occurrence of the truth *calls* one to participate in discussion and *sends* one into discussion, one cannot "come to know" the truth, as I will argue in greater detail in chapter two. If we keep our dependence on the occurrence of truth in mind, then it may become clear, as I plan to argue in greater detail in chapter three, that we become capable of authentic discussion by participation in complete friendship.

to develop and clarify for us a "conception of rational enquiry" useful for cultivating a sense of possibility for progress towards agreement in ethics.[133] Where folks are suffering from despair, where they are tempted to give up on the possibility of ever coming to an agreement about a problem in ethics, MacIntyre has an important point to make and an important service to perform. However, in situations where *both* the disagreements *and* agreements supposed by conversation partners are not genuine (dis)agreements but rather symptoms of confusions, we will have to approach the problem in a different manner, for it is one thing for us to pursue agreement; another thing to pursue genuine (dis)agreement.[134] In order for us to move toward agreement, it is enough for someone to recommend an agreeable alternative, but to move toward genuine (dis)agreement, someone will have to give contemplative attention to those contexts of application in which certain concepts are put to use in our lives.[135]

In *Philosophy's Cool Place*, D. Z. Phillips observes that, in a "technological culture with its primary interest in arriving at answers and solutions," many suppose philosophy's task "is not to contemplate reality but to answer substantive questions about it or to bring about changes in it where necessary."[136] He then seeks to explicate and elucidate a "contemplative conception of philosophy," to help the reader come to grips with the

[133] *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p. 3f.
[134] As D. Z. Phillips reminds us, "the need for discussion is occasioned by the presence of confusion, not by the fact that evidence is being sought for two equally intelligible theories or hypotheses" (*Religion and Friendly Fire*, p. 13.) He also reminds us, "there is all the difference in the world between advancing reasons in a discussion and simply indulging in persuasive techniques in an effort to change people in the ways one wants" (*Introducing Philosophy*, p. 96). We are sometimes tempted to think that agreement is a good thing no matter what it is agreement about, but "in a real conversation [or what I have called discussion], it is not what is said which is determined by a need for agreement, but what is said, and what we think of it, determines whether or not we are prepared to [genuinely] agree" (*Introducing Philosophy*, p. 187).
[135] According to D. Z. Phillips, philosophy "is not the means for arriving at substantive conclusions about competing intelligible alternatives, but a battle against the bewitchment of intelligence." *Religion and Friendly Fire*, pp. 13-14.
[136] *Philosophy's Cool Place*, p. 2.

possibility of engaging in an activity that primarily aims to appreciate the possibilities of sense disclosed in and through ordinary discourses.[137] Both MacIntyre and Phillips address the problem of (dis)agreement, but notice that they give different *kinds* of attention to the problem before them. While MacIntyre mainly attempts to cultivate some *sense of possibility*, Phillips mainly attempts to contemplate *possibilities of sense*. One is concerned with progress, with *going somewhere*; the other is trying to *go nowhere*.[138] MacIntyre's project is mainly positive – that is, it *posits* a specific conception of moral agreement and aims at securing the conditions for the possibility of such agreement. Phillips's project is mainly negative – that is, it mainly consists of the kind of "negative effort" Simone Weil once described as "suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object."[139] Both deal with problems of (dis)agreement in a way that is indispensable to our relationships and communities – positivity is a condition for the possibility of hope and development *for us*; negativity is a condition for the possibility of distinguishing what is real from what is unreal, what something is *in itself* from what it merely is *for us*.

However, it is not enough to say that we need a moment of positivity and also a moment of negativity. It is not enough for us to teach our students to practice both a

[137] In *Philosophy's Cool Place*, Phillips approvingly quotes Wittgenstein who said, "our aim is to bring back words from their metaphysical to their ordinary use," and Phillips then clarifies that "by 'ordinary' use he means the natural contexts in which our concepts have their meaning" (p. 161).
[138] MacIntyre is always moving toward a particular *telos*, or "terminus." In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre begins with the observation that "the most striking feature of contemporary moral utterance is that so much of it is used to express disagreements; and the most striking feature in debates in which these disagreements are expressed is their interminable character. I do not mean by this just that such debates go on and on – although they do – but also that they apparently can find no terminus. There seems to be no rational way of securing moral agreement in our culture" (p. 6). His *telos* is a kind of security – *a rational way of securing moral agreement in our culture*. It is, of course, when we are busy *securing something* that we are most prone to *conceal something*. "Open comportment" to self-disclosure requires what Len Dykstra describes as a kind of "madness" – "an essential insecurity," a willingness to risk occasional losses of stability (*Images of Pastoral Care*, p. 3f).
[139] *Waiting for God*, pp. 61-62.

hermeneutics of recollection and a hermeneutics of suspicion. When we have become confused about the fundamentals of the discourse of the other, no amount of trying to agree with the other and then trying to disagree with the other will work to bring us into genuine (dis)agreement with the other. In such a situation, we cannot pursue genuine (dis)agreement by directly pursuing agreement and directly pursuing disagreement, or by first listening and after that being rigorous.[140] In such a situation, we can only pursue genuine (dis)agreement indirectly, by rigorously "letting the discourse speak for itself."[141] For example, students of religion have been taught that a hermeneutics of recollection "assumes that believers are in touch with something real" and encourages the retrieval of what is good *for us*; and students of religion have been taught that a hermeneutics of suspicion "denies that there is a divine reality in religion" and encourages students to suspect whatever is apparently bad *for us*. This kind of engagement with otherness is better than merely engaging in an endless series of assertions and counter-assertions, but there is something missing from this program. The primary concern in both cases is with

[140] Rudolf A. Makkreel has complained: "Ricoeur proposes that the binary opposition of demystification and restoration drives interpretation as such and speaks of the 'double motivation' of hermeneutics: the 'willingness to suspect' coupled with the 'willingness to listen,' a 'vow of rigor' with a 'vow of obedience.' However, by pairing listening with obedience on the one side as opposed to rigor and suspicion on the other, Ricoeur creates the impression that true listening lacks rigor, and by implication is, uncritical. But it is possible to listen critically with an open and disciplined mind. Moreover, it limits our understanding of rigor to conceive it negatively as a mode of demystification" (*Orientation and Judgment in Hermeneutics*, p. 159.)

[141] A post-foundationalist thinker may assert that the various discourses we engage in are not answerable to a conception of reality, truth or value, independent of them all. This is correct. Nevertheless, a problem arises when "instead of looking to the actual conversations we engage in, to the values and commitments to be found there, the anti-foundationalist imposes external constraints of his own on our actual conversations." For example, one may insist that "participants in any perspective must aim for agreement with adherents to other perspectives; they must be prepared to speak to anyone to achieve this end; if the end is achieved, agreement will mean no more than the dominance of one perspective in the conversation; all perspectives must be respected; no one must give an absolute commitment to any perspective, even the dominant one, since new possibilities in the culture must be accommodated; and it is foolish to stick to one's commitments when most people are ready to move on." When we ignore the real differences and distances between people and their actual commitments, we tend to represent "a vulgarization of ordinary conversations" and reproduce "a set of attitudes which seem to belong to the dilettante," who does not really give himself to anything. *Introducing Philosophy*, p. 189.

what the discourse of the other is *for us*, but when we are in a state of confusion, we can only move toward genuine (dis)agreement by "letting the discourse speak for itself." When we have fundamentally misunderstood the understanding of the other, more than sympathetic and critical attention is required. In such cases, contemplative attention "to the thing *itself*" is required.

Contemplation is an activity characterized by "trying to go nowhere" in order to "let the discourse speak for itself,"[142] or an attempt to allow the self-interpretation of a given word-event guide our understanding of what is possible.[143] "Giving *that* kind of attention to certain problems," D. Z. Phillips writes, "*is* the philosophical life," but he warns us that the disposition to attend to discourse in this way, especially the discourse of the other, "is not easily acquired."[144] It is much easier to surrender the will to wonder at "how one thing leads to another" so that we may more rapidly construct our own discourses and bring them to market sooner, in order to *control what happens next*. This certainly seems to be the way to compete for material resources in modern research universities which characteristically lack "any large sense of concern for enquiry into the relationships between the disciplines" and which also characteristically lack "any conception of the disciplines as contributing to a single shared enterprise, one whose principle aim is neither to benefit the economy nor advance the careers of its students."[145] I will have to say more about the possibility of judging the conclusions of the sciences in chapter three – the chapter on wisdom.

[142] *Philosophy's Cool Place*, p. 160.
[143] Cf. *Radical Theology*, pp. 83-84.
[144] *Philosophy's Cool Place*, p. 13.
[145] *God, Philosophy, Universities*, p. 174.

But, here and now, the point that needs to be made is that the negativity that D. Z. Phillips practices is not the negativity of someone who is "skeptical" about religious claims, the way that Sallie McFague, for example, proudly claims to be in *Metaphorical Theology*.[146] He does not simply negate forms of religious discourse that do not fit with a "new sensibility"; instead, he negates *theories of religious discourse* that do not "let the discourse speak for itself." He focuses our attention on "the reality of concepts" by inviting us to consider the concept's context of application in the lives of believers and the concept's history of formation, or how it has entered the lives of believers.[147] His hope is "to return us from our confusions to clarity about the concepts at work in our lives."[148] For this reason, he reminds his readers that "interpretations, like theory-laden perceptions, are parasitic on concepts which are not interpretations, and which are not theory-laden," and he then challenges some among us to "give a perspicuous representation of the role those concepts actually have [in human lives]," a task which will require us to restrain ourselves from attempting to "get to something 'behind' them of which they are supposed to be interpretations."[149] If we neglect to consider possibilities of sense in the ordinary discourses of others, we are in danger of committing what has been called "the fallacy of logical inversion" – an informal fallacy, methodological in nature, which consists of making use of a concept in a way that somehow violates the grammar, or logic, the concept receives from "the original and natural context in which the relevant concept has a life."[150]

The Threat of Logical Inversions

[146] Cf. *Metaphorical Theology,* pp. 6, 13.
[147] *Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation,* p. 19.
[148] *Philosophy's Cool Place*, p. 41.
[149] *Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation*, p. 9.
[150] "The Fallacy of Logical Inversion," pp. 173-202.

We commit the fallacy of logical inversion, often unwittingly, when we engage in the sort of activity that D. Z. Phillips called "avoiding discourse," or "avoiding discussion," or when we engage in conversations in such a way that we "prevent discourse from being itself or from saying what it wants to say."[151] Sometimes, we misunderstand the discourse of the other because we lack the speculative intellectual virtue needed for "grasping at once" what the other is saying. I have been arguing that we may *come to lack* the speculative intellectual virtue of understanding because we are unwilling to give (contemplative) attention to the roles that our concepts play in our orienting practices and in the orienting practices of others. Now, I want to draw attention to some ways that we may fail to do (conceptual) justice to the discourse of the other because we have become so preoccupied with some particular ambition that we, perhaps unwittingly, translate the discourse of the other in ways that violate the logic of the discourse. In this way, we may effectively exclude the word of the other from taking place in our lives.

In *Exclusion and Embrace*, Miroslav Volf identifies four distinct types of exclusion – elimination, assimilation, domination, and abandonment. One way to exclude others is to try to eliminate them, to "kill and drive out."[152] This is exclusion by elimination. A "more benign" way to exclude others is to insist that others must become like us – "you can survive, even thrive, among us, if you become like us; you can keep your life, if you give up your identity."[153] This is exclusion by assimilation. A more malignant kind of assimilation is to subjugate others, or "assign 'others' the status of inferior beings."[154] This is exclusion by domination. Finally, "if others neither have goods we want nor can perform services

[151] "The Fallacy of Logical Inversion," pp. 173-202.
[152] *Exclusion and Embrace*, p. 74.
[153] *Exclusion and Embrace*, p. 75.
[154] *Exclusion and Embrace*, p. 75.

we need, we make sure that they are at a safe distance and close ourselves off from them so that [they] can make no inordinate claims on us."[155] This is exclusion by abandonment.

I think Volf's types of exclusion may be helpful for understanding the various ways that we may come to violate the word of the other. Furthermore, I think that taking a closer look at a few examples of logical inversions may help the reader to come to grips with the nature of the problem. So, in the next few pages, I provide a few examples of what have been called "logical inversions." First, we may violate the logic of the discourse of the other by eliminating, or revising, the word of the other. Second, we may unwittingly violate the word of the other by assimilating, or kindly reducing, the word of the other to the *kind* of word that we are already in the habit of dealing with, the *kind* of word that seems respectable to us, already. Third, we may violate the word of the other by dominating the word of the other, or severely reducing it either to the *same* word that has already been said by someone else (often adding that he or she has said it better) or, from the very outset, assigning the word of another to an altogether *inferior status*. Fourth, we may violate the word of the other by abandoning, or abolishing, the word of the other.

Logic Eliminated, or Revised, in Plato's *Gorgias*

In Plato's *Gorgias*, Socrates (a philosopher) participates in an extended dialogue with some rival educators (rhetoricians). Throughout their conversation, Socrates aims to clarify for them how philosophy is different from rhetoric and to recommend philosophy to them as a disciplined way to locate oneself and others in relation to "the true rule of a

[155] *Exclusion and Embrace*, p. 75.

human life"[156] and discourage his rivals from simply carrying out a routine designed to gratify, or flatter, others. Again and again, Plato shows us that Socrates can consistently defend his own position and that he understands the positions that his rivals have taken, which is evident in his ability to continue their discourse, whereas the rhetoricians prove unable to defend their own statements concerning the nature of their "craft," the nature of the good life, and the relationship between their craft and the good life. In this way, it appears that they are not behind their words, that their words have become "winged words." Now, in the following pages, I do not mean to dispute with Plato about whether or not Socrates brings his rivals to the point where they stand condemned out of their own mouths. Indeed, Socrates brings each of them to this point. Furthermore, I do not mean to discourage others from considering the merits of Plato's vision of "the true rule of a human life" or the merits of Socrates method of education. I am deeply grateful for these. Instead, I only want to show the reader where Socrates insists on a logical inversion of the discourses of his conversation partner.

First, in his conversation with Gorgias, Socrates insists that we should understand rhetoric as discourse about justice, but Gorgias knows and practices rhetoric as discourse about persuasion.[157] Socrates insists that rhetoric cannot have the consistency of an art,

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[156] *Gorgias*, p. 51

[157] It is worth noting that Plato has the character Callicles point this out to Socrates and Gorgias when he exclaims: "O Socrates, you are a regular declaimer, and seem to be running riot in the argument. And now you are declaiming in this way because Polus has fallen into the same error of himself of which he accused Gorgias:—for he said that when Gorgias was asked by you, whether, if someone came to him who wanted to learn rhetoric, and did not know justice, he would teach him justice, Gorgias in his modesty replied that he would, because he thought that mankind in general would be displeased if he answered 'No'; and then in consequence of this admission, Gorgias was compelled to contradict himself, that being just the sort of thing in which you delight. Whereupon Polus laughed at you deservedly, as I think; but now he has himself fallen into the same trap" (*Gorgias*, p. 43). It is also worth remembering that it is Plato who presents Socrates, here, as focusing on one aspect of discourse and one possibility of sense and not other possibilities of sense. In other words, even though Plato observes the narrowness of his character's discourse (from the perspective of Callicles), in this dialogue, Plato is responsible (to some extent) for putting words in Socrates's mouth. It may be the case that Plato's desire to recommend a moral image (of justice) causes the narrow-mindedness here.

or craft, because rhetoric does not consistently encourage justice. One might argue that one who does not consistently encourage justice is not practicing a *humane* discipline. However, it is not clear that one who is *inhumane* cannot practice the "art" of discourse about persuasion in a logically consistent manner. It is one thing to say her discourse is not consistent with "the rule of a human life" that we want to recommend; it is quite another thing to say that one cannot engage in discourse about persuasion in a logically consistent way. About rhetoric, Socrates remarks: "an art I do not call it, but only an experience, because it is unable to explain or to give a reason of the nature of its own applications."[158] It does become clear that Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles cannot explain themselves *without transgressing against the rule of a human life*; but it does not follow that discourse about persuasion must be internally inconsistent – only that (their account of) their actual discipline does not *fit* "the rule of a human life."

Second, in his conversation with Polus and Callicles, Socrates insists that we ought to ask whether or not something is good when we are trying to decide whether or not it should be considered advantageous, but Polus and Callicles have argued that we ought to ask whether or not something is advantageous when we are trying to decide whether or not something should be considered good. Callicles, especially, objects that Socrates has taken a narrow view of the good life by limiting, in the aforementioned manner, what is considered advantageous. Socrates, however, objects: "you reproach me with always saying the same; but I reproach you with never same the same about the same things, for at one time you were defining the better and the superior to be the stronger, then again as the wiser, and now you bring forward a new notion; the superior and the better

[158] *Gorgias*, p. 20.

are now declared by you to be the more courageous."[159] Here, Socrates is beginning to recommend individuality and to unfold the connections he sees between individuality and immortality. I take no issue with his advocacy for humanity and individuality, but we should note that Socrates has inverted the logical relation that Polus and Callicles have assigned to 'the good' and 'the advantageous.'

Socrates is not wrong to champion a "rule of human life." There is nothing wrong with someone trying to make the beliefs and ideas that guide one's life appear credible and attractive to others. Furthermore, one might say that Socrates was engaging in an important teaching practice called "conceptual clarification," wherein the objective is to unfold the route that has led to a certain confusion "in such a way that the person no longer wants to utter it."[160] Indeed, it appears that Socrates almost achieves this objective by showing his rivals that they are incapable of giving an account of their discipline that does not either transgress against our individuality or our humanity. (We have to say that he *almost* achieves this objective because despite the fact that, in the end, his rivals stand condemned out of their own mouths, they are unwilling to make a change; so, "Plato conveys to us that the discussions have not had the slightest effect on them.")[161] However, it is worth noting, that Socrates, in his advocacy for "the rule of a human life" has thrust upon his rivals (and/or Plato has put before us) an account of rhetoric that is a logical inversion of their own accounts of rhetoric as discourse about persuasion and that for the sake of advantages. In this way, he does not remain content to contemplate possibilities of sense in their discourse.

[159] *Gorgias*, p. 50.
[160] *Philosophy's Cool Place*, pp. 24-25.
[161] *Religion and Friendly Fire*, p. 14.

Finally, here again, I remind the reader that habits of "avoiding discourse" present no small danger to *us*. Insofar as what we count as true or false *for us* is developed against a background of what we take to be true of false *for others*, a misunderstanding of the understanding of the other will ensure that we remain out of touch with the reality of the other such that we are "given over to"[162] a distorted imagination of who we are in relation to them. Our imaginations will be formed against a background of notions that we have fallaciously attributed to others. Furthermore, once we think we know what others are saying, we move on. If we have misunderstood them, we may simply go on living our lives and making our decisions in accordance with these misunderstandings, which may lead us to build for ourselves plantations of pride upon foundations of sand.

Logic Assimilated, or Kindly Reduced, in James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*

Another example of logical inversion is found in William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. In his textbook, *Psychology the Briefer Course*, he observes that a person may helpfully adjust her "self-feeling" by either supposing less of her potential or by actualizing more of her potential.[163] With this observation in mind, he theorized, "the Ego may seek to establish itself in reality either by negating or embracing."[164] In *The Varieties*, James rightly warns us not to become fascinated with "over-beliefs" and challenges us to instead direct our attention "to what is common and generic"; but, attachments to his own Ego theory and to empirical modes of reflection ensure that he will only see "a positive content of religious experience which . . . [is] *objectively true*" in "*the fact that the saving person is continuous with a wider self through which saving*

[162] Cf. Romans 1:18; 24-26, 28.
[163] *Psychology: A Briefer Course*, p. 53.
[164] *Psychology: A Briefer Course,* p. 56.

experiences come."[165] While I have deep respect for the courage and the intelligence of William James and for the way he shows us how religious experiences can be good *for us*, it seems to me that he is often tempted to *only* pay attention to possibilities of sense in religious discourse that accord with his own Ego theory, and by "subliming the measure" of ideal "self-feeling" *as pictured in his theory*, he (perhaps unwittingly) puts constraints on his own ability to appreciate other possibilities of sense.[166]

For example, in his lectures on "the Topic and the Unseen," he invites his readers to interpret reports of religious experiences in accordance with his theory of self-feeling by narrowly defining religion as "*the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine*" and then selecting examples of "religious experience" that fit this definition.[167] In this way, he constrains attention to the difference that "religious experience" makes in the *emotional* lives of believers. He constrains attention, or put in more positive terms, he focuses attention, on possibilities for critically reimagining how some intuitively felt[168] primal truth[169] has elicited, among religious geniuses, self-feeling-improving responses of solemnity (self-contraction)[170] or enthusiasm (self-expansion).[171] The problem is not that James is *mistaken* in his observations but that his preoccupations

[165] *The Varieties*, p. 515.
[166] Randy Ramal has voiced similar criticisms, claiming: "Although in his other writings [James] emphasizes the pragmatic attitude that gives primacy to practice over theory, I think that in the *Varieties* he adopts an epistemologically empiricist model for understanding religious experience. According to this model, religious experience is the upshot of external, divine influences and it is similar in its procedural grounds to empirical experience. The only difference between the two types of experience for him is that the objects of religious experience are not empirical in nature." "The Fallacy of Logical Inversions," pp. 173-202.
[167] *The Varieties*, p. 31.
[168] *The Varieties*, p. 73.
[169] *The Varieties*, p. 34.
[170] *The Varieties*, pp. 37-38.
[171] *The Varieties*, p. 48.

with his own Ego theory lead him to adopt a *cramped conception* of what inquiry can be.[172]

Consequently, he only attends to accounts of religious experiences that can be described as events of self-feeling-improving self-contractions (becoming healthy-minded) or self-expansions into the MORE (conversion), regarding only these as genuine religious experiences.[173] In this way, he tempts us to think that worldly, emotional self-

[172] Wittgenstein and Phillips have lamented that "an age's conception of what an intellectual problem is can be shoddy and that shoddiness consists precisely in the inability to see a problem in terms other than seeking answers to it, seeking solutions, getting things done," and they have understood that many intellectuals, like James Frazier, "see [primitive] rituals only instrumentally, as ways of getting things done, just as, in a wider context [some, like Frazier, have] though of the science of culture as essentially a reformer's science" (*Philosophy's Cool Place*, pp. 46-47). In our preoccupations with "getting things done," for example, with legitimizing or delegitimizing religious practices or promoting paths toward self-improvement, we can come to ignore possibilities of sense (and tempt others to ignore possibilities of sense) in the discourses of others.

[173] When James affirms that "there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves to it" (*Varieties*, p. 53), it may seem he has come close, if he has not temporarily crossed over, to the view that we must look for the meaning of religious experience somewhere "behind" religious discourse. However, it should be noted that he is interested in turning his audience's attention away from speculative notions concerning 'the soul,' 'God', and 'immortality," he is interested in turning our attention toward what he calls "*feelings of objective presence*" (*Ibid.*, p. 55, 58), and he is thoroughly convinced that unreasoned immediate assurances are "the deep thing in us" whereas "the reasoned argument is but a surface exhibition" (*Ibid*, p. 74). In these ways, he resists the temptation to engage in mere speculation, and yet, it seems that he gives into temptation when he concludes his lectures on "The Topic and the Unseen" by arguing that experiences with transcendence tend to awaken "both moods of contraction and moods of expansion" in proportion to someone's personal dispositions (*Ibid*, p. 75). In this way, he limits the sense of religious discourse to the logical space available within his Ego theory, and as one continues to read *The Varieties*, it becomes clearer that James is primarily interested in cultivating, through attention to the effects that "moods of expansion" and "moods of contraction" have on persons of various temperaments, a sense of possibility for self-improvement in and through religious experiences.

In particular, James becomes fascinated with possibilities for self-improvement in the life of the sick soul by way of expansion into "the MORE." Throughout *The Varieties*, James gives much, much more attention to the possibility of the sick soul expanding into "the MORE" than to the possibility of happiness attained by the healthy-minded by way of "moods of contraction." He dismisses the healthy-minded religion as something that is practiced by persons characterized by a kind of handicap – an incapacity for pessimistic suffering (*Ibid*., p. 127). In contrast to the way the healthy-minded person focuses her attention on that which fits her for happiness, he celebrates the way the sick soul acknowledges an essential aspect of life – namely, evil, suffering, and their inescapability (*Ibid.,* p. 131). According to James' typology, the problem of evil simply does not arise for the healthy-minded person. One may wonder whether anyone is so happy-minded that they live their lives without an experience with evil and suffering. Of course, one does well to remember that 'the sick soul' and 'the healthy-minded' are *types* and that James contrasts them in order to make his points about the nature of religious conversions and to cultivate a sense of possibilities for self-improvement through participation in religions of conversion. Even the fact that James clearly prefers the one type – 'the sick soul' – to the other is not a problem. However, a problem does arise when his inquiry is so dominated by his theory

improvements, or self-improvements that can be appreciated independently from the perspective of faith, are essential to religious experiences. From the perspective of faith, what is essential is not that I come to enjoy self-improvement but that I come to love God *for God's sake*.[174] While it is true that believers confess that loving God for God's sake ultimately benefits the soul of the believer; in the perspective of faith, it makes all the difference which ye "seek first."[175] Coming to love God for God's sake *may* yield empirically verifiable self-improvements, but it is misleading for someone to suggest that genuine religious experiences *must* yield world-historical advantages.[176]

Not wanting to surrender to the kind of skepticism that seeks an explanation of the reality of God *prior to* paying attention to what religious discourse amounts to in the lives of believers, D. Z. Phillips objects: "it is the contexts in which they are made which informs us of what the distinction between the 'real' and the 'unreal' comes to within them."[177]

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of self-feeling, or some other commitment to empiricism, or some attempt at an explanation, that the value of moods of self-contraction altogether disappears from view. In the beginning, he acknowledges the value of "contraction" but he soon becomes obsessed with "expansion." In this way, his own enthusiasm for (empirically verifiable) "expansion," limits his appreciation of the value and meaning of religious experiences and discourses.

[174] Many students and teachers of religion want to use explanations of religion to assign *instrumental* significance to acts of religious participation precisely where the saints have assigned *eternal* significance. These students and teachers are often *only* willing to speak of religious participation in terms of a quest to *find out* who I am or what life is for or to come to grips with 'the meaning of life' or pursue some other goal or perform some other function. However, Rush Rhees challenges us to recall: "For the great saints the love of God was not a matter of finding the meaning of life. If I do love God, then I pray that I may love him more perfectly. And I want to say: I cannot love God without offering my life to God. But it is turning things upside down to say that this is first and foremost a concern with the meaning of life; or even that it is a conviction that there is some meaning in life. Anyone to whom the love of God was important *because* it gave meaning to life, would be only imperfectly religious. For the religious person the love of god is important because of God. It cannot be for any other reason" ("Religion, Life, and Meaning (B)," p. 192).

[175] Cf. Matt. 6:33

[176] We are saying "more than we know" if we claim that religious experiences are essentially good for our emotional lives. It is possible for conceptual confusion, superstition, projection, fantasy, and illusion to be at work in religion. It is one thing to say that religious experiences *may* yield emotional self-improvements, and another thing to say this-or-that kind of emotional self-improvement is *the essence* of religious experience. However, "reductive analysts . . . are not content to say that their analyses *may* apply to religious belief"; instead, "they say that what they have provided is *the essence* of religious belief" (*Religion and Friendly Fire*, p. 84).

[177] *Recovering Religious Concepts*, pp. 4-5.

Rather than rushing to make 'God' in the image of 'something objective,' we first need to embrace "the clarificatory task of distinguishing the grammar of one 'something' from another."[178] We need to embrace the difficult task of "coming to grips with" the reality of God in the lives of individual believers (not just in the emotional lives of persons.) William James does pay a great deal of attention to the lives of believers and the emotional difference that believing may, indeed, make in their lives; however, he is often tempted to become a slave to his own Ego theory such that he turns away from possibilities of sense that will not submit themselves to "experimentation" and do not jive with the "spirit of life" he wants to recommend.[179]

Once again, the kind of positive effort that he makes to explain the effects of religious experiences in the emotional lives of human persons should not be altogether discouraged. It is important and necessary for us to focus our attention. As Nietzsche saw, without narrowness there can be no cultivation, or development, of humanity.[180] It is only by reducing the complexity of our worlds that we are able to do what needs to be done, but precisely for this reason, we need to practice contemplation and discussion – to keep ourselves from slipping into excessive narrowness, or stupidity, and reproducing "idle talk" that may enable us to go about doing what needs to be done, today, but will surely keep us from seeing what needs to be done, down the road.

Logic Dominated, or Severely Reduced, in Rorty's *Philosophy and Social Hope*

[178] *Recovering Religious Concepts*, p. 5.
[179] For example, he acknowledges that some religious discourses emphasize the value and importance of "moods of contraction," but he seems only interested in *how* "moods of contraction" *might function* within projects aimed, ultimately, at self-expansion. To cast "religious experience" in such a humanistic mold amounts to "conquest by embrace, assimilation by exterior validation, integration by relativization and loss of identity" ("What is True Religion?", p. 236).
[180] *Beyond Good and Evil*, §188.

At this point, before I introduce a third example of logical inversions, it seems to me that I should reassure the reader that I recognize that we need to check our beliefs to see whether they are true or false. I do not mean to suggest that we can never have reasons to conclude that the word of the other is invalid or that the beliefs of others are false. Instead, I am emphasizing the point that "how they are checked depends on the kinds of beliefs they are" and "this is not simply 'given' prior to any context."[181] We are not in a position to make the judgments we have to make unless we work our way into the right kind of relationship with our beliefs and the beliefs of others, with our words and the words of others. Furthermore, paying attention to the discourse of others may help us come to understanding the meaning of the word of the other, but in understanding what the word of the other *is* in itself, I have not yet answered the question of what it *should be* for me and for us.

It is moral commitment, and not contemplative attention alone, that underwrites our value judgments. All this is not to say that giving our attention to others is relatively unimportant. It does mean that we will have to exercise self-restraint and not become overeager to "should all over ourselves and others" if we are going to pay attention to one another. As Simone Weil put the matter, in order to learn how to pay attention to others we have to learn to consent to relations in the world, to not desire that they should be otherwise, at least for a moment; learn to "give up [our] imaginary position as the center";[182] and learn to embrace the idea that "the development of the faculty of attention forms the real object and almost sole interest of studies."[183] This will mean that we have to restrain ourselves, at least for a moment, from the impulse to "go

[181] *Religion and the Hermeneutics of Contemplation*, p. 291.
[182] *Waiting for God*, p. 57.
[183] *Waiting for God*, p. 100.

somewhere." It will mean that, instead of trying to become the one at the center of the debate, we will have to learn to sit in wonder at possibilities of sense,[184] and we may have to suffer being "nobody" in the moral communities to which we belong.[185] Such acts – acts of patient friendship – are not for the faint of heart.

D. Z. Phillips reminded us that philosophical attention, or contemplation, does not yield moral guidance, and concerning those moral philosophers who claimed that the moral guides they had constructed are underwritten by philosophical attention alone, he wrote:

> Often obstacles in philosophical discussion are not obstacles of the intellect but of the will; we do not want to give up a certain way of thinking. It is in giving up the hold of these tendencies, according to Wittgenstein, that we *suffer* in doing philosophy. We feel that we cannot give up the view that moral philosophy should guide our conduct. We feel ashamed if we say we should do this, because it seems to be a loss of vocation and an expression of loss of confidence in our subject. Yet I want to argue that to cling to the idea that moral philosophy has the task of telling us what the moral character of our lives should be is itself to display a lack of character.[186]

His point is not that attempts to construct guides are necessarily misguided or immoral. In order for hope to become a possibility for us, some image of a field of action has to become accessible to us! What is needed, though, is the humble recognition among professional philosophers and intellectuals that this kind of activity, of constructing and advocating for such images, "goes beyond" paying attention and is not itself attentive in nature, but moral. At stake is our ability to attend to others and "let the discourse of the other speak for itself" so that it may be possible for us to come to enjoy that quality of peace which can only come from genuine (dis)agreement with one another.

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[184] *Philosophy's Cool Place*, p. 47.
[185] *Philosophy's Cool Place*, p. 159.
[186] *Philosophy's Cool Place*, p. 121.

This is what Rorty fails to do in *Philosophy and Social Hope*. Instead of letting the discourse of faith speak for itself, he aggressively reduces the hope of the New Testament to "the same hope" found in the *Communist Manifesto* – namely, that someday, "we shall be willing and able to treat the needs of all human beings with the same respect and consideration with which we treat the needs of those closest to us, those whom we love."[187] Here, the notion of "all human beings" functions like a Trojan Horse to conceal from view the fact that religious reactions *to the world*, in the case of the New Testament, and activist reactions *in the world*, in the case of the Communist Manifesto, do not communicate to us identical conceptions of 'the human' or 'human nature' or 'human flourishing,' but Rorty treats these two writings as if they were merely two partially successful attempts to "describe" the same vision. In all this, Rorty disguises the moral nature of the democratic values he wants to recommend by pretending he is simply attending to "the needs of all human beings," and in his enthusiasm for recommending certain democratic values, he aggressively reduces the hope of the New Testament and the hope of the *Communist Manifesto* to "the same hope."

Logic Abandoned, or Abolished, in Flew's "The Presumption of Atheism"

Finally, many contemporary debates concerning 'the existence of God' assign God to a particular space-time position (e.g., time t^0) or onto-theological function (e.g., the *Causa Sui*) and then turn to their audiences and declare that such an entity cannot fit within a particular theoretical or ethical framework and that, therefore, believing in such an entity is not a live option for any rational person. Here, it seems an enthusiasm for abandoning (or defending) the concept of God has tempted many debaters to give little attention to the way the concept of God enters the life of a believer. Instead, many

[187] *Philosophy and Social Hope*, p. 203.

have eagerly imposed the logic of one kind of discourse (e.g., the logic of theoretical explanation) on another kind of discourse (e.g., religious discourse) in such a way that they have failed to do justice to the place that talk of 'God's existence' occupies in the lives of believers.

Now, the poet R. S. Thomas once declared "as a Welshman I do not see any meaning in my life is there is no such place as Abercuawg, a town or village where the cuckoos sing," and he then warned that asking 'Where is Abercuawg?' would be a sign that one has misunderstood the nature of his confession. Interpreting the poet's remarks, D. Z. Phillips later said:

> "If we fail to take account of how the notion of Abercuawg enters our lives, if it does enter them, then it is likely that we will assume that Abercuawg is simply a place alongside or in addition to other places. If that is how we think of it, it cannot be Abercuawg; that Abercuawg which is not a place, but that which shows the sense or lack of sense of any particular place."[188]

What it means for a Welshman to believe in Abercuawg is not reducible to what it means for someone to believe that they are able to locate "where Abercuawg is" on a map, or "when Abercuawg was" on a timeline. In this way, the reality of Abercuawg in the life of a Welshman is like the reality of God in the life of the believer, and D. Z. Phillips warns us: "if we simply postulate a conception of God at the outset of a philosophical treatise, that notion is completely unmediated. We have not shown how it can get a hold a human life. It is all too easy to make God an extra object – greater, of course, than any finite object, but an additional one nevertheless."[189]

If we pay attention to the lives of believers, we discover that believing in God is not reducible to having discovered some use for concepts of the divine within socio-

[188] *R. S. Thomas: Poet of the Hidden God*, p. 93.
[189] *R. S. Thomas: Poet of the Hidden God*, p. 93.

economic, political, theoretical, ethical, and aesthetic frameworks. Instead, the lives of believers are regulated "from above" by a guiding light that governs how they interpret their experiences of societies, politics, ethics, beauty, and the like. Likewise, we should not imagine that nonbelievers simply say "there is no God" in accordance with some theoretical framework or "God does not exist" in accordance with some ontological framework or "God is not all-loving" in accordance with some ethical framework. The difference between the believer and the nonbeliever is a matter of whether or not one lives *before God*, as someone who is ultimately answerable to God.

All this is not to say that we cannot speak of someone who is both a believer and a non-believer. Someone who believes may pray: "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." Nonetheless, the point that I have been making remains: contemporary debates concerning whether 'there is a God', whether 'God exists,' or whether 'God is all-loving' often fail to seriously consider the distance between those who live *before God* and those who merely "follow where the evidence leads."[190] The whole life of the believer hinges on her belief in the existence of God. She does not hold her belief tentatively and wager belief in proportion to the evidence at hand. Instead, she holds her belief absolutely and takes the greatest sort of risk that someone can take – allowing her concern for someone to ultimately guide the way she lives her life. When we ignore the differences and distances between us, we are liable to commit the fallacy of logical inversion.

For example, when, in "The Presumption of Atheism," Antony Flew offers us a "procedural framework," to regulate conversation concerning the existence of God, he has invited us to engage in a search for evidence that God's existence is "theoretically

[190] Cf. *There is a God*, chapter 2.

possible."[191] The fact that Flew was convinced that his regulatory framework would "remain neutral between all parties to the main dispute" reveals that he misunderstood the most basic difference between the believer and the nonbeliever.[192] The believer lives her life *before God*. God is the great guide of her life. Insofar as she is a believer, how she lives is ultimately guided by her understanding of how God understands her. To require that our lives be ultimately guided by "worldly" considerations of what seems "theoretically possible" is to rule out believing in God, in a religious sense, at the outset. Saying "there is a God" because one has "followed where the evidence leads" does not make one a believer. The believer, as such, lives *coram Deo* whether or not the fig tree blossoms.[193] Flew, in his eagerness to promote atheism, speaks as though the one who confesses 'God exists' and the one who claims 'the former planet Pluto exists' where already engaging in a single shared conversation about what is "theoretically possible." In his advocacy for this particular kind of conversation and for the possibilities of agreement it promises, he abandons, or simply ignores, the logic of religious confessions in favor of the logic of theoretical explanations.

Concluding Remarks

We have been speaking about the way that practices of (conceptual) justice, especially acts of contemplation, are necessary for coming to have (the virtue of) understanding in and through discussions with others. As I have argued, if we do not "let

[191] "The Presumption of Atheism," p. 37.
[192] "The Presumption of Atheism," p. 37.
[193] Cf. Habakkuk 3:17. Now, this is not to say that believers *as such* simply ignore non-religious or non-theological interpretations of events in an anti-intellectual fashion. The lives of all human persons are guided by custom and by particular interpretations of societies, economics, politics, ethics, aesthetics, and so on. The believer participates in customs and interprets what needs to be interpreted with the understanding that she is answerable to God for *how* she goes about participating in customs and interpreting what needs to be interpreted. Insofar as she believes, she looks on all these things from the point of view of faith in the self-revelation of God.

the discourse speak for itself," we will not be in a position to appreciate what something is "in itself," and if we are unable to appreciate what something is "in itself," we will not be able to fully appreciate what something is "for us." Now, all of this is not to say that we must comprehend what something is "in itself" *before* we have any sense of what it is "for us." We will have an initial sense of what something is "for us," but unless we work our way into a just understanding of what something is "in itself," our sense of, or certainty about, what it is "for us" will remain immature. This is so even when we *correctly* understand what something is "for us" according to some tradition. We cannot come to have a mature understanding of what something is "for us" unless we justly practice "the freedom of self-consciousness", and we cannot justly practice "the freedom of self-consciousness," without working our way into a just relation with who and what others are "in themselves."

Now, throughout this chapter, I have argued that we may fail to work our way into a just relationship with others by becoming "forgetful of Being," by "avoiding discourse," or by committing one of four types of "the fallacy of logical inversion." I have also argued for a certain conception of (knowing) truth *as correspondence*. Like St. Thomas Aquinas, I have argued that human acts of "correspondence" essentially involve an act of the intellect – namely, "the intellect which proposes the right objects." Like Heidegger, I have argued that, as we form our propositions, we should not so much aim to craft "a think-like approximation" as to cultivate freedom to participate in the self-disclosure of beings (e.g., by way of practicing conceptual justice and conversational justice). Like Augustine, I have argued that the process of coming to have the right kinds of propositions in mind demands "the will to live rightly." Like Hegel, I have argued that, for humans, coming to have "the will to live rightly" necessarily involves coming to have the kind of "freedom of

self-consciousness" which is compatible with peace, which must be realized through "the transformative activity of work." Like William James and Whitehead, I have argued that maintaining the will to work for peace, or happiness, will require us to resist the temptation to "lie back," or merely administer "anesthesia." Finally, like Randy Ramal and D. Z. Phillips, I have argued that, as we attempt to move forward, we must also keep ourselves from "avoiding discourse" and committing "the fallacy of logical inversion."[194]

In this chapter, we have discussed the nature and importance of the speculative intellectual virtue of understanding *as a condition for the possibility of correspondence*. In chapter two, we will discuss the possibility of *corresponding to God* by way of coming to understand the understanding of God through faith in the self-revelation of God and by way of practicing sacred science and sacred doctrine in the hope of coming to know ourselves as we are known by God. In chapters two and three, we will look at how it is possible for someone to correspond to God, what it means for us to correspond to God, and why it is important for us to correspond to God. In particular, I will aim to show the reader the nature of the speculative intellectual virtues of science and wisdom and their importance to those who wish to completely make the transition from death and misery to life and blessedness. For reasons that we have discussed in this chapter, if we are to correspond to God, we will have to leave behind the Enlightenment hope of designing a "rational religion" that might serve as a "common ground" for the realization of some "modern" social harmony, and we will have to renounce our desires to make over Christian doctrines to function like ideologies for the purpose of securing harmony by speaking for religions, as opposed to letting religious discourse "speak for itself." If we are

[194]As religion requires one "to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world," so, coming to have the intellectual virtue of understanding requires that one work toward happiness AND keep oneself from corruption; cf. James 1:27.

going to fully make the transition from misery to true happiness (*eudaimonia*), we are going to have to seek to become more than mere "friends of religion." As I will show the reader, if we are going to correspond to God, we are going to have to think on and work at becoming "friends of God" by becoming familiar with the demand of the Word of God accepted through faith.

Becoming Friends of God:
Knowing the Truth and the Importance of Practicing Christological Reflection for the Formation of Virtue of Science in Christian Theology

In chapter one, we gave attention to the possibility of (the speculative intellectual virtue of) understanding and its place in the process of "knowing the truth." We saw that our need for understanding is related to our need to grasp some "starting-point" for the process of knowing the truth. In this chapter, we will consider the relationship between the starting-point of Christian theology and its "stopping-point" and the ways we may prepare ourselves to approach this stopping-point by participating in Christian theology. As I said in my Introduction, Christian theologians *as such* take our absolute dependence on God seriously, and ask the question: what possibilities have been played into our way by the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead? So, the starting-point of Christian theology is the divine disclosure of the truth of a human life – i.e., the self-revelation of the Giver of "the good spirit." The stopping-point of Christian theology is fully knowing "the truth of a human life,"[1] which has been made known to us by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and acting to (help others) personally appropriate the truth of a human life so that one may come to (help others) have life to the full.[2] In other words, the stopping-point, or end, of Christian theology is knowing the Giver of "the good spirit" and how one is known by the Giver of "the good spirit" and coming to live in communion with the Giver (the Father and the Son) so that one may come to fully participate in the Gift (the Spirit) of eternal blessedness.[3]

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[1] *Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 41.
[2] Cf. John 10:10.
[3] By speaking of "the Gift of eternal happiness," I do not mean to suggest that eternal happiness is simply given, or in no way an achievement. Indeed, happiness is a human activity. It is actual only

There are two ways that someone can fail to grasp the stopping-point. On the one hand, one may simply bypass, or go beyond, the stopping-point. Wittgenstein once warned of "a remarkable and characteristic phenomenon in philosophical investigation" where "the difficulty . . . is not that of finding the solution but rather of recognizing as the solution something that looks as if it were only preliminary to it. 'We have said everything. – Not anything that follows from this, no *this* itself is the solution!'"[4] In other words, it is possible for us be *underconcerned* with the most appropriate answer to a question.[5] We can fail to earnestly accept the *demand* of what has been revealed to us (a problem of the will). As Augustine warned: we can sin by "neglecting to obey [the commandment of God]."[6] On the other hand, as Augustine also warned: we can sin by "neglecting to persevere in the contemplation of wisdom."[7] The theologian can misconceive the *telos*

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when it is enacted. Still, it is better for us to encourage gratitude for the gift than to encourage pride in the achievement, for those who are on the way to happiness may be derailed by pride, which separates one from the Giver whereas gratitude for the Gift unites one with the Giver.

[4] *Zettel*, p. 58e, §314.

[5] Noel Leo Erskine complains that Tillich's tendency "to focus on the human situation in general made him deal with broad categories such as alienation and estrangement, often without giving them sociological concreteness. Even if one admits that in his books *Love, Power, and Justice* and *The Courage to Be*, Tillich hints in the direction of sociological concreteness, on has to further admit that unlike (Martin Luther) King (Jr.), Tillich's theology is predicated on the viability of the present socioeconomic system. . . . This in part may account for Tillich's silence on the struggle of the civil rights movement for justice and freedom in America. This may seem surprising since the economic, political, and theological foundations of America was shaken by the civil rights movement. Tillich lectured in the midst of the revolution without speaking a word in reference to that revolution" (*King Among the Theologians*, p. 134).

[6] *On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 120.

[7] *On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 120. Note: Augustine also says that we can sin by "neglecting to receive the commandment," but this is not one of the "two ways in which one can sin before becoming wise" (*Ibid*, p. 119). When the truth occurs to me, I cannot fail to receive what has occurred to me, though I can fail to accept what has occurred to me, as I argue below. I can fail to obey the demand of the Word of God, and I can fail to continue to contemplate the demand of the Word of God. By doing so, my/our histories and habits of sin – i.e., my/our failure to contemplate and obey the demand of God's Word with sufficient continuity and intensity (see chapter three) – can leave me/us unprepared, or ill-disposed, to *fully* accept the grace of God, but I/we cannot neglect to receive the truth that occurs to me/us, though I/we can fail to accept it (e.g., by failing to live in a rational manner). When Augustine says that we can sin by "neglecting to receive the commandment," it seems to me that he is using the term "receive" in a manner similar to the way that I am using the term "accept" and that he is making the point that we can fail to *fully* accept the grace of God by failing to develop the necessary virtues, such as the speculative intellectual virtues. If this is accurate, then I find myself in agreement with Augustine, and I recommend my third chapter to the reader as a theological commentary on how we

of theology, and stop short, or fall below, the stopping-point (a problem of the intellect). In the words of Paul Tillich, we can elevate "a preliminary concern to ultimacy."[8] It is possible for us to totally surrender ourselves to something that does not promise us total fulfillment.[9] We can become too attached to a "mediocre good," such that we stop short of, or fall below, union with "the highest good." In other words, it is possible for us to become overconcerned with an *inappropriate answer* to a question.[10]

There are, in summary, "two ways in which one can sin before becoming wise: either by not applying oneself to receive the commandment, or by not obeying it once it is received."[11] Theology is a science that we practice *on the way to wisdom* – a way for us to seek self-transcendence in the direction of the wisdom of God by reflecting on the meanings of sacred doctrines in the light of faith in the self-revelation of God. Every theologian must guard against problems of the will (i.e., failing to earnestly accept the *demand* of the Word of God) and problems of the intellect (i.e., failing to adequately distinguish the *ultimate* from the merely preliminary). One error makes it impossible for us to *stand* before God *whatever happens*; the other makes it impossible for us to stand *before God*, the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. These errors threaten our individuality and our humanity – characteristics which are essential to the truth of a

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may come to *fully* accept the grace of God by relating to one another and to our histories and habits of sin *as friends of God* by becoming wise through charity as we are empowered to do so by the grace of God we have received.

[8] *Systematic Theology*, p. 13.

[9] Something that claims ultimacy "demands the total surrender of him who accepts this claim, and it promises total fulfillment even if all other claims have to be subjected to it or rejected in its name" (*Dynamics of Faith*, p. 2). One may be misled by something that "claims ultimacy" but which cannot deliver "total fulfillment."

[10] One might respond to Erskine by saying that "civil rights for Americans" is a relatively mediocre good in comparison to "faith, hope, and love for humankind." Surely Erskine would agree that "civil rights" is a "stepping stone" and not a "stopping point." In any case, for our purposes, it is worth noting that we can fail to come to have "life to the full" by becoming unconcerned where we should be concerned and by becoming overly concerned with things that we should not be so concerned about.

[11] *On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 119; see footnote #7.

human life. In this chapter, I will continue to reflect on the nature of the truth of a human life; aim to clarify the nature of Christian theology *as sacred science*; explore the relationship between the task of sacred science and the task of sacred doctrine; and argue that theologians who want to (help others) correspond to God will have learn to carry out these crucial tasks in ways that prepare themselves and others for individuality and humanity.

The Purpose of (Human) Science, or the Possibility of (Self-)Knowledge

In order to prevent ourselves from bypassing or stopping short of truly "knowing an object," we practice sciences. A science is a "cognitive discipline," or "disciplined way of knowing" an object.[12] The end, or *telos*, of every science is "knowing an object." Now, it is one thing for us to *know an object*; another thing to merely know something *about* an object. If you show a toddler a picture of George Washington and tell her, "This is George Washington," later, when the picture appears to her, as long as she remembers the word you have spoken to her, she can show you that she knows something *about* George Washington. She knows "the *that*." She knows *that* this particular picture is a picture of him. If you show her the picture and ask, "Who is this?", she can answer, "George Washington." What she does not yet know, but what may be disclosed to her later on, so that she may come to know it, is *why* you have shown her this picture: because George Washington is the first President of the United States and you want her to become a well-informed citizen.[13] We only develop this kind of knowledge – not merely "knowing the *that*" but "knowing the *why*" – by supposing "universals" and

[12] *System of the Sciences*, p. 14.
[13] Making this connection may help her to become a teacher to future generations, both by providing a basis for her to become concerned about teaching such things to future generations and by helping her to grasp of the truth of the representation.

allowing those "universals" to guide our actions as we work with the "particulars" of our situation. As Paul Tillich puts it: "in order for an object to be known, it must be assigned its necessary place within a context. The individual in its isolation is never an object of knowledge. Where there is no comprehensive context, the individual might be perceived, but it will not be known."[14] In the case of the toddler, she isn't there yet; instead, at this point, her inner life is like the inner life of those animals which only "live by appearances and memory" and have only a "small share in experience."[15]

We become capable of human acts by developing a "knowledge of universals" which enables us to locate *this* particular thing relative to "all things" so that we can act for the sake of "common" and "unchangeable" goods as opposed to merely "private"[16] and "temporal"[17] goods. Our capacity to locate ourselves in nature, or know 'where I am,' "depends on our *theoretical knowledge* about things and events and their relations in our environment"; our capacity to locate ourselves socially, or know 'what I am in relation to another and what another is in relation to me' (e.g., friend or foe), "depends on our *practical knowledge* about how others view themselves and others, including ourselves, with respect to them"; and, finally, our capacity to locate ourselves existentially, or know 'who I am' and 'who she is, in herself' "depends on our *knowledge*

[14] *System of the Sciences*, p. 29
[15] *Metaphysics* B1, A1, p. 2.
[16] Cf. *On Free Choice of the Will*, Book 2, especially, pp. 57, 68. Here, Augustine argues that "when the will cleaves to the common and unchangeable good, it attains the great and foremost goods for human beings, even though the will itself is only an intermediate good"; however, "when the will turns away from the unchangeable and common good toward its own private good, or toward external or inferior things, it sins" (p. 68).
[17] Cf. *On Free Choice of the Will*, Book 1, especially, pp. 25-27. Here, Augustine argues that evildoing consists in "neglecting eternal things, which the mind perceives and enjoys by means of itself and which it cannot lose if it loves them; and instead of pursuing temporal things – which are perceived by means of the body, the least valuable part of a human being, and which can never be certain – as if they were the great and marvelous things" and that "all evil deeds – that is, all sins – fall into this one category" (p. 27).

of ourselves relative to how others identify and know us."[18] It is only by coming to have a "knowledge of universals" that we become able to locate ourselves (in space) individually, as opposed to trying to be in two places at once, and order our lives (in time) humanely, or in a human way, as opposed to a violently self-assertive, self-preserving, and self-promoting way.

A life is not a mere period of time that begins at birth and ends at death. A human life is not simply one damned thing after another. We do not have to live like toddlers who look not for rattles dropped and give no thought to tomorrow. As we mature, we not only live "by appearances and memory" (i.e., by consciousness) but "also by craft knowledge and rational calculations" (i.e., by self-consciousness).[19] In other words, as we mature, "we not only exist in the world but live in it, and we cannot live in it without interpreting it in order to orient ourselves and thus become capable of acting in it."[20] We cannot live (abide-in-self and pass-beyond-self)[21] in the world without developing some "knowledge of universals," and we cannot live well unless we develop a "theoretical knowledge" that will enable us to "subdue the earth" (Gen. 1), a "practical knowledge" that will enable us to say, concerning someone, "this is flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2), and a "knowledge of ourselves" that will enable us to withstand the serpent in the garden (Gen. 3) and, unlike Cain (Gen. 4), rebuke the devil in the desert (Matt. 4).

Such knowledge "comes about when, from many intelligible objects belonging to experience, one universal supposition about similar things comes about."[22] Of course, it

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[18] *Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 190-191. Cf. *Psychology: A Briefer Course*, pp. 43-48.
[19] *Metaphysics*, B1, A1, p. 2.
[20] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 204.
[21] A life, as opposed to a mere existence, essentially involves "an alternation between an abiding-in-self (*Insichbleiben*) and a passing-beyond-self (*Aussichheraustreten*) on the part of the subject" (*The Christian Faith*, § 3, p. 8). Something that does not pass-beyond-self is not alive, and something that does not abide-in-self is not one thing but is many things, or is divided (i.e., it is not the subject of *a life*).
[22] *Metaphysics,* B1, A1, p. 2.

is not the case that every supposition that actually "comes about" leads us in the direction of "knowing the truth." Hence the need for a dissertation! Furthermore, the craft knowledge that I develop by working on things which resist my desires to reduce them to *beings-for-me*, as I have argued in chapter one, can bring me to a place where I come to know what is *not possible* for me, but in order to discover "the content of my essence," I will have to engage in social intercourse with another self-conscious, desiring being. There is no way around it: "all self-knowledge originates in [knowing myself as I am known by others], with the result that I cannot know myself unless someone else knows me, and cannot come to know myself unless others communicate to me 'that' and 'how' they know me."[23] So, coming to have self-knowledge is a social process. Furthermore, it is a process that must take place within "a society of at least tripersonal structure" because "the person who enables me to locate myself relative to his knowledge of me cannot derive his own self-knowledge (wholly and exclusively) from my knowledge of him."[24] If his self-knowledge is to be useful to me for the purposes of *developing* self-knowledge, "he must have derived it from someone else's knowledge of him," for if his self-knowledge is wholly derived from knowledge that "was within me," then I am only dealing with a parrot and cannot *come* to have self-knowledge by communicating with him. I will have more to say about the sociality of the process of coming to have true self-knowledge in chapter three.

What needs to be emphasized here is that we can, and we do, make mistakes, or misperceive the (particular) facts, and this can lead us to develop a false sense of the actual. Likewise, we can misunderstand the (universal) meaning of the self-disclosures of

[23] *Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 205-206.
[24] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 206.

beings, or the words of others, and, as I have pointed out in chapter one, this can lead us to develop a false sense of the possible. Both kinds of error can lead to misery, and as a matter of historical fact, have led to misery. Moreover, insofar as we must depend on others for self-knowledge, it is not only the case that we can become miserable by way of mistakes and misunderstandings we make as we carry out our own craftwork; we can also become miserable by uncritically appropriating false identities derived from mistakes that others have made in their actions toward us and from misunderstandings at work in the words they have communicated to us. And in this age of artificial intelligence,[25] false identities are not only possible. They have become tragically ordinary.

Since we do not want to remain miserable but want to become "good-spirited," we have developed "disciplined ways of knowing." Every discipline involves repetition. Some acts are repeated to bring about a kind of freedom to act in some specific way by forming within a human agent "a quality . . . in the passive and moved power" of that agent.[26] And they are continuously repeated, even by those who are already disposed to act in a specific way (1) because "by repeated acts, a habit grows"[27] and (2) because freedom gained from virtues, or the perfections of habits, can be lost "directly" by acting in a corrupt way or "accidentally" by the "mere cessation" of discipline.[28] In a more or less disciplined fashion, we all try to avoid mistakes and misunderstandings, and "we all use a variety of strategies for critically appropriating how others identify and locate us" – that is, we are all engaged in a process (one might call it a process of attunement and creative becoming) that is "coextensive with our life" insofar as "we are continuously on

[25] Cf. Ephesians 1:21; Galatians 1:4.
[26] *ST* I, q. 51, a. 3.
[27] *ST* I, q. 52, a. 3.
[28] *ST* I, q. 53, a. 3.

our way to our personal identity."[29] In short, this is why we ought to practice sciences: to develop and maintain freedom to learn and appropriate the truth, or to become true selves, so that we may have life to the full.

The Possibility of Learning the Truth

A difficulty arises, though, when we try to think through the question 'How can we learn the truth?' If someone regards truth as something to be learned, one must know that she does not know the truth, for one does not *seek* something she already has. If I know the truth, then I cannot *seek* it because I already have it. However, it seems equally impossible for someone to seek what she does not know since she would not know what to look for or where to look. How then can one learn the truth? Here, some have insisted that all who have come to know the truth know that "the truth is not introduced to the individual from without, but was within him."[30] This teaching certainly has the advantage of curbing the enthusiasm of various "rulers and authorities." If the truth "was within him," the disciple does not owe everything to some "author"; rather, according to this doctrine, knowing whose instruction has helped one learn the truth is only a matter of historical interest, for "the Truth in which I rest was within me and came to light through myself, and not even Socrates could have given it to me, as little as the driver can pull the load for the horses, though he may help them by applying the lash."[31] This is one way to try to give an account of the possibility of learning the truth.

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[29] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 206. As I will explore in more detail below, "the strategies for building up our personal identity cannot be meant to achieve a definitive and comprehensive knowledge of ourselves but only a consistent and coherent one," that we achieve this "by selection and the creation of priorities, not primarily by integration," i.e., by giving "priority to how certain others (individuals or groups) identify us by accepting their reflection of our identity (perhaps only temporarily) as normative for our own understanding of it," and that "the obvious danger with this is that we create wrong priorities and develop an inadequate self-identity through the appropriation of misleading identifications by others into our own self-knowledge" (pp. 206-207).

[30] *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 8.

[31] *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 10.

However, there is a problem with this line of thinking. It is, very conveniently, a line. The disjunction has been altogether removed. The difficulty has not been dealt with, not really. Instead, the hiccup has been eliminated. The difficulty has simply been explained away by those who insist that the truth does not *come* "since it appears at bottom every human being is in possession of the Truth."[32] So, this line of thought is no ray of hope. One can hardly imagine a more potent anesthesia. What could make our minds number to the importance of the moment than a teaching that insists there is no import, that there is no freedom to learn the truth, that there is nothing more to ourselves, that "every human being is in possession of the Truth?" What then is there left to do with our intelligence but to put our minds to use to perceive and secure the means necessary for "self-realization"? What use do we have for intelligence apart from cognition and "getting results"? If "every human being is in possession of the Truth," then, indeed, our lives *should* revolve around "self-assertion, self-preservation, and self-promotion."[33] As Kierkegaard pointed out, this way of thinking and living is not consistent with the sacred practices and doctrines of Christianity, which proclaim and emphasize the decisive significance of a moment of divine revelation for us and call us to turn away from a life of unfaith toward a life of faith (in the power of God to make us true).

As Kierkegaard argues, if the moment is to have decisive significance, "the seeker must be destitute of the Truth up to the very moment of his learning it; he cannot even have possessed it in the form of ignorance, for in that case the moment becomes merely occasional."[34] Indeed, such a person cannot even be described as a seeker; rather, she is "beyond the pale of the Truth, not approaching it like a proselyte, but departing from

[32] *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 10.
[33] *Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 5. Cf. *Psychology: The Briefer Course*, pp. 49-52.
[34] *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 11.

it, or . . . in Error."[35] Furthermore, such a person cannot be directly helped to recall that she knows the truth. Instead, she must be indirectly helped, or given an occasion to acknowledge that she is in Error. Unless this takes place, the student cannot truly come to have what I have called "the freedom of self-consciousness,"[36] for unless this takes place, she cannot become truly self-aware. I am not self-aware unless I discover my error. Self-awareness only comes when I have discovered my error. I have to discover *my* error, "since it is only when I have discovered it that it is discovered, even if the whole world knew of it before,"[37] and yet, I cannot bring myself to discover *my* error, not if one is, indeed, "destitute of the Truth up to the very moment of his learning it."

Here is what will have to happen: I will have to be given the condition for learning the truth (i.e., the form of the truth) since "all instruction depends on the presence, in the last analysis, of the requisite condition,"[38] and I will have to be given (the content of) the truth. Christianity affirms this when it teaches that the gift of the truth (the Spirit) proceeds from the one who gives us the condition for learning the truth (the Father) and the one who brings us the truth (the Son). Furthermore, we are taught to remember that we have been saved by grace through faith and also to believe that we are absolutely dependent upon the one who has saved us, which makes Him, for us, "not so much teacher as Judge." We are taught that the Giver is "more than necessary"[39] – that for

[35] *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 11.
[36] Here, Kierkegaard, following Augustine, notes that the one in Error may seem to be free since he is in a state "in consequence of his own act" and "to be what one is by one's own act is freedom"; but he also points out that "to be free from the Truth is to be exiled from the Truth, and to be exiled by one's own self is to be bound" and that "no captivity is so terrible and so impossible to break, as that in which the individual keeps himself." (*Philosophical Fragments*, pp. 12-13)
[37] *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 11.
[38] *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 11.
[39] I say that the Giver is "more than necessary" (1) because the Giver is not "grounded . . . in the being of some other being, or in the being of being as such" and (2) because the Giver "disposes over being and nonbeing," and such a being "can have no ground outside of itself" (*God as the Mystery*, p. 33). One can only decide to accept the Gift of the Giver such that one "follows" (i.e., contemplates and

the sake of our salvation, the Giver has come to us and called us to "follow" him.[40] We did not come to follow him because we recognized his goodness in accordance with the truth that "was within us."[41] Instead, those who follow Jesus Christ have been empowered by the grace of God to follow him[42] and are becoming true by following him.[43] For this reason, we "cannot forget this teacher, or let him vanish Socratically":[44] in positive terms, he is the cornerstone of our individuality and the source of our humanity; in negative terms, he is, for us, the solution to our problems of the will (i.e., our *un*belief) and problems of the intellect (i.e., our un*belief*).

The Truth of a Human Life and the Problems of *Un*belief and Un*belief* (or Idolatry)

As I speak about "the truth," I do not have in mind a kind of secret knowledge of some supposed *summum ens* nor do I have in mind a general "reason for all" or some arbitrarily privileged "statement of statements." Instead, I have used the definite article to indicate only two things: (1) that I am speaking about *the truth* of a human life, or the ultimate *concern* of an individual (i.e., about a truth that has "decisive significance" for "an existing person," or an "infinite passion"); and (2) that I am speaking toward the truth *of a human life*, toward "the highest good" for a human, toward the *ultimate* concern, so that some might come to have a "personally interested passion" for living in a happy

imitates) the "disposition" of One who "disposes over being and nonbeing" or decide to reject the Gift, or turn away from the Giver. See also footnote #120.

[40] We do not judge the Word of God *in accordance with* something else; rather, God commands: "Follow me." Cf. Matthew 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 10:38; 16:24; 19:21; Mark 1:17; 2:14; 8:34; 10:21; Luke 5:27; 9:23; 9:59; 14:27; 18:22; John 1:43; 10:27; 12:26; 21:19; 21:22.

[41] Instead, it is written: "He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him" (John 1:10-11).

[42] As the Gospel of John puts it, those who have followed him "were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13).

[43] As the Gospel of John puts it, "to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the power to become children of God" (John 1:12). Cf. John 8:31-32; 1 John 2:3-5.

[44] *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 12.

"personal relationship" with "that than which nothing greater can be conceived" (i.e., to be loved by and to love, to be known by and to know, above all, the Giver of eternal life).

I am not saying, "Everyone has an 'infinite, personally interested passion.'"[45] On the contrary, I recognize that it is possible for one to "forfeit the condition"[46] for the possibility of true happiness by becoming too attached to pleasures and advantages;[47] that it is possible for one to be "tricked out of"[48] true happiness by an "inordinate desire"[49] for "private goods"[50] and "temporal goods";[51] that it is possible for one who is eager to achieve speculative or world-historical successes to "become too objective to have an eternal happiness."[52] In other words, one can (under)develop and suffer an immature form of subjectivity, or fail to become a self, because one has become too attached to,

[45] One can say that every individual has an "infinite passion," for coming to have an "infinite passion" is prerequisite to becoming an individual. Likewise, one can say that every human has a "personally interested passion," for coming to have a "personally interested passion" is prerequisite to becoming a human. However, it is not the case that every person has either an "infinite passion" or a "personally interested passion." Many do not and are, instead, miserable and wicked. I will say more about the relationship between "the divided self"/inhumanity and misery/wickedness in the following pages, especially in Part Three.

[46] *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 12.

[47] "Those who love each other on account of utility, then, do not love each other in themselves, but only insofar as they come to have something good from the other. Similar too is the case of those who love on account of pleasure. . . . For it is not for it is not for being what he is that a person is loved, but only insofar as he provides (in the one case) something good or (in the other) pleasure. These sorts of friendships, then, are easily dissolved when the people involved do no remain the same as they were. For if they are no longer pleasant or useful, those who love them will cease to do so." *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 8, Chapter 3, p. 167.

[48] *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 27.

[49] Cf. *On Free Choice of the Will*; Augustine argues that what makes an act evil is inordinate desire and that if we look for evil in the external, visible act, we are bound to encounter difficulties (p. 5).

[50] "When the will cleaves to the common and unchangeable good, it attains the great and foremost goods for human beings, even though the will itself is only an intermediate good. But when the will turns away from the unchangeable and common good toward its own private good, or toward external or inferior things, it sins." *On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 68.

[51] "All wicked people, just like good people desire some good, but the good turn their love away from temporal goods, from things that cannot be possessed without fear of losing them, whereas the wicked try to get rid of anything that prevents them from enjoying temporal goods securely." *On Free Choice of the Will*, pp. 7-8, 11.

[52] *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 27.

or has fallen in love with, "mediocre goods." For example, someone may fail to develop subjectivity because she has become accustomed to, or surrendered herself to, the kind of objectivity that, in a given age, promises pleasures and advantages. As I see it, this is the heart of the problem of *un*belief – one becomes too objective, unlearns passion (or loses concern), and thus forfeits the condition for the possibility of autonomy, or "abiding-in-self."[53] For those who have forfeited this condition for the possibility of life,[54] the question is: how can we learn inwardness, or how can we become selves?

One can develop a personally interested passion for citizenship by participating in a local cult tied to a particular country, but one cannot develop an *infinite*, personally interested passion in this way. One can become a *citizen* by believing in the religious ideology of a state or country, but one cannot become an *individual* in this way because what one hopes for *as a citizen* may contradict what one hopes for *as a human,* or *as a member of a particular family, class, race, gender*, etc., such that someone becomes *divided against* herself. Likewise, one can develop a personally interested passion for a particular set of morals or sacred teachings and the particular teacher(s) from which those lessons come, but one cannot develop an *infinite*, personally interested passion for them unless they are universally valid, totally consistent, and also of singular importance. In contrast to the political and mythical theologians of the Greco-Roman world, Christian theologians "made exclusivist claims about the risen Christ and the God who raised

[53] No one can say "yes" to someone or something and "no" to all else without passion. While it is true that unrestrained passions (plural) are involved whenever someone acts in a duplicitous manner, it is also true that no one can walk a straight line without passion. It takes passion for this, right here, to say "no" to our passions for those, over there. Our goal should not be to eliminate passions. To eliminate all passions would be to eliminate the condition for the possibility of decision and human action, but no one would say that this is what we want unless they were defending a thesis (or a suburb). Instead, since we want to be free and happy, not merely "safe" and "right," our goal should be to become infinitely passionate for "that than which nothing greater can be conceived."

[54] Cf. footnote # 21.

him."[55] In this way, then, Christian theology differs from political and mythical theologies – it aims to cultivate an *infinite*, personally interested passion. In other words, Christian theologians aim to cultivate individual selves, as opposed to sophomoric selves. Christian theologians work to cultivate individuality by encouraging "infinite passion" for the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, i.e., for one who is truly infinite, who "does not remain only infinite but also overreaches the finite as its own other," and who is concretely universal, or who "transcends individuals" and yet "is not external and opposed to individuals" but is one in whom individuals can find themselves "as moments of its own life."[56]

And when I say that I am speaking *toward* "the highest good," I want to indicate that while my speech attains to beatitude, or more specifically, to communion with the Giver of beatitude, the Giver of beatitude remains "incomprehensible" to me insofar as knowledge of the Giver "exceeds the mode of the knower." As a finite creature and as a sinner, albeit a sinner saved by grace, I enjoy communion with the Giver of beatitude in a limited way. I do not presume that all the people of the world are in desperate need of some clever illustration that I might give them nor do I despair of speaking of the self-revelation of God "in order that the salvation of men might be brought about more fitly and more surely."[57] I do not presume to have fully achieved the blessedness of the saints, but I hope that my interpretation of the testimonies and doctrines of those, who by the Gift of the Giver of eternal life have witnessed the true nature of "the highest good," will become for someone an occasion to move in the direction of the Giver of "the highest

[55] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 35.
[56] "Towards a Dialectic of Truth," p. 167.
[57] *Summa Theologiae* I, A. 1, Q. 1, Reply.

good" – and not merely the kind of (heteronomous) occasion for movement that takes place when one person throws a stone at another.[58]

I recognize that whenever someone speaks toward (the Giver of) "the highest good," there is the danger that "preliminary, finite realities are elevated to the rank of ultimacy."[59] This is the problem of un*belief*, or idolatry – one wagers her life, or risks "all things," for something that is not truly ultimate, for something less than "the highest good." I recognize that the risk involved in cultivating an "infinite, personally interested passion" for someone is "the greatest risk man can run," for if the effort to live in a totally committed relationship with another "proves to be a failure," then "the meaning of one's life breaks down."[60] Finally, I recognize that such a risk appears, from the point of view of unfaith, to be unnecessary, but from the point of view of faith, it is commanded – it is *more than necessary*.[61] So, those who have been given the will to believe and do not want to suffer idolatry cannot avoid the question: how can we learn true inwardness, or how can we become true selves?

One can develop an infinite passion (or totally surrender oneself) for the realization of some ideal, provided that the ideal is universal, internally consistent, and of singular importance, such as the ideal of self-realization. Guided by such an ideal someone can come to have an *infinite* passion for contemplating one's own nature and the nature of one's situation, but one cannot become *personally interested* in an ideal, or develop a *personal relationship* with an ideal. Whenever someone "relates" to an ideal, they do not "relate" to it *personally*. They do not *address*, or *speak to*, the ideal personally. They

[58] *Cf. Systematic Theology* (Tillich), p. 7.
[59] *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 13.
[60] *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 20.
[61] Cf. footnote # 39.

may act *in accordance with* the ideal, but they do not *pray to* the ideal. One may sing a song of praise concerning an ideal to another, but one does not *sing praises to* the ideal. And while one may meditate on the ideal, one does not wait for the ideal *to speak to her* because the ideal is an object of thought, not a subject, not one who freely acts.

Whenever someone judges an ideal worthy of attention and perhaps even devotion, he acts *in accordance with* something that "was within him," but no one can come to have *new life* by acting in accordance with something that "was within him." I am not saying that reflective judgments cannot "make the difference" in a situation; only that reflective judgments cannot "make all things new." In contrast to all natural theologies, Christian theology has "insisted on God as personal and acting not only as creator and ruler of the world but also in the history of the Jewish people and, above all, in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ" and has "proclaimed his resurrection to be the beginning of an eschatological life."[62] In this way, Christian theology differs from natural theology – it aims to cultivate an infinite, *personally interested* passion; or, rather, a passionate "personal relationship" that may bring about radically *new* self-knowledge and radically *new* life.

In other words, the problem with "natural theologies" is that they seek to secure a way for us to talk *about* God that is serviceable (e.g., a way for us to talk *about* God that would serve, or promote, a movement, or "communitarian turn," toward ecological and economical responsibility)[63] and agreeable (e.g., a way for us to talk *about* God that is in line with "a new sensibility")[64] by illustrating God's presence in nature. They "speak for God." They show an interest in the Word of God, but they seem more interested in saying

[62] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 35-36.
[63] *A New Climate for Theology*, pp. 27-40.
[64] *Models of God*, pp. 3-28.

same things *in other words*. They are effectively like one who is in the habit of interrupting a conversation to say, "I think what she is trying to say is…" As a result of the illustration provided, someone might find your position more serviceable and more agreeable, but, insofar as she is captivated by the illustration, she is no longer inclined to speak *with you*. Instead, she is now inclined to politely honor you by saying "that is a good point" so as to free herself of her obligation to you, who introduced her to the truth, so that she may turn away from you to speak with your "helper." If the illustration provided by your "helper" succeeds in captivating its audience, you lose your conversation partner. Likewise, when one sets out to change the way we talk *about* God by means of some clever illustration, there is the danger that he will "help" turn someone who was venturing to talk *to God* into one who would rather limit herself to objective talks *about* God with the "helper."[65]

The problem is not that one has dared to speak *about* God in her own words.[66] Theologians, as such, speak *about* God in order to "solve problems by argument and reasons."[67] Instead, the problem is that apparently helpful illustrations can inadvertently introduce and realize "non-obligatory, uncommissioned, and dangerous possibilities."[68] First of all, indeed, in some cases, we say this picture "might just as well be replaced by another" but in other cases, "the whole *weight* may be in the picture."[69] As I have made clear in chapter one, when we launch "helpful" illustrations at a misunderstanding of the

[65] As we know from experience, there is a strong positive correlation between the *act* of interrupting a conversation and the *desire* to receive attention from others.
[66] It would be foolish of us to altogether prohibit theologians from talking about God *in their own words*. We can process and reflect information perceived or communicated to us "only on the basis of its transformation into our own informational system." Yes, this activity "always involves a re-structuring of the information received which allows for misconception, error and illusion," but unless some such "re-structuring of the information" takes place, we could never personally appropriate the information. The difficulty is carrying out this "re-structuring of the information" in ways that do justice to "the thing itself" and promote our fulfillment (*Theology and Philosophy*, p. 49).
[67] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 10.
[68] *Church Dogmatics*, I.1, §8.3, p. 345.
[69] *Lectures and Conversations*, p. 72.

understanding of the other, we commit a form of conversational injustice. If we want to practice discussion (i.e., earnest or serious conversation) and, through discussion come to understand the word of the other, we will have to prioritize the work of interpretation. This is how interpretation differs from illustration: "interpretation means saying *the same thing* in different words" whereas "illustration means saying the same thing *in different words*."[70] If one wants to participate in discussion, one must desire, first, to become able to say *the same thing* in her own words. This work is necessarily prior to the work of truthful illustration. If I cannot say *the same thing* in other words, I cannot say the same thing *in other words*.[71] Remember, it is when we "want to be too active" and "want to carry out a search" – a search for *other words*, for example – that we are liable to make "faulty connections."[72]

Second, "there is no disciple at second hand."[73] Whenever we try to say the same thing *in other words*, whether we do so because we are interested in cultivating (world-historical) serviceability or (speculative) agreeability, the most we can accomplish is to craft an approximation but "to be infinitely interested in relation to that which at its

[70] *Church Dogmatics*, I.1, §8.3, p. 345.
[71] Many "natural theologies" tempt us to become underconcerned with the task of interpreting the self-revelation of God as we become overconcerned with the task of painting a serviceable or agreeable picture. We end up saying more than we know about the merits of the illustration (e.g., about a character, or moral exemplar, like Napoleon), and, in this way, we may become tempted or tempt others to elevate (some aspect of) the image in view to the level of ultimacy. At the same time, we say less than we know (in faith) about the (revealed) knowledge of God, and we are only ready to say more than we know about the merits of the illustration because (in unfaith) we are prepared to say less than we know about the (revealed) knowledge of God. Perhaps the illustration promises (world-historical) advantages or (speculative) pleasures, and, perhaps, our concern for these has come to override our concern for understanding the understanding of God. Perhaps we have become captive to some fear or some confusion or some malice. In any case, from the perspective of faith, the act of idolatry (or un*belief*) may be described as an act of unfaith. Likewise, from the perspective of faith, *un*belief can be described as an act of unfaith, but the problem with *un*belief is that one lacks infinite passion whereas the problem with idolatry, or un*belief*, is that one has a "bad infinite" passion.
[72] *Waiting for God*, p. 62.
[73] *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 78.

maximum always remains an approximation is a self-contradiction and thus is comical."[74] An approximation is not worthy of *infinite* passion. Furthermore, as with an ideal, one can become passionate about an illustration but not *personally interested* in an illustration. One cannot really have a "personal relationship" with an illustration. One who, upon reflection, judges a picture to be true makes this judgment *in accordance with* something that "was within him," but a disciple of God is a "new creation." When someone in a state of error receives the condition for understanding the truth and the truth, "he becomes another man; not in the frivolous sense of becoming a man of the same quality as before, but in the sense of becoming a man of a different quality,"[75] and this transition is not so much like the change that takes place when someone who was a failing student becomes a passing student but more "like the change from non-being to being."[76] A relationship with a picture cannot bring about such a change, and, indeed, we have a word for someone who, nevertheless, hopes an impersonal relationship with an object will "make all things new" – we call him a "zealot," or a "fanatic."[77]

Problems of Idolatry in Contemporary "Christian Ethics"

Insofar as we practice theology so that persons might become individual humans, characterized by an "infinite, personally interested concern," insofar as theologians want

[74] *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 31.
[75] *Philosophical Fragments*, pp. 13-14.
[76] *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 14.
[77] The desire to "make fans" of religion (e.g., fans of the Bible or fans of the Church) is understandable, especially among those who are professionally committed to religion in an age of atheism, who are married with children, who have taken out loans to "buy" cars and a house, and live in a democratic state (in which bringing about political change necessarily involves the formation of voting "fans" of this or that proposal or candidate) but there is a qualitative difference between work that is done to "make fans" and work that is done to "make disciples." More than anything, those who are engaged in "making fans" insist that we need something from them (e.g., something that they claim religion will provide, like "meaning"), whereas those who are engaged in "making disciples" are constantly trying to become an occasion for others to meet with, learn from, and come to abide in the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, constantly trying to introduce others to the One with whom all things are possible.

to recommend a path for the formation of concern, or a way for others to come to terms with "the ultimate significance" of things, every act of theology has ethical implications, or, rather, implications for ethics. Here, we encounter another difficulty, for one man's *modus ponens* is another's *modus tollens*. If (theological) proposition *A* implies (ethical) proposition *B* and someone regards proposition *A* as true, then she has a (formal) right to regard proposition *B* as true. However, if proposition *A* implies proposition *B* and, instead, she regards proposition *B* as false, then she has the same right to regard proposition *A* as false. This difficulty has, perhaps, been nowhere more vividly highlighted than in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, who strategically, yet constantly, regarded (ethical) proposition *B* as false and, thus, attacked ""the religious mood" that he saw in theologians of his day – an attitude that, according to Nietzsche, *wants* to invert "all the values of antiquity" and *wants*, instead, to welcome "a sacrifice of all freedom, all pride, all self-confidence of spirit."[78]

He warned us that it is possible for us to suffer "de-cadence," that it is possible for us to "fall out of rhythm with life."[79] This may happen when our attachments to certain ways of thinking cause us to (under)develop an immature or corrupt form of subjectivity – for example, one that has "placed itself under the dominion of morals, because it too, *believed* in opposite moral values and saw, read, *interpreted* those opposites into the text and the facts."[80] Nietzsche warned us that it is possible for our attachment to a given perspective to have roots in an "old popular superstition from time immemorial" and that it is possible for us to come to regard some such teaching with assurance, such that we fall prey to "some play on words perhaps, a seduction by grammar, or an audacious

[78] *Beyond Good and Evil*, "What is Religious," §§ 45-46.
[79] *Pious Nietzsche*, pp. xii, 4-5, 8, 165, 174, 183, 202.
[80] *Beyond Good and Evil*, "What is Religious," § 47.

generalization" and become blind to the role of "perspective" in the constitution of our ways of thinking.[81] Furthermore, in his view, this was not only a possibility but something that had actually and often taken place. He thought that we had become so attached to a particular set of moral propositions and the theological propositions implicit in those moral propositions that we had become ignorant of "little things," or "the basic concerns of life itself," and that as a result of our ignorance, we had become confused about *who* (i.e. what kind of person) asks the "strange, wicked, questionable questions" that many philosophers and theologians ask and *what* motivates our efforts to know the truth.[82] So, my concern that we have not been practicing human intelligence is not entirely new. It is a concern that I share with Nietzsche and others; and like Nietzsche, I am not merely concerned with (the virtue of) understanding for the sake of understanding our history.

Nietzsche's main concern was that people, especially Christians and theologians, had abdicated and were abdicating their freedom to ascend, or develop.[83] In his view, the Christian desire to be characterized by a "holy spirit" had devolved into an insistence on a "Christian morality" that had sprung up, not from the work of the Holy Spirit, but from the work of *ressentiment*, or a spirit of mere opposition to "all the virtues of antiquity." Folks who become inordinately attached to sets of morals or sacred teachings threaten to destroy conditions for the possibility of coming to have and enjoy a "free spirit." They

[81] *Beyond Good and Evil*, "Preface."
[82] *Beyond Good and Evil*, "On the Prejudices of Philosophers," § 1.
[83] In his view, Christian morality needed to be attacked and annihilated because it opposes *ascending* life, the kind of living in which power is *growing* and resistance is overcome (*The Antichrist*, § 2, p. 570). Instead, according to Nietzsche, Christian morality calls persons to resign themselves to the kind of life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness that is characteristic of *a weakling* (*The Antichrist*, § 1, p. 570). He argued that the philosophers (and theologians) that he criticizes possess a deficient form of freedom, a merely reactionary kind of engagement in the world. They are not free not to react. Whereas they have written their wisdom, according to Nietzsche, in opposition to "a wily and shrewd skepticism," they have mistaken small men for geniuses and have tended to celebrate most a group of reactionary thinkers who have produced "no longer *refutable*" works, even though their works are saturated with a toxic kind of morality. Unlike them, Nietzsche saw his own work as truly *positive* and *affirmative*.

threaten to destroy these conditions not only for themselves and for others, but worst of all, for future generations.[84] Once we recognize that this is possible, we owe it to ourselves and to our fellows and to future generations to try to not only "justify the models [we use]" but also "delineate the limits of [our] models in order to not confuse [the reality of being x] with the limitations of model-bound concepts [of thing x]."[85] And once we learn that one man's *modus ponens* is another's *modus tollens*, we have to not only ask "which is correct and to what extent" but also "what kind of man am I becoming, and what kind of future do I want to generate?"

When I become aware that models have limits and that I must decide who I will become and what kind of future I want to generate, it is natural for me to experience a fear of error. However, as I warned the reader in chapter one, it is possible for my fear of error to become excessive. For example, as I become more and more aware of the role of perspective in the constitution of our ways of knowing, I may despair of religion. I may feel compelled to deny that "it is the prerogative of religion to offer a total perspective which, even when not shared by others, provides an absolute orientation and helps us to

[84] To his credit, Nietzsche recognized that one may hope to explicate and elucidate (the content of) the truth for the one who is in error but that one cannot reasonably hope to communicate to the one who is in error the condition for knowing the truth *through argument*. Instead, according to Nietzsche, in order for the one who is in error to come to have the condition for knowing the truth, a new *kind* of man must emerge. In his view, in order for the truth of human life to be realized, a new specimen must evolve – a man more manly than modern man must be bred (*The Antichrist*, § 3; pp. 570-571).

[85] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 25. While it is often helpful for us to abstract from experiences in search of universals; however, we do this so that we correspond to reality, which we will not be able to do unless we understand things "concretely." In the words of Anselm Min: "To take a thing 'concretely' is to take it precisely as a totality of *all* such mediating relations which constitute it as what it really is and apart from which it becomes a reified abstraction" (*Paths to the Triune God*, p. 162). Furthermore, to the point of the sentence to which this footnote is attached, he writes: "For the purpose of limited consideration it is indeed necessary to abstract from certain relations, but by the same token it is also necessary to recognize it for what it is, an abstraction, to ask whether one is taking into account all the relations relevant even to one's limited consideration, and in any case to maintain a vision of the whole in its concrete, constitutive relations" (*Ibid*, p. 162). If we want to *fully* correspond to the object of our inquiries, we will have to maintain such a "vision of the whole" *in spite of* our need to concentrate on this-or-that aspect of something for a moment.

integrate everything into a coherent picture."[86] I may insist that all that is possible for me and others or all that is needed by me and others are partial perspectives and the relative orientation they can provide.[87] I may decide, mainly for moral reasons and mainly on the basis of a fear of error, that the need for an "experimental" attitude – i.e., the need to prevent errors from becoming "reified and petrified" – is, for me and my house, a concern that overrides concerns for "completeness and totality."[88] And, finally, I might make these decisions prematurely, on the basis of a misunderstanding of an authentic, religious concern for "completeness and totality," and, then, since I myself do not want to fully give my attention to sacred doctrine, I can mostly ignore the import of sacred doctrine and begin working to construct alternative teachings, without delay, and bring them to market, as soon as possible.[89]

Nietzsche's critique of the way philosophy and theology had been dominated by "Christian morality" also applies to the way "metaphorical theology" is dominated by "a new sensibility." In both cases, dialectical thinking has been given up in favor of "picture-thinking." What is old is merely opposed – not affirmed, negated, and preserved. Instead of trying to understand the understanding of the other, one simply tries to discard and

[86] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 8.

[87] Nietzsche recognized that, since we find ourselves so deeply entrenched in a state of error, the transition from error to truth will require more than a *partial* commitment to a *relative* good. Instead, he thought that "free spirits" would have to *will* the truth ferociously and relentlessly enough to match, and like the overmen of history (*The Anti-Christ*, § 4, p. 571), overmatch the priestly will to sickness that has infected the whole world of modernity and has already been "transmitted" to the ends of the earth through the life-stealing teachings and practices of Christian men (*The Antichrist*, § 29, p. 600), who have introduced not "progress" but decline into the history of the human spirit (*The Antichrist*, § 6, p. 572) and have everywhere "desecrated" human nature (*The Antichrist*, § 26, p. 597).

[88] Indeed, it is important that "our interpretive creations not be reified or petrified" (*Models of God*, p. 22); and yet, Christian doctrine traditionally exhibits a concern for "completeness and totality" that is not compatible with the "fear of error" embodied by many modern intellectuals.

[89] Beyond this, it is also important for us to recognize that "my full attention" may not be "complete attention." I may give my attention to something "to the best of my ability" and yet not give "complete attention" to it. I have to work to become capable of "complete attention" (through, for example, participation in "complete friendship") before I can give "complete attention."

replace images that do not secure "a new sensibility." The task of coming to know the truth is dominated by the tasks of self-preservation and self-promotion. There is, to be sure, an insistence that every metaphor "is and is not"[90]; however, metaphorical theology forgets to question the relation of truth to untruth and thus bypasses the work of coming to grips with "the inner possibility" of truth.[91] Instead, someone merely "projects, tentatively, a possible transformed order and unity yet to be realized" and proposes that we "live in the tension" between what "is and is not" in the direction of "a new sensibility," but she does not work to comprehend the relation between "a new sensibility" and "the Holy Spirit."[92] Instead, she only dares to think (objectively) about the (world-historical) advantages of particular (political) uses of "the 'spirit' metaphor" and judges them *in accordance with* "a new sensibility."

In both cases, a group of people has approached a set of problems in a rather one-sided fashion and has, as a consequence, ignored many "little things." So, Nietzsche complained that philosophers and theologians had not given sufficient attention to the "fundamental value for life" of supposedly base moments (e.g., moments of "deception,

[90] *Metaphorical Theology*, pp. 13, 19.

[91] Cf. "On the Essence of Truth," pp. 119-120. Put another way, metaphorical theology operates with a doctrine of "metaphor" which contends that metaphors relate two ideas in a relationship of imperfect similarity and that all human understanding is "metaphorical," or the result of a constant search for "similarity amid dissimilars," but it distinguishes "truth" from "untruth" in a merely pragmatic way, which only shifts the problem of how a "metaphorical" understanding can come to consistently know things *as true, or* come to see "a perfect similarity of [truth-]relations between two quite dissimilar things," to the problem of how come to consistently know that things "work" for us. If one embraces that sort of essentialism which supposes we all know what "works" for us, the problem disappears; but what justifies such a shift from a doctrine of "metaphor" to a doctrine of "analogy" when one begins to think and speak about what "works" for "humans" or "selves"?

[92] *Metaphorical Theology*, p. 19. Sallie McFague later confessed that she was wrong, in her early writing, to have "disparaged the 'spirit' metaphor as 'amorphous, vague, and colorless,' 'ethereal, shapeless, and vacant' . . . [and] 'not a strong candidate for imaging God's sustaining activity,'" (*A New Climate for Theology*, p. 160); however, even here, we do not find much in the way of dialectical thinking. Instead, we find an attempt to illustrate the advantages that "the 'spirit' metaphor" might have for a "Christian morality."

selfishness, and lust").[93] Likewise, one might complain that contemporary theologians tend to give insufficient (hermeneutical) attention to (traditional) discourses that do not immediately jive with one's actual self-knowledge or with some "new sensibility" and that many have, as a consequence, come to ignore the "fundamental value for life" of the speculative intellectual virtues of understanding, (sacred) science, and wisdom – virtues that contemplative theologians have held in high esteem.

Anselm Min has rightly called our attention to the fact that contemporary theology tends to be "oriented toward a particular issue (e.g., liberation), one-sided in its attention (e.g., liberation as central), based in a particular group (e.g., white women, African Americans), activist (e.g., removal of oppressive conditions), suspicious of tradition (e.g., the past as patriarchal), and anthropocentric."[94] Instead of keeping "the highest good," or "the truth of a human life," in mind and working to help others more fully participate in "the contemplative life" *coram Deo*, contemporary theologians have tended to despair of the task of calling others to eternal life or have tended to presume everyone who says "Lord, Lord"[95] is already fully blessed (with respect to self-knowledge, at least) and have settled for the task of making others into more useful participants in "the political life" by confronting them with "thought experiments" crafted and launched in the direction of an what Nietzsche rightly regarded as an "insane hope" – namely, the hope that my thought might "create the world in its own image."[96]

Whereas classical theology mainly promotes participation in "the contemplative life"; contemporary theology mainly promotes participation in "the political life." Both

[93] *Beyond Good and Evil*, "On the Prejudices of Philosophers," § 2; *BWN*, p. 200.
[94] *Paths to the Triune God*, p. 10.
[95] Cf. Matthew 7:21
[96] *Beyond Good and Evil*, "On the Prejudices of Philosophers," § 9; *BWN*, p. 206.

suppose they are working in support of the good life, but one believes in the Giver and the Gift of eternal life and operates within the perspective of faith whereas the other operates in unfaith. So, one hopes to "possess the good always" while the other merely hopes to "bring about the revolution" or to live with "the power that holds out the longest."[97] One supposes that we are, above all else, creatures of possibility; the other supposes that we are, above all, needy persons. The one supposes that what those who are unhappy need most from their fellow man is "people capable of giving them their attention";[98] the other supposes what is most needed is "a community in which . . . we are free from inhibiting structures and free for self-realization, mutually rewarding relationships, and self-expression."[99]

One acknowledges the problem of sin but believes it is possible for us to *become true selves* with the help of good friends (a.k.a. "the saints");[100] the other largely ignores the problem of sin, at least with respect to our self-knowledge, and supposes that it can and should be said, about each of us, that the truth "was within her," that she knows who she is, and that she only needs space, or opportunities, to "be herself" provided by a community of people who are so committed to respecting her (actual) knowledge of who she is that they will work to provide her with opportunities to "be herself."[101] One mainly aspires to "complete friendship"; the other merely aspires to "mutually rewarding

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[97] Cf. *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion*, pp. 126-128, 132-133.
[98] *Waiting for God*, p. 64.
[99] *Though the Fig Tree Does Not Blossom*, p. 71.
[100] In other words, it assumes that "the individual subject can become a true self only in and through a concrete community that alone can provide both the means and recognition for individual achievements" ("Towards a Dialectic of Truth," p. 165).
[101] The latter, it seems, wants to bring about something like "the caprice . . . of inclining in this or that direction" by (negatively) bringing about an "absence of constraints" and (positively) bringing about "mere readiness for what is required and necessary," but forgets that "prior to this", as Heidegger put the matter, is "engagement in the disclosure of beings as such" ("On the Essence of Truth," pp. 126-127). It makes all the difference in the world whether or not our prior engagement in the disclosure of beings has been (re)generated by participation in charity, or the love of God.

friendships," or "advantage friendships."[102] I will have more to say about this in chapter three, but, for now, beware: if we want (to come) to have life to the full, we will have to learn to practice "complete friendship."[103]

Furthermore, contemporary applications of the doctrine of recollection tend to contribute to the problem of gnosticism. This allegation may strike the reader as odd, but gnosticism is the practice of insisting that others must acquire "secret knowledge" in order to be saved. At first glance, it seems that whoever teaches someone to believe that the truth "was within her" has done the exact opposite. It seems that this teacher is, among all teachers, most opposed to gnosticism; after all, if the truth "was within her," then she does not need to *acquire* "secret knowledge" in order to know the truth (concerning who she is). However, if, in order to flourish, she needs, above all else, "a community" to provide her with sufficient opportunities for self-realization, then her salvation is, in fact, contingent upon whether or not others acquire secret knowledge; for, she cannot flourish unless others acquire, at least to a minimally serviceable and agreeable degree, the knowledge that "was within her" (concerning who she is), which is, for the other, a kind of secret knowledge. So, it turns out that, according to this political application of the doctrine of recollection, our salvation mainly depends on whether or not a voting majority (in the case of a liberal democracy) acquires and appropriates such "secret knowledge" for the sake of the disadvantaged, or on whether or not enough of us

[102] Cf. "Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship," pp. 623, 629-630; *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.3, pp. 166-169.
[103] Above, I mentioned that one cannot be "personally interested" in a picture. By this, I did not mean to suggest that one cannot have a "private interest" in a picture. If it were impossible to have a "private interest" in a picture, works of art would never sell. Instead, I meant that one cannot relate to a picture "personally" because the picture is not a subject, or a self-conscious, desiring being. In Part Three, we will look at why one cannot be *completely* "personally interested" in a pleasure-friend or an advantage-friend – namely because such friends are not completely present in relationship to one another.

become sufficiently "woke" and politically engaged to bring about the necessary revolution.

We should be concerned about the first-person perspective of the other, for we will not be able to truly locate ourselves socially unless we come to know how others view themselves and others, including ourselves, in relation to them. While this is undoubtedly true, what still needs to be recognized in contemporary "Christian Ethics" is that one can seek to secure (the possibility of) adequate "practical knowledge" in such a way that one obscures from view our need to develop a more complete "knowledge of ourselves." In the name of social justice, one can muffle the uniquely Christian call to truly become an individual and a human by following (i.e., contemplating and imitating) the love of God revealed to us in and through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ – i.e., one can forget and tempt others to forget that "human existence needs not only *social* reconciliation but also reconciliation with *all* reality."[104]

By pointing this out, I do not mean to deny that we need to listen to one another and learn from one another. For God's sake, I have been emphasizing the importance of discussion. Nor do I mean to suggest that Christian salvation is a private matter that does not pertain to "the political life." It is written: "faith without works is dead."[105] What I am challenging is a doctrine of salvation implicit in many works of "Christian ethics," a doctrine of salvation very often supported by an "anthropology of lack," that tempts us to aim to merely become "advantage friends" bound together in a merely worldly quest for "flourishing." Like many contemporary theologians, I think it is very important for us to give a responsible account of the hope that we have and communicate a vision of the

[104] "Towards a Dialectic of Truth," p. 167.
[105] James 2:26

object of our hope in a way that can provoke and sustain moral agency. Our account should "convey a promise and issue a call."[106]

However, some modern applications of the doctrine of recollection, often accompanied by the rhetoric of "self-realization," tend to both exaggerate our potentials for independence from one another and obscure from view the extent to which human persons remain vulnerable and dependent throughout their lives – not only dependent on others for opportunities for "self-realization" but, more fundamentally, dependent on the love of God (i.e., charity) for the possibility of coming to have true self-knowledge. Furthermore, these applications of the doctrine of recollection tend to make the self-revelation of the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead appear arbitrary and superfluous. If the truth "was within her" and all she needs is a community that recognizes (her immediate sense of) who she actually is and supports her efforts to realize her potential (with all the support that advantage friendship will allow for), what need does she have for the Word of the Cross or the communion of saints?

Among other things, the Word of the Cross invites us to acknowledge that, like the other animals, we are vulnerable to innumerable possible afflictions. There are obstacles – serious obstacles – that must be overcome for the sake of "the good life." Many theologians, today, acknowledge that there is work to be done. However, many speak as if the only work that needs to be done is to provide each with opportunities for self-realization or as if the main obstacle to "the good life" is a (material) lack of opportunity. This work, the work of providing materials where materials have been systematically denied, is, indeed, very much necessary for "the flourishing of the whole," but what good is it if you work for the prosperity of a whole nation but not for the well-being of even one

[106] *Though the Fig Tree Does Not Blossom*, p. 8.

whole person. Indeed, "what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life"?[107]

Now, I sympathize with the "skeptics" who suspect that many, if not most, books in publication (not to mention many other products of so-called thinkers, likes lectures and laws) are saturated with hasty generalizations, crafted for the sake of serviceability and agreeability. Furthermore, I believe that whoever says "the unexamined life is not worth living"[108] should also remember that "of making many books there is no end, and much study is weariness of the flesh,"[109] and I share the not only practical but artistic concern of John Keats, who lamented:

> *Do not all charms fly*
> *At the mere touch of cold philosophy?*
> *There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:*
> *We know her woof, her texture; she is given*
> *In the dull catalogue of common things.*
> *Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,*
> *Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,*
> *Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine –*
> *Unweave a rainbow…*[110]

I acknowledge that the works of philosophy we have received have each been affected by histories and habits of sin. However, I cannot say, together with Marx and Engels, "We know today that this kingdom of reason *was nothing more than* [emphasis added] the idealised kingdom of the bourgeoisie."[111]

We will not achieve "the highest good" for you or for me this way – by simply trying to get rid of anything that might prevent us from securing opportunities that we deem

[107] Mark 8:36
[108] Plato's *Apology*, §38a.
[109] Cf. Ecclesiastes 12:12
[110] *The Complete Poems*, p. 431. Excerpt from "Lamia."
[111] *The Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 684.

necessary for "self-realization" in accordance with "a new sensibility."[112] We will not be able to become happy, or come to have "the highest good," by way of mere opposition, projection, or apathy.[113] Instead, becoming truly happy, or coming to enjoy "the highest good," will require us to practice intellectual virtue, to put our minds to work to completely acknowledge the word of the other, and to cultivate for ourselves and for future generations not only a wealth of opportunities and the means to distribute them fairly but also "the intellect that proposes the right object for desires and actions and distinguishes between good and evil."[114]

Like other animals, humans have reasons for action that occur prior to reflection;[115] however, unlike other animals, humans normally develop beyond an "initial state of *having reasons for acting in this way rather than that* towards the specifically human state of *being able to evaluate those reasons, to revise them or abandon them and replace them with others*."[116] It is possible for us to engage in "the study of our choices about the good life, both individually and in the whole picture of a good life that our choices, taken together, create."[117] Like many contemporary theologians, I think we should reflect upon our options and discuss them with one another and together commit ourselves to courses of action that contribute to "a community in which human beings have their basic needs

[112] Such an approach is a form of wickedness, for as Augustine puts the matter: "all wicked people, just like good people desire some good, but the good turn their love away from temporal goods, from things that cannot be possessed without the fear of losing them, whereas the wicked try to get rid of anything that prevents them from enjoying temporal good securely" (*On Free Choice of the Will*, pp. 7-8; see also p. 11).

[113] As I have indicated above, I think it is important that we, as Anselm Min puts it, "accept the fundamental reality and value of the world in its concrete determinacy as the natural locus of human existence," such that we do not end up contradicting ourselves by trying to withdraw from world into "the interiority and universality of one's own pure thought" (as does "the stoic" or "the beautiful soul") or by declaring war on "the world in its particularity and determinacy" (as does "the skeptic") or by simply denying the value of self and world ("Towards a Dialectic of Truth," p. 164).

[114] *Paths to the Triune God*, p. 148.

[115] *Dependent Rational Animals*, pp. 5-6, 55-56.

[116] *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 91.

[117] *Christian Ethics*, p. 16.

met and the positive conditions necessary to realize their full potential."[118] However, I do not think that we promote "the highest good" when we strictly proportion our caregiving in accordance with someone's immediate sense of who she (actually and potentially) is or simply in accordance with some "new sensibility." First of all, I cannot *become a self* if everyone else simply accepts my immediate sense of who I am and acts accordingly. I may not be interested in what you have to say to me if you do not, to some extent, say "yes" to my immediate sense of who I am, but I cannot *become a self*, or develop the freedom of self-consciousness, unless someone says "no" to me.[119] Second, to the extent that my immediate sense of who I am is (and our "new sensibilities" are) ordinarily in error, I cannot know what is truly possible for me unless someone gives me grace, empowering me to see possibilities that were initially hidden from my eyes.

We should not ignore what we have come to know about ourselves and the world we live in, but neither should we ignore *that* we have *come* to know whatever it is that we know or *how* we have *come* to know it. Our knowledge of ourselves and our world has come to us from the mystery of the world, and it is possible for us to so busy ourselves with self-assertion, self-preservation, and self-promotion that we prevent ourselves and others from accepting a word of truth addressed to us by the mystery of the world.[120] If in relation to another, we only use our intellect to observe "who she is" and to calculate "what she is worth," then we will construct fields of action and cultivate habits of justice

[118] *Though the Fig Tree Does Not Blossom*, p. 71.
[119] In this sense, "it is more important that a proposition be interesting than that it be true" (*Adventure of Ideas*, p. 244).
[120] The attitude we embody may prevent us from *accepting* the Word of God, but where we are addressed by the mystery of the world, we cannot not *receive* it. In other words, "where the truth occurs, one cannot avoid relating to it," but we can decide not to *accept* it, or decide to relate to the occurrence of truth in the mode of unfaith. We can decide to turn away from the truth by deciding to act on the basis of desires which are opposed to faith, or by deciding to move in a direction other than the direction of the love of God.

that fail to make space for her to become who she is *in God's eyes*. While it may prove difficult to get unbelievers on board, believers have good reason to hold onto, develop, and pass on to future generations a kind of saintly hope in the One who "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine."[121] If our highest good were to achieve maximum managerial effectiveness, we should *simply* use our minds to observe "who she is," appraise her relative worth, and to plan courses of action, accordingly.[122] However, those who remember that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"[123] and who are now hoping for eternal life have reasons to wait for divine revelation, to hope for divine redemption, and to love others with the divine love of complete friendship, or charity.

Finally, it makes a real difference whether or not we prioritize charity. First of all, the gift of charity is indispensable to the growth of moral persons because "our adult capacity for balancing competing interests and for keeping valid contracts comes only after our unconditional nurturance by others while we are weak and dependent children, incapable of either stating our interests or entering into binding agreements."[124] We only become selves by receiving and giving love. Second, even as adults, some acts of love must "precede and transform" the meaning of justice insofar as acts of love are productive of worth which 'justice' functions to distribute."[125] Third, as sinners saved by grace, we can decide to trust in the creative power of the love of God to provide the

[121] Cf. Ephesians 3:20

[122] Here, the point is not just that can be "effective" in any number of directions, good or bad; as Alasdair MacIntyre puts the matter, "the whole concept of effectiveness is . . . inseparable from a mode of human existence in which the contrivance of means is in central part the manipulation of human beings into compliant patterns of behavior; and it is by appeal to his own effectiveness in this respect that the manager claims authority within the manipulative mode" (*After Virtue*, p. 74). In my view, we cannot approach "the highest good" unless our habits of thinking and living are born from above "the manipulative mode."

[123] Cf. Romans 5:8

[124] *The Priority of Love*, p. 7.

[125] *The Priority of Love*, p. 10.

sense of possibility we need to fulfill both duties of charity and duties of justice, and if we are able to live in faith, we may, together with the prophets, come to know and confess:

> Though the fig tree does not blossom,
> and no fruit is on the vines;
> though the produce of the olive fails
> and the fields yield no food;
> though the flock is cut off from the fold
> and there is no herd in the stalls,
> yet I will rejoice in the Lord;
> I will exult in the God of my salvation.
> God, the Lord, is my strength;
> he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
> and makes me tread upon the heights.

For these reasons we should prioritize charity, and we should not rule out from the outset the possibility of becoming, by the grace of God, individuals who give thanks to God "whatever happens" and who hope in the power of the love of God "even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death."[126]

Christian Theology as a Remedy for Our Problems of Idolatry

Whereas Nietzsche worried that theology had become hopelessly dominated by "Christian morality," in my view, the best way for us to overcome the tendency toward idolatry that we find in contemporary ethics is for us to faithfully practice Christian theology. Put negatively, we practice Christian theology to solve problems of idolatry by argument and reasons. Put positively, we practice Christian theology so that we may live well, or live in the direction of the truth of a human life which God has revealed to us and we have accepted by faith. We do this by working to cultivate a *thinking faith* which "constantly refers back anaphorically to that to which it owes its existence, thus pointing the way cataphorically to a new understanding of everything" – i.e., toward a

[126] Cf. Psalm 23:4

"knowledge of ourselves" that "does not focus on itself" but "on the presence of the divine in a worldly world."[127]

Theology is the culmination of the sciences, or the "queen of the sciences," insofar as theology aims to assign truths known in the light of the other sciences their necessary place in the context of our salvation, or in the context of our becoming true. In the words of Etienne Gilson, theology is "the science of truths necessary for our salvation."[128] Christian theologians go about assigning various truths their necessary place in the context of "the truth of a human life," or in the context of our becoming true, by seeking to understand each truth in the light of the self-revelation of God. As Christians have come to understand the possibility and the process of becoming true, it was necessary that God make possible a way of knowing the truth of a human life through revelation because, as Thomas Aquinas puts it, (1) creatures are "directed to God as an end that surpasses the grasp of reason" and (2) "the end must first be known to men who are to direct their thoughts and actions to the end."[129]

As finite creatures we are not in a position to grasp (the Creator of) "all things" in an exhaustive way. A finite creature cannot hold "all things" in her mind, not in "the totality of their own intrinsic being and their mutual relations."[130] So, when we make an attempt to know "all things" as they are known by God, we naturally expect to see the mode of knowledge follow the mode of the knower,[131] and we expect to find that God's being exceeds (or transcends) the mode of a created knower.[132] Furthermore, insofar as

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[127] *Transcendence and Secularity*, p. 51.
[128] *The Christian Philosophy*, p. 21.
[129] *ST* I, q. 1, a. 1.
[130] *The Solidarity of Others in a Divided World*, p. 23.
[131] *ST* I, q. 12, a. 11.
[132] *ST* I, q. 12, a. 4. Theologians speak of God's transcendence/immanence by introducing a variety of distinctions: e.g., creator/creature, redeemer/sinner, consummator/new creation, eternal life/earthly existence and the like (cf. *Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 90). We make these distinctions

we are sinners, whose thoughts are not God's thoughts and whose ways are not God's ways,[133] as we work to develop true faith and become true selves, we must not become excessively fascinated with, or fixed upon, the products of our own imaginations. We should not expect to, strictly speaking, "comprehend" the Creator and Redeemer of "all things", and yet "the chief aim of sacred doctrine is to teach the knowledge of God, not only as he is in Himself, but also as He is the beginning of things and their last end."[134]

Christian theology, as *sacra doctrina*, is supposed to prepare us for the work of approaching the truth of a human life, but theological concepts and doctrines do not perform this preparatory function by painting a "definitive and comprehensive" picture of God,[135] or by "the abstractive generalization of a God-structure and its respecification in terms of a doctrine of analogical predication."[136] No, since we are creatures, as we employ various strategies (e.g., models) to orient ourselves in the world, "the strategies for building up our personal identity cannot be meant to achieve a definitive and comprehensive knowledge of ourselves but only a consistent and coherent one."[137] Furthermore, since our capacity to know ourselves is finite and fallible, we are forced to carry out the work of becoming true selves "by selection and the creation of priorities, not primarily by integration" – that is, we must carry out this work by becoming serious in

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to orient ourselves in the world (e.g., in response to "limiting questions"). We locate possibilities for our self-trans-ascendence in the context of God's self-trans-descendence. The decisive point of reference for Christian life orientation is "not a human capability for self-transcendence, but God's actual self-transcendence" (*Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 106).

[133] Cf. Isaiah 55:8.

[134] *ST* I, q. 2, preface.

[135] As Ingolf Dalferth puts it: The identity of what is to be explained theologically is not to be found in some definable content, but rather only in the repeated, freely occurring amen with which humans acknowledge that what has been made known to them in the communication of the gospel is the truth about their lives, an acknowledgement that is never forced but is compelled by the inner conviction that I can do no other" (*Radical Theology*, p. 125).

[136] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 202.

[137] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 206.

relation to some perspective, or by giving "priority to how certain others (individuals or groups) identify us by accepting their reflection of our identity (perhaps only temporarily) as normative for our own understanding of it."[138]

Theologians, as such, recommend that we prioritize "the perspective of faith," and Christian theologians acknowledge that while we are not capable of elevating ourselves to the truth of a human life by reason alone, God has provided for us in two ways: (1) by revealing "certain truths which exceed human reason" and (2) by teaching us by divine revelation "even as regards those truths about God which human reason could have discovered" so that the truth of a human life would not be "only . . . known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors."[139] The Christian theologian prioritizes "the perspective of faith" such that she starts working to (help others) become true "from within faith and Christian beliefs," and, in her work as a theologian, she aims to better understand the truth of a human life as it has come to light in the perspective of faith by working to critically reconstruct those beliefs in the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.[140] Her relationship with theological concepts and doctrines is not a relationship with something that conquers by force. She relates to these concepts and doctrines because the truth occurred to her in their presence by "a hearing of faith,"[141] and "where the truth occurs, one cannot avoid relating to it."[142]

By saying that she relates to these concepts and doctrines in the mode of faith is not to say that she relates to them in an irrational way; rather, this is the way we ordinarily relate to the occurrence of truth. As Ingolf Dalferth puts it:

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[138] *Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 206-207.
[139] *ST* I, q. 1, a. 1.
[140] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 46.
[141] Cf. Galatians 3:2; Romans 10:17.
[142] *Radical Theology*, p. 53.

> "Humans are not masters of the occurrences that affect them, nor of the rules that these occurrences follow (if they follow rules at all). At all times, humans can only react in responsive ways to something that has happened to them by relating to that which precedes them. The occurrences by which humans orient their living, understanding, and thinking are not accessible other than in this responsive mode. They themselves and others are indeed participants in them, but simply as those impacted and involved, as those who are recipients, not as authors or originators."

At the same time, she recognizes that it is possible for us to try to "work out our salvation" in ways that lead to various intrapersonal and interpersonal disorders.[143] This is why she has devoted herself, as a theologian, to solving problems by arguments and reasons: she knows that it is possible for us to be given over to wrong priorities and an inadequate identity because we have adopted misleading identifications and have operated under their guidance, and she wants (to help us) to transcend the problems that have been caused by false identities for the sake of all creation.

Theologians work to prevent wrong priorities and repair inadequate identities by identifying misleading identifications as misleading and by persuading others to adopt alternative identifications, developed from within the perspective of faith, that promise a path to the truth of a human life. Now, one cannot "fix" someone else's identity directly since *my* error is something I must discover for myself, but one can become an occasion for self-discovery. For example, consider the person who has embraced some misleading qualification as a result of a logical fallacy, such as a logical inversion. One cannot fix a logical fallacy by way of refutation – that is, by merely showing someone that they have arrived at a false thesis. One can only fix a fallacy by showing someone that they have arrived at a thesis, whether it is true or false, *by committing a fallacy*.

[143] Cf. Philippians 2:12.

It is one thing to persuade someone to stop making a confused *statement*; it is quite another thing to persuade one to stop making a *confused* statement. This second activity involves bringing someone to the point where "the route to the confusion [has been] unfolded in such a way that the person no longer wants to utter it."[144] The activity of unfolding the route that has led to a confusion is "*essentially indirect*" because "one has to begin from where the confused one is" but since what she is uttering does not make sense, since the confused one is confused, one cannot set her free by "directly" persuading her that her thesis is false.[145] Instead, one has to show her that she is confused, that her words have become "winged words," either in the specific sense that what she is trying to say is not faithful to (the definitive intuitions of) the tradition to which she belongs[146] or in the general sense that her own words are inconsistent with her "self," or have no use, or application, in her "specific way of living a human life."[147]

One becomes capable of "fixing" a fallacy by participating in a "philosophical science built up by human reason," but the theologian is not only a participant in such a science but also a student of "a knowledge revealed by God."[148] This is not to say that theologians are rational up to a point, at which they necessarily become irrational; only that the theologian pays special attention to "the manifestation of order in the chaos of

[144] *Philosophy's Cool Place*, p. 25.
[145] *Philosophy's Cool Place*, p. 24-25.
[146] As David Kelsey argues, "a self-involving performative utterance, may fail, not by being falsified by evidence, but – to use the quasi-technical term J. L. Austin employed when he drew attention to these matters – by being infelicitous. It may suffer 'infelicity' if I am insincere, lacking the attitude or intention I express. Or it may suffer 'infelicity' if what I involve myself in is a promise and, however sincere I may be, I am unable to carry it out. Clearly, then, if the community that uses the doctrine to help elucidate its credal expression of its own self-identity lacks deep dispositions toward the relevant attitudes and intentions (say, gratitude or a commitment to care for the well-being of creatures), then its doctrine of creation fails by 'infelicity.' Affirming the doctrine would no longer be an authentic expression of the truth of the community" ("The Doctrine of Creation from Nothing," p. 64).
[147] Cf. *Radical Theology*, pp. 15-20.
[148] *ST* I, q. 1, a. 1.

events" and seeks to know "all things" in the light of this "manifestation."[149] She gives her attention to an event in which our understanding of "the way things are" is ruptured, an event in which our sense of "what matters" is shaken. She does not turn away from the experience of the absence of a familiar order. She does not turn back to the safety of that which has already been built up by human reason. Instead, having been visited by a disruption of her customs, she attends to the experience of the absence of a familiar order, and, insofar as the absence of that order is experienceable, she attends to the presence of another order implicit in the experience of the absence of the familiar order. She refuses to turn away from the thought that threatens to unsettle her, and for her effort she hopes to prepare herself and others to have an "experience with experience," to gain a more intimate and more complete awareness of the presence of the divine in "the thinking of thought," to encounter the mystery of the world, or receive a "glimpse into the mystery out of errancy," and come to understand the mystery of the world *as mystery*.[150]

What is special about the theologian is that she *wants* to give her attention to and to think through some "manifestation of order." She believes that a path, or a way, to becoming true has been revealed to her through some manifestation of order. She hopes that giving attention to this manifestation of order will prepare her to partner with others to fix problems (e.g., problems of memory, intellect, and will, or problems related to death, meaninglessness, and guilt). I say this is "special" because it is not the case that everyone is rendered a "sick soul" by these problems so as to become self-conscious of their/our sickness, nor is it the case that every sick soul has received and accepted "the

[149] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 217.
[150] Cf. "On the Essence of Truth," p. 135.

will to believe" in a supposedly divine manifestation of order.[151] Although someone is in error, it is possible that the question "How can I know the truth?", or "How can I become a true self?", may not arise in the course of one's life.

At some point, though, my self-knowledge, including my understanding of all that has been "built up by human reason," may break down. My identity may no longer work for me. When this happens, I may begin to ask questions about the contingency of my self-knowledge. I may begin to ask: "Why do (or did) I accept how this individual or group reflects my identity as normative for my own self-understanding?" and "Would I not be a different sort of person if my self-knowledge were derived from some other person's view of me?"[152] Or I might begin to ask questions about the truth and certainty of my self-knowledge. I may ask: "Do [others] know me as I truly am," and if they do not know me as I truly am, how can I be sure that, as I have gone about working out my own self-knowledge, I have not wrongly assigned priority to this-or-that account of who I am and where I fit in the scheme of things?[153] Or I might begin to ask about the coherence and consistency of my self-knowledge. I may ask: Are the ways that others experience me consistent with my own experiences of myself, and is what they reflect as my identity consistent with how I understand myself and how my loved ones understand me?[154]

Furthermore, even if such questions arise, one might try to explain away or simply ignore the distinction between *my/our actual knowledge of myself* and *true knowledge of myself* and, in this way, "reject the whole problem as misleading and confused."[155] The

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[151] Cf. *The Varieties of Religion Experience*, lectures 6-10.
[152] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 207.
[153] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 207.
[154] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 207.
[155] *Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 207-208. My first-person knowledge of myself may change and does change, and others' third-person knowledge of me, may change and does change; however, so the secular argument goes, "it does not follow that I have a 'true identity' only approximately realized by my actual identity at any given time" (p. 208). As opposed to working to come to 'true identity' through

one who does this may have what is commonly called a "clear conscience." One can almost always purchase (temporary) rest for herself if one is able to develop the requisite capacity for ignorance. For example, one can move so far away from the needs of others that she never wakes up to the sound of sirens – that is, until the ambulance comes for her. It is conceivable that someone might even go to his or her grave having never heard a siren. However, some hear sirens and cannot do otherwise. And some cannot help but feel the anxiety of guilt, for they know:

> Whereas crocodiles have no difficulties in being crocodiles, this is not so in the case of human beings: we have actively and creatively to realize what and who we are; we can miss or achieve this end to a greater or lesser degree; and we are permanently faced with the difference between what in fact we achieve and what might and could have been achieved; who in fact we are and who we might and should (like to) be.[156]

Some cannot help it; they know that with a little help from their friends, they could adopt different standards of orientation, consider different visions of the good life, and engage in different kinds of projects.

And some have, by the grace of God, heard the good news and believed Jesus is the Christ (i.e., that the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead has acted decisively for salvation of His creation) and have come to confess, together with the saints, that "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."[157] They have heard and have believed that the One who is truly infinite, concretely universal, and absolute has decided for them (i.e., that the Triune God has made a way for them), and they have decided to acknowledge

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a "hearing of faith" and a confession of sins, someone may insist that "I am who I am and whom I know myself to be at whatever time" and find that there are "enough contingent continuities in my life to enable myself and others to ascribe it to one and the same person" (p. 208). In short, one may consider this kind of self-knowledge that is relative to the relativities of this finite existence to be as good as it gets. From a religious standpoint, this kind of move is understandable, but it is also recognized as an unacceptably "low view" of (what is possible for) humanity.

[156] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 208.

[157] Cf. Romans 5:8

the gift of God's decision for them. This is how the truth of a human life has occurred to them. So, for them, God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ has become "the point of reference for all Christian thinking about God, Jesus, the world and human existence" and "their final court of appeal in all theological matters,"[158] such that they attempt to make sense of theological concepts and doctrines by way of "their interpretative re-translation into the story of Jesus Christ and the discourse of faith of the Christian community."[159]

Like a good philosopher, a good theologian knows that the process of becoming a true self will involve "letting others speak for themselves," but unlike philosophers, or at least more than philosophers, a theologian engages in reflection so that she or someone else may more adequately engage in the work of *proclamation* – i.e., so that someone may prophesy that becoming a true self will require one to actually give attention to and obey the self-revelation of God. Furthermore, some theologians have insisted that God has decisively revealed Himself to us by speaking through persons and by acting in the history of His people "as person and not merely as principle." Christian theologians are theologians of this kind; however, unlike those who are *only* "waiting on God," Christians believe that "the Word became flesh and lived among us."[160]

Christians believe that we have seen "the image of the invisible God," that "in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell," and that "through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things."[161] In short, we believe that we are not *only* on a quest (for example, a [world-historical] quest for "a community in which . . . we are free from

[158] *Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 37, 40.
[159] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 202.
[160] Cf. John 1:14
[161] Cf. Colossians 1:15, 19-20.

inhibiting structures and free for self-realization, mutually rewarding relationships, and self-expression" or a [speculative] quest for "the historical Jesus"). We are primarily called to acknowledge and to communicate an achievement – a decisive victory, a final self-revelation, a way for us to come to participate in "not a preliminary, but the perfect knowledge of God."[162] The Giver of eternal life has made a way for us to become true. He has given us the Gift (the Spirit) of eternal life. He has made it possible for us "find ourselves" and help others "find themselves" as moments in the life of the absolute Spirit, or come to inhabit "a life orientation that aligns human life, not with penultimate circumstances, but with *ultimate presence*," i.e., with "that without which nothing could be possible or become real."[163]

As Christians, we are called to proclaim and interpret "the Word of the Cross" – to express ourselves and the unique hope, or "victory," that we have, in a symbol that "expresses not only the ultimate but also its own lack of ultimacy."[164] We are called to understand ourselves and our situations by confessing and believing that "God makes Godself *understandable as God in Christ, and understood as God in Christ through the Spirit*" and by seeking, on the basis of the self-revelation of God, to "understand the

[162] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 36.
[163] *Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 44.
[164] *The Dynamics of Faith*, p. 112. As Tillich points out, the cross reminds us: "Jesus could not have been the Christ without sacrificing himself as Jesus to himself as the Christ. Any acceptance of Jesus as the Christ which is not the acceptance of Jesus the crucified is a form of idolatry." The question of "the truth of a human life" is related to "the necessity of standing by one of my . . . selves and relinquishing the rest," for as William James has pointed out: "such different characters may conceivably at the outset of life be alike *possible* to a man. But to make any one of them actual, the rest must more or less be suppressed. So the seeker of his truest, strongest, deepest self must review the list carefully, and pick out the one on which to stake his salvation" (Psychology, p. 53). Christians may be described as those who, by the grace of God, are becoming their "truest, strongest, deepest" selves by following (i.e., by contemplating and imitating) the radical obedience to God and the divine mercy for neighbor that Jesus Christ embodied in his life and death, which have been revealed to us to be essential to our "truest, strongest, deepest" individuality and humanity by the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

understanding of God."[165] In short, we believe that God has made a way for us to "know the truth" and become true selves, and we hope that by walking the path that has been illuminated for us we may come to know ourselves as we are known by God,[166] or acquire "absolutely localizing self-knowledge,"[167] and develop a true awareness of the "ultimate significance" of things[168] – that in the life, message, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has made it possible for those who believe to truly come to know "what makes a human life . . . true and good and right" and to participate in and enjoy such a life *in spite of* our "paltriness, inadequacy, impairment, duplicity and confusion."[169]

The Relationship between "Sacred Science" and "Sacred Doctrine"

I have argued that what makes the theologian "special" vis-à-vis the philosopher is that she *wants* to give her attention to and to think through some divine manifestation of order. Another way to say this is to say that she operates *within* the perspective of faith made possible for her by divine revelation. From *within* the perspective of faith, she works to develop orientational knowledge so she may (help others) come to more fully understand and participate in the new (eschatological) life made possible by revelation and faith. One is not in a position to fully appreciate the importance of her work unless one learns to *think* the relationship between human life and the mystery of the world. How is it possible for us to live a human life *in spite of* the fact that we are constantly being thrown into unfamiliar experiences? How is it that, when you read this sentence for the first time, you are able to make some sense of it (at least enough sense to move on to the next sentence without being totally undone, or without becoming totally disoriented

[165] *Radical Theology*, pp. 65-67.
[166] Cf. *Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 204-209.
[167] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 210.
[168] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 217.
[169] *Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 41.

by your encounter with this strange sentence which you have never encountered before)? How is it possible for us to *live* – not merely exist, but *live* – through so many strange events?

In response to such questions, David Hume once declared that "all inferences from experience . . . are effects of customs" such that "custom . . . is the great guide of human life."[170] By saying this, he was not merely acknowledging that we are "creatures of habit."[171] Instead, he was arguing that we are only in a position to make meaningful "connections" between ideas because we have become accustomed to certain "conjunctions" and "customs." Our participation in "custom" and our knowledge of "constant conjunctions," or knowledge of universals, make it possible for us to orient ourselves in the world. As stated above, our knowledge of universals makes it possible for us to *locate* this particular thing in relation to "all things." What needs to be clarified here is that it is our participation in custom that enables us to *order* our lives by guiding the way that we reduce the complexity of the world, or develop perspectives on the world, so that we can *act* in the world with some measure of consistency.[172]

What the theologian is concerned with, as a theologian, is the occurrence of the truth in divine revelation and with its reception in faith. As Ingolf Dalferth observes: "where the truth occurs, one cannot avoid relating to it, and one cannot relate to it without understanding."[173] The theologian works to understand the self-revelation of God so that she may (help others) truly live in faith. Every occurrence of truth calls us to become true,

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[170] *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, pp. 28-29.
[171] Our experiences of the world are certainly guided by habits of attention (with respect to perception) and by habits of consent, or certainty (with respect to understanding). However, insofar as we become able to decide what should receive our attention and our consent, we are not merely "creatures of habit," but also "creatures of possibility."
[172] Cf. *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 7; cf., *Becoming Present*, pp. 15-16.
[173] *Radical Theology*, p. 53.

but the occurrence of truth in the self-revelation of God, calls us to live by orienting ourselves to the ultimate presence, or by standing *coram Deo* – to acknowledge the way that our lives are surrounded by an abundance of grace, which makes our lives possible, and to no longer restrict ourselves to fields of action that accord with custom (or a familiar order),[174] at least not where custom would tempt us to call something "irresponsible," "improper," or "ineffective" that the Word of God has made "right," "true," or "good."[175]

We forfeit the possibility of being made true by the occurrence of the self-revelation of God if we interpret the event in a way that violently reduces the meaning of the event to a meaning that fits neatly within a customary perspective, or a worldly perspective. We have to decide whether or not we will accept the judgment of grace that comes to us from the occurrence of the truth. We have to decide whether we will correspond with revelation in faith *completely* (i.e., "for God's sake"[176] and "to the end,"[177] or "whatever happens"),[178] or we will break off our correspondence with the Word of God when the promise of "getting results" by way of faithful correspondence is

[174] As Ingolf Dalferth puts it: "Human life is . . . always lived in one of two ways: either it does not orient itself to ultimate presence, thus restricting itself to its own possibilities, or it does orient itself to ultimate presence and thus begins to discover and live out its human potential" (*Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 48).
[175] Cf. Acts 10:15.
[176] Our correspondence remains *incomplete* when our main interest in reflecting on the occurrence is to find out what one must do to be saved (Cf. Luke 18:18). As Rush Rhees reminds us: "For the great saints, the love of God was not a matter of finding the meaning of life. If I do love God, then I pray that I may love him more perfectly. And I want to say: I cannot love God without offering my life to God. But it is turning things upside down to say that this is first and foremost a concern with the meaning of life; or even that it is a conviction that there is some meaning in life. Anyone to whom the love of God was important *because* it gave meaning to life, would be only imperfectly religious. For the religious person the love of God is important because of God. It cannot be for any other reason" ("Religion, Life, and Meaning (B)," p. 192).
[177] Cf. Matthew 24:13; 10:22; Mark 13:13.
[178] Religion seeks to offer a conception of life that is (negatively) compatible with and (positively) a help toward individuality and humanity, or a "conception human life in terms of which a believer meets *whatever* happens" (*The Problem of Evil & the Problem of God*, p. 195).

gone from our sight – i.e., when the prospect of gaining pleasures and advantages, or actualizing extant potentials for self-realization, is unseen.

Whether one is underconcerned with the promise of faith or overconcerned with the promise of custom, the act of reducing the importance of revelation to its worldly, or custom-compatible, importance is an act of unfaith. Another example of how this takes place can be seen in the "quests" for "the historical Jesus" that have, in the last two hundred years, become interesting to some scholars. Those who participate in these quests have become notorious for missing the point that people of faith understand the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ to have *eternal* significance for believers and non-believers. They often want to "help" believers find the custom-compatible importance of Jesus, but they tend to become preoccupied with this activity to the point that they say nothing about the importance of God's act of self-revelation.

For example, in *Jesus of Nazareth: Jew from Galilee, Savior of the World*, Jens Schröter acknowledges that searching for "the real Jesus" will require us to ask and answer the question "Who is Jesus *for us*?" However, Schröter confines inquiry within a custom-compatible perspective and, in doing so, fails to question how God's action in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ renders "old life" perspectives obsolete, or how God's action makes it possible and more than necessary for believers to develop a new perspective, one that corresponds with the occurrence of divine revelation and is compatible with the new life of faith. He confines his quest within the field illuminated by the "light of current presuppositions of understanding," but the particular "presuppositions" and "standards of reason" that he insists upon require us to adopt an excessively dismissive attitude toward the perspective of faith. What Schröter ignores is that coming to grips with "the real Jesus" will require one to give contemplative attention

to the reality of God in the life of faith. One distorts the importance of Jesus for us if one ignores the contents of "the fundamental Christian confession" – which is, "God raised Jesus from the dead."[179] In order to correspond with a judgment of grace, as one is empowered to respond to the judgment, one has to respond in good faith. One cannot, be changed into what one becomes by the power of an occurrence of the truth and, with respect to the very same thing, stay the same.

Where truth occurs, it commands one to "go beyond" untruth. No one can serve two masters.[180] The theologian, as such, prioritizes the work of understanding the truth of revelation in faith. She seeks to go beyond custom in the direction of the love of God. In order to *work*, she will have to rely on custom, but she does not simply seek to become conscious of what custom requires; instead, she seeks to become self-conscious of her reliance on custom and to critically examine whether her own reliance on custom, as well as the reliance of others, is compatible with the truth of a human life, whether or not this custom belongs in the life of faith, or is compatible with actual correspondence with the self-revelation of God, or conducive to holy communion with the Giver of eternal life. The Christian theologian tries to cultivate a historical awareness of the ways that believers have self-consciously "lived in the tension" between "Christ and culture," and as she receives the concepts and doctrines developed by her predecessors, she tries to remember that "a religious understanding is related to that understanding implicit in our use of everyday language in that it purports to transform it."[181] So, her work as a Christian theologian involves two basic tasks: (1) to work, with the living and the dead, in good faith, to understand and to critically reconstruct the customs of the church (e.g., the

[179] *Crucified and Resurrected*, p. 39ff.
[180] Cf. Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13.
[181] *Do Religious Claims Make Sense?*, p. 178.

theological concepts and doctrines of the church) in the direction of the love of God revealed in and through Jesus Christ and (2) to elucidate the importance of these customs (e.g., uses of theological concepts and doctrines) for my/our perfection, or to the truth of a human life.

Someone who is empowered by the occurrence of truth to go beyond untruth inherits a sacred obligation to elucidate the truth of the human life for the sake of those who are still accustomed to untruth. For this reason, theology is not only "sacred science" but also "sacred doctrine." In other words, theology is a *teaching* activity, or an activity wherein someone communicates to others the truth that has come to her, a truth which has been "mediated to her beforehand."[182] A good teacher remembers that knowledge has come to her and will take on both obstacles of the will and obstacles of the intellect that might prevent her students from coming to know the truth. With respect to obstacles of the will, a good teacher aims to engage her students at the point of their interests, so that might she help them to become interested in discussing the topic. In the context of a classroom filled with persons saturated with a modern, technological interest in "getting results," one might begin discussions by introducing how these ambitious, isolated grade-grabbers may expect to be graded.

Thomas Aquinas began his *Summa Theologiae* by first asking the provocative question "whether, besides philosophy, any further doctrine is necessary?" and giving an answer crafted to gather interest immediately. He contends that our salvation is at stake, that "it was necessary for man's salvation that there should be a knowledge revealed by God" and that "in order that the salvation of men might be brought about more fitly and surely . . . there should be a sacred science learned through revelation" that takes place

[182] *The Christian Philosophy*, p. 3.

"besides philosophical science built up by human reason."[183] It is a fine introduction, but the theologian faces a unique problem: namely, that there is no introduction that one can give that can make someone want to change her whole way of life, and theology is undertaken to (help others) understand the new (eschatological) life made possible by the self-revelation of God – something that cannot be fully understood unless one comes to decide, by the grace of God, to change their whole way of life. So, the Christian theologian should not become overconcerned with (the) *mythos* (of the world).

With respect to obstacles of the intellect, a teacher has to find a way to "bridge the intelligibility gap" opened up by the differences between her perspective, which is presumed to be more truth-conducive than the perspectives of her students (or else she is not appointed to be their teacher, except where concern for the truth of a human life is no longer wagered, in which case a mere quantitative analysis of someone's years of teaching experience and a publication count will do). Bridging "the intelligibility gap" will require her to make use of terms that are familiar to her students. In order to come to know which terms are, indeed, familiar and what the limits of their competencies are, she will have to engage in discussions with at least some of her students. Once the teacher has made the necessary discoveries (which may not take her very long, especially if she is no stranger to the customs of the land), she may begin to translate her knowledge of the topic into terms that are familiar to her students. However, here, once again, the theologian faces a unique problem: that which she aims to (help others) understand, namely the (truth of the) life of faith, which is called into being by the self-revelation of God, is "something new that cannot be sufficiently understood in terms of something

[183] *ST* I, q. 1., a. 1.

familiar."[184] When viewed from the perspective of faith, Christian faith is not "merely one religious belief among others (as Enlightenment rationality has it); by its own account, it is the awareness and acknowledgement that Christ's cross and resurrection mark the end of the old world and the beginning of the new."[185] So, the Christian theologian should not become overconcerned with (the) *logos* (of the world).

In other words, *before* Christian theologians set out to "elucidate the importance of revelation and faith" by appeal to *mythos* and *logos*, they should work to understand the way the discipline of theology is "something unique and sui generis" and work to critically reconstruct their own customs "in contrast to both the *mythos* and *logos* strands within its own tradition."[186] If Christian theologians want their work to be "true to the eschatological reality of faith in God's creative and renewing presence in creation through Christ and the Spirit," they will, as Dalferth has pointed out, have to avoid three dead ends:[187]

> (1) the classical *aporia* of a metaphysical "both-and," of [understanding and reconstructing theology] as an incoherent metadiscipline of the rational and the mythical;[188]
> (2) the Enlightenment *aporia* of a dogmatic "either-or," of allowing itself to be forced into the Procrustean bed of choosing between rationalism or obscurantism (or "between the devil and the deep blue sea")[189]; and[190]

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[184] Cf. *Radical Theology*, pp. xv-xvi, 229-234.
[185] *Crucified and Resurrected*, p. xiii.
[186] *Crucified and Resurrected*, p. xiii.
[187] *Crucified and Resurrected*, p. xiii.
[188] After the emergence of "the model of Reason and Revelation" in Enlightenment philosophy, or the emergence of the idea of "the essential reciprocity of internal and external perspectives on Christian faith," some theologians responded in the manner of a "supernaturalist reaction." In their work, they accepted the idea of an "essential reciprocity" between Reason and Revelation, but they confined their attention "to the additional truths claimed to have been received through revelation and to be not contrary to but above reason" (*Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 99-100).
[189] *Crucified and Resurrected*, p. xii.
[190] After the emergence of "the model of Reason and Revelation" in Enlightenment philosophy, some theologians responded in the manner of a "rationalist reaction." In their work, they sought "to compromise with the spirit of the age" by working to "reformulate the Christian faith in terms of beliefs that could be sustained on the basis of reason, experience, and history" (*Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 99-100).

> (3) the self-defeating *aporia* of a "neither-nor," of cutting all constructive ties to the surrounding culture by relating in a merely negative way to it.[191]

Instead of prioritizing the "effective" (mythological) and "responsible" (rationalistic) work to "convey a promise and issue a call," Christian theologians, as such, should prioritize the work of understanding "everything in a new way from the point of view of the eschatological breaking in of God's creative presence in the human reality of this life and world in an through God's Word and Spirit."[192] Theologians have not fulfilled their duties if they do not "convey a promise and issue a call," but they have not even begun to do the unique work of Christian theology if they have not made a prior intellectual effort to understand the truth of a human life revealed in Jesus Christ.

While we can only come to understand the truth of a human life by making use of our available cognitive, emotive, and conceptual resources, we can make an effort to cultivate some *critical distance* from custom in the hope of *drawing near*er to God by practicing christological reflection, or the study of the truth of a human life revealed in Jesus Christ. Christology is not understood, here, as a "definitive doctrinal statement of a truth that we cannot understand but only accept or reject"[193] but, rather, as "a hermeneutical guideline that inducts us into a process of reorienting our life toward the creative presence of God and helps us to move through the questions and answers posed and provoked by the gift structure of Christian faith."[194] Of course, the goal is not

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[191] After the emergence of "the model of Reason and Revelation" in Enlightenment philosophy, some theologians responded in the manner of an "orthodox reaction." In their work, they tried to cut ties with "the new spirit of the Enlightenment" by dogmatically insisting on "the absoluteness of the internal perspective of Faith" and by denying "any theological relevance to the external philosophical perspectives on faith (*Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 99-100).
[192] *Crucified and Resurrected*, p. xiii.
[193] For, as Tillich put it, "if the doctrine of norms abandons the critical element (philosophy), it becomes the mere presentation of available norms. It loses the direction to the universal and becomes just a *historical self-presentation*, a confession" (*The System of the Sciences*, p. 172).
[194] *Crucified and Resurrected*, p. xviii.

to become radically opposed to custom, or the spirit of the age, through an adolescent act of arbitrary differentiation, but to understand what it means to accept the judgment of grace we have received from the hand of God and allow the occurrence of the truth in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to make us true, or bring us near to the Giver of eternal life.

Put briefly, the task of christological reflection is to "think through the fundamental soteriological reality, namely that we owe our salvation wholly and exclusively to God *himself* and that God *alone* is the necessary and sufficient prerequisite for our salvation and for Jesus Christ's significance for us."[195] In other words, thinking the truth of a human life theologically, will require us to assign the process of our salvation and the problems we encounter as we try to work out our salvation their necessary place within the context of *God's activity*. From the perspective of faith, paths to the truth of a human life might be perceived, but they will not be known unless we are able to locate these paths in the comprehensive context of *God's activity*. Since the singularity, or distinctive importance, of Christianity is symbolized in the cross and its importance is articulated in "the word of the cross," which includes the confession of the resurrection, Christian theology attempts to locate paths to the truth of a human life in the context of *God's activity* by way of

[195] *Crucified and Resurrected*, p. 155. Perhaps the greatest expression of our absolute dependence upon the grace of God is contained in the resurrection confession. Death is a state of total "creaturely passivity"; so, "resurrection from the dead" can only be understood as "exclusively divine activity." As Dalferth puts it: "The resurrection is not a particular instance of waking or setting upright; it is the explicit expression of a plainly incomparable process: the divine creativity (Rom. 4:17), which, in the eschatological event of the raising of the crucified one, unveils its own foundation as the inexhaustible love of God. In preserving the identity of Jesus along with the indescribability of God's action, the declaration that Jesus was raised by God communicates the irreconcilability of our experiences of Jesus in such a way that, on the one hand, the distinction between God and Jesus is preserved and, on the other, divine life can be predicated of Jesus on the basis of an action attributed to God and to him alone" (*Crucified and Resurrected*, p. 77). In this way, the resurrection confession simultaneously recommends the life and message of Jesus to us *as divine* and reminds us that, if we want to fully know the divinity of Jesus Christ, we must assign the divinity of Jesus Christ its necessary place in the comprehensive context of God's activity.

christological reflection.[196] By way of christological reflection an understanding of paths to (and pitfalls on the way to) the truth of a human life is to be "developed from the living experience of redemption as it originated with [God's activity in the life, death, and resurrection of] Jesus Christ and is mediated in the historical continuity of the [life of faith lived out in] Christian community."[197] Unless the "sacred science" of Christian theology is conceived and practiced as a science that is both "all-comprehensive in scope" and "centered on christology," the intellectual efforts of Christian theologians will not "be true to the individuality of faith."[198]

In order to faithfully carry out the task of christological reflection, "the resurrection must be interpreted with the cross in mind, the cross with God in mind, God with the message of Jesus in mind, and God's actions on the cross and in the resurrection of Jesus with us and our world in mind."[199] In other words, if we want to perfectly know the reality of "the fundamental Christian confession" our intellectual efforts to "think theologically" should become characterized by a "trinitarian pattern" of christological reflection. Hegel recognized that the concept of 'the triune God' is fit for the task of communicating an absolutely localizing self-knowledge (1) because 'the triune God' does not stand in opposition to the finite but as a true infinite "overreaches the finite as its other," (2) because 'the triune God' does not stand in relation to human beings in a general way but, in and through the faith of Jesus Christ, a true "concrete universal," it "contains them in their differentiation," and (3) because 'the triune God' is absolute, or unconditional, and, as such, overcomes every contradiction by including "all reality as moments in its

[196] *Crucified and Resurrected*, p. 40ff.
[197] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 103.
[198] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 103.
[199] *Crucified and Resurrected*, p. 27.

own life."[200] However, Hegel regarded 'the triune God' as if it were only the given content of the Christian confession, something like a "definitive doctrinal statement of truth," a "representation" that needed to be interiorized within an account of the history of "the absolute Spirit" bringing us to an "absolute knowing" of itself. In other words, in the end, Hegel restricts his intellectual efforts to know the truth of a human life within a comprehensive context that is compatible with the worldly *logos* (or logical custom) of experience, reason, and history.[201]

Whereas Hegel crafted and embedded a meta-perspective on perspectives of faith within the perspective of reason (born of "the spirit of the age"), Barth reversed this process, crafting and embedding a meta-perspective on perspectives of reason within the perspective of faith (born of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ). This is how he attempted to bridge the intelligibility gap opened up by the differences between the perspective of faith and the perspective of reason – by interiorizing the problem and reproducing the discontinuity between the external and internal perspectives (or the call to *learn* the truth and *become* true) "as a categorial distinction *within* the structure of the internal perspective of faith"[202] and tirelessly working to clarify (i.e., explicating and elucidating) the call to learn and appropriate the truth, or *become* true selves, that Christians have received and accepted (in faith) from the occurrence of the truth of a human life in Jesus Christ.

Theological Meta-perspectives on the Perspective of Reason: A Case Study[203]

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[200] "Towards a Dialectic of Truth," p. 167.
[201] Cf. footnote #190.
[202] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 121.
[203] Someone might argue that Thomas does not develop a "theological" meta-perspective on the perspective of reason but, rather, a "mixophilosophical" meta-perspective on the perspectives of reason and faith. As the reader will observe, in this section, I recognize the force and purpose of this "attack," but while I am prepared to recommend Barth's approach to "sacred science" as exemplary, I think Thomas's approach to "sacred doctrine" is also exemplary; so, I am not inclined to altogether

Barth was not the first teacher to make use of a theological meta-perspective on perspectives of reason. Thomas Aquinas makes a similar move in his *Summa Theologiae*. Thomas was aware, for example, that a defense against atheism is unnecessary *within the perspective of faith* because the assurance of the truth of God's existence is given in faith. Still, he poses the question near the beginning of his *Summa Theologiae* "whether God exists?" One way to explain his interest in this question would be to argue that Thomas adopts an Aristotelian conception of science which formally obligates him to begin the work of framing the subject of his "science" by asking "whether it exists?" A better way to explain his interest in the question is to acknowledge the difficulties involved in bridging intelligibility gaps, as we have done above, and to recognize that Thomas's interest in the question "whether God exists" is "first and foremost a matter of finding an access (*via*) to the intelligibility of God."[204] Scholars often recognize that Thomas's "five ways" challenge students to "go beyond" physics – to understand beings-in-motion *as beings*. However, many scholars have failed to recognize that Thomas then challenges students to "go beyond" metaphysics and develop a theological meta-perspective on classical metaphysical doctrines, to understand being (*esse*) *as act-of-being* and beings (*ens*) *as beings-by-participation* – as participants (creatures) in the life of God (the Creator). With the "five ways," Thomas recapitulates the sense of the term "God" as it is

withhold the term "theologian" from "the Doctor" nor the term "theological" from his work. I recognize the evangelical reason someone might make such a prophetic gesture, but there is also an ecumenical reason to try to acknowledge, negate, and preserve the point of this gesture, for the love of God (Cf. footnote #222). It is important for us to remember that "the problems of our world are not solved in or by theology, but Christian theology aims at helping Christians to engage in identifying and solving the problems of our time by providing guidelines and signposts for orientation" and remember that "the crucial question is not about our theologies but rather the question of whether our life is actually transformed from a life of unfaith and self-love to a life of faith and the love of God and neighbor" (*Crucified and Resurrected*, p. xvii). In other words, with orientational differentiations, "the important criterion is not adequate description and theoretical knowledge, but real-life relevance and practical wisdom" (*Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 47).

[204] *Aquinas on God*, p. 38.

used in the language of classical metaphysics so that he may establish "middle terms" for the sake of bridging intelligibility gaps between the perspective of reason and the perspective opened up in and through "a sacred science learned by revelation."[205]

As Thomas points out, one may demonstrate the truth of a proposition *a priori*, arguing from one's knowledge of what is absolutely prior to a subject matter, or one may demonstrate the truth of a proposition *a posteriori*, arguing from what is only relatively prior in the relationship of the subject matter to us, as in the case where someone proceeds to knowledge of a cause from a knowledge of the effect because "an effect is better known to us than its cause."[206] Since God's being-by-essence is absolutely prior to our being-by-participation, it would be an error to presume that we can demonstrate the truth of God *a priori* from a knowledge gathered from our own existence. In this way, the knowledge of God exceeds the mode of every created knower. Nevertheless, because "every effect depends upon its cause" such that "if the effect exists, the cause must pre-exist," we may proceed to demonstrate the truth of the proposition "God exists" from the effects of God's existence which are better known to us,[207] but in order for us to *proceed* toward a knowledge of a cause from a knowledge of its effects, we must neither *presume* to know the essence of the cause in advance or *despair* of the possibility of coming to know the truth. Instead, if we are to *proceed* from what we know to what we do not know, we will have to "accept as a middle term the meaning of the word" in the language (in this case, the discourse of faith, primarily, and the discourse of classical

[205] *ST* I, q. 1, a. 1.
[206] *ST* I, q. 2, a. 2.
[207] *ST* I, q. 2, a. 2.

metaphysics, secondarily) and contemplate possibilities of sense in the language "for the question of its essence follows on the question of its existence."[208]

That Thomas is not primarily interested in explicating and elucidating the import of classical metaphysical doctrines is evident from the start in the fact that he only devotes three articles to the topic of the existence of God while he devotes hundreds of articles to the topics of God's essence and operations. As Etienne Gilson puts it: "nowhere is the absence of an exposition of his own philosophy . . . more seriously felt than on the question of existence."[209] Thomas is aware that it is possible for us to "say more than we know." He warns us that the grammatical remark that God is "something than which nothing greater can be thought" does not communicate to us any positive knowledge of God. To know *that* this is a widely accepted grammatical rule for God-talk is not yet to "know the *why*," or even to know "that what the word signifies exists actually, but only that it exists mentally," or notionally.[210] Likewise, knowing the grammatical rules for speaking about the existence of an entity (in the perspective of reason) – e.g., to know that according to its nature (*essentia*) the Being (*esse*) of a being (*ens*) is characterized by some measure of complexity, imperfection, finitude, change, division, and the like – does not bring with it a true knowledge of God, for God does not exist in the ordinary (i.e. univocal) sense of the term "exist."[211]

Thomas is also aware that it is possible for us to "say less than we know." He believed that it is "necessary that man should be taught divine truths by revelation," that "there should be a sacred science learned through revelation."[212] He seeks the golden

[208] *ST* I, q. 2, a. 2, ad. 2.
[209] *The Christian Philosophy*, p. 77.
[210] *ST* I, q. 2, a. 2, ad. 2.
[211] *ST* I, q. 3, pr.
[212] *ST* I, q. 1, a. 1.

mean between "saying too much" and "saying too little" – between a loss of faith and a loss of hope. At no point in our lives is it appropriate for us to presume to have arrived at an exhaustive knowledge of God (even though, as followers of Christ, we believe that God has made way for us to participate in the perfect knowledge of God revealed to us in Jesus Christ), for this would amount to a loss of faith. Likewise, at no point in our lives is it appropriate for us to quit thinking about and speaking toward the truth of a human life theologically (even though, for us finite beings, there will be moments when life demands that we put down our pencils, get serious, and make decisions), for this would amount to a loss of hope. So, Thomas warns: "as the ultimate beatitude of man consists in the use of his highest function, which is the operation of his intellect; if we suppose that the created intellect could never see God, it would either never attain to beatitude [i.e., lose hope], or its beatitude would consist in something else beside God; which is opposed to faith."[213]

So, St. Thomas, the teacher, also made use of a theological meta-perspective on perspectives of reason. However, Barth, more than Thomas, demonstrates a remarkable readiness to return to the "starting-point" of christological reflection, let the christological discourse "speak for itself," or respect the irreducibility of the christological discourse, and, *on the basis of* faith in the self-revelation of God and its expression in "the fundamental confession" (God raised Jesus Christ from the dead), develop "a realist understanding of the eschatological reality of the risen Christ and the new life into which we are drawn by the Spirit."[214] A readiness to return to the starting-point guards against idolatry – that is, it

[213] *ST* I, q. 12, a. 1.
[214] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 121.

keeps the one who is ready to return to the starting-point from becoming inordinately attached to an *inappropriate answer* to the question of the truth of a human life.

However, the kind of preoccupation with the starting-point that is characteristic of his "christological concentration" will make it more difficult for a teacher to actually practice a science that is "all-comprehensive in scope" and to establish a wide range of "middle terms" that may be used to prepare the way for students to take notice of the credibility of articles of faith and, by taking notice of the credibility of the articles of faith, become more open to participation in the life of the church and more receptive to means of grace which may prepare them to remain appropriately *concerned* with the answer to the question of the truth of a human life, or to better practice the individuality (or infinite negativity) of faith, *if* they are given eyes to see the answer *as the answer*. In this way, a readiness to point toward and develop interest in the stopping-point (i.e., participation in the soteriological work and eschatological rest of God and in the blessedness of the saints) guards against *un*belief.

In this case, we do not have to hate one in order to love the other. Both Barth and Thomas practiced a "sacred science" that aimed to consider all things in relation to God *as their beginning and end*, and in different ways they both acknowledged the need to develop "a consistent doctrinal structure" and "an interpretation of reality in terms of it."[215] Barth's christological concentration safeguards a key condition for the possibility of developing perfect knowledge of the truth of a human life – the one who hopes to reflect the truth of a human life must not become forgetful of the occurrence of the meaning

[215] As Dalferth warns: "the structure of Barth's dogmatics . . . allow for different ways of disagreeing with it. . . . However, what we cannot do . . . is to reject the two theological tasks with which Barth attempts to cope with the two components of his dogmatics: theology can dispense neither with a consistent doctrinal structure nor with an interpretation of reality in terms of it. Thus even if we reject the answers Barth gives we can hardly avoid the questions he asks" (*Theology and Philosophy*, p. 124).

(for us) of the truth that has called one to become true. Thomas's undeniably "open" comportment safeguards a condition for the possibility of venturing doctrines that point others toward the truth of a human life – the one who hopes to teach must discover middle terms that her students will find interesting.[216]

One who loves Thomas may remind us that "there are in fact higher and lower perfections, and an imperfection aiming at a higher type [e.g., public teaching] stands above lower perfections [e.g., private knowledge]."[217] One who loves Barth will remind us that "human talk about God merits to be called responsible when its only intention is that God should be permitted to speak"[218] and that God has addressed us as God *in Christ*.[219] The one who loves Thomas may remind us that God has addressed us as God in Christ *through the Spirit*.[220] Finally, the one who loves Barth may concede the point that a christological concentration will force the teacher to proceed along a "narrow road" toward a "narrow gate,"[221] i.e. it may render the task of discovering *interesting* middle terms more difficult, and yet the one who loves Barth may maintain that it is difficult to teach a subject when one does not know the subject matter[222] and may

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[216] To say something to someone by way of analogy, "it presupposed that the transference (*epiphora*) is *understandable*" (*God as the Mystery of the World*, p. 267), and little can be "transferred" to the one who is not interested enough to give you his attention. So, in a sense, indeed, "it is more important that a proposition be interesting than that it [conform to Reality] (*Adventures of Ideas*, pp. 241, 244). Ask a rhetorician: interest in, or a sense of possibility (i.e., hope) for, the transference of something good is a prerequisite to being able to say something to someone by way of analogy.

[217] *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 257.

[218] *God as the Mystery of the World*, p. 226.

[219] *Radical Theology*, p. 67.

[220] *Radical Theology*, p. 67.

[221] Cf. Matthew 7:13-14

[222] A person who does not know the truth of the subject matter may communicate knowledge of the subject matter to someone in an accidental way, if the matter can be communicated in this way. For example, I may learn how *not* to hit a baseball by watching someone else strike out, again and again. However, someone can only *give* what she has to give; so, "craftsmen can teach, while experienced people cannot" (*Metaphysics*, B 1, A 1, p. 3). In order for someone to say something to someone by analogy, there must exist in the speaker some "lingual *acquaintance* with the *situation* of the thing to be expressed; the *relations* of the two things [e.g., medicine and urine] to the further thing [e.g., health] must be known to us if the naming is not to be meaningless; so "if God were *fully unknown within* the

remind us that Christian *knowledge* of the truth of a human life comes to us in and through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is one with the Giver of eternal life.[223]

In the end, insofar as the work of coming to know the subject matter is necessarily prior to the work of going out to teach it, since one can only give what she has to give, in sacred science, the task of developing a *consistent doctrinal structure* by way of christological reflection, i.e., one that is not only coherent but which corresponds to the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ, is necessarily prior to the task of developing some credible *interpretation of reality*. However, while we think backwards, we live forwards, and in our lives, knowing when to *return* to the starting-point *on the basis of* our faith in Jesus Christ and when to *point* to the stopping-point *on the basis of* the hope of the Holy Spirit is not a function of knowledge, per se, but of wisdom. Knowledge "is built up on the basis of differentiations that stand the test of reality, since different phenomena can be explained as instances of an underlying principles (law)," but wisdom "is gained through differentiations which help us to orient ourselves in life."[224] Knowledge makes it possible for one to "*position* himself in relation to an order," or law, so that one can use it to orient himself, and wisdom, i.e., knowing that and how one knows or that and how one does not know an *order* and its differentiations, makes it possible for one "to *use* it (emphasis

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world and its human language, then responsible talk about God on the basis of pure analogy of relation would be impossible" (*God as the Mystery of the World*, p. 277). If we combine the model of "analogy of relation" (which solves a problem in logic) with the model of "analogy of proportionality" (which solves a problem in rhetoric), which "permits God to be expressed on the basis of a *nameable* relation to the world (or to something in it) *as* the unknown" (*God as the Mystery of the World*, p. 277), then we give ourselves have license to speak of God in the manner of the *via negativa*. But "it is intolerable to live in the awareness of a condition which comes into view only in order to disappear again into unknownness" (pp. 277-278); and faith in the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ, who is one with the Father, "forces theology to dispute" way the doctrine(s) of analogy has been used in the metaphysical tradition (p. 280).

[223] Cf. John 1:18

[224] *Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 47.

added) to position – and thus to orient – himself."[225] In chapter three, I will explore in some detail that and how the love of God, or charity, may appear, to the one who practices christological reflection, *as the beginning and end of a human life*. Furthermore, I will consider what coming to understand the love of God *as the beginning and end of a human life* might mean for "Christian Ethics" and for the life of the church. Finally, in doing this, I hope to make a contribution not only to the knowledge of the scholar but also, and mainly, to the wisdom of charity and to the life of the church.

[225] *Transcendence and the Secular World*, pp. 47-48.

Becoming *Friends of God*:
The Way of Salvation and the Importance of Practicing Charity for the Formation of the Virtue of Wisdom in the Life of the Church

In the previous chapter, we discussed the nature of the theologian's concern for coming to know "the ultimate significance" of things and how she aims to practice the virtue of science so as to (help others) transcend inadequate forms of self-knowledge by developing (and communicating) "a life orientation that aligns human life, not with penultimate circumstance, but with *ultimate presence*" – i.e., with "that without which nothing could be possible or become real."[1] Throughout this dissertation, we have been discussing the speculative intellectual virtues, and I have argued that, today, we seem to lack an appropriate sense of the importance of these virtues. In the previous chapter, it became clear that "nothing can possess ultimate significance for us and merit our absolute confidence and commitment unless it offers, or contributes towards, *salvation*"[2] – i.e., unless it helps us to make the transition from misery (the bad spirit) to blessedness (the good spirit). Furthermore, I have argued that the extent to which *we* can make the transition from misery to blessedness will depend on the extent to which *we* develop the freedom to *think* such a transition.

In this chapter, we will turn our attention away from the nature and importance of *science* and away from the task of analyzing and describing theology *as a science*, and we will turn our attention to the work of clarifying the nature and importance of *wisdom*. In particular, I will give the reader a theological account of the wisdom of charity,[3] and I

[1] *Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 44.
[2] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 217.
[3] Or the wisdom of the love of God.

will explore some of the implications of the call to Christian charity for the study of ethics and for the life of the church. Whereas we mainly asked, in the previous chapter, "'How is it possible for us to come to know ourselves as we are known by God?', or 'How is it possible for us to learn true self-knowledge?', in the present chapter, we will mainly ask: 'How can we become more familiar with the will of God so that we may more fully correspond to the goodness of God?', or 'How can we come to more perfectly *think* and *appropriate*, or *work to realize*, "the fellowship of eternal happiness"?'

In chapter one, we discussed how becoming perfectly human necessarily involves human acts of correspondence and how a human act of understanding is a condition for the possibility of a human act of correspondence. Until someone grasps some starting-point for an act of correspondence, she is incapable of a human act of correspondence, which essentially involves an act of human(e) intelligence. In chapter one, I argued that we may become free for human(e) intelligence, or free for authentic correspondence, by learning to practice conceptual justice in our conversations with others, which will require us to renounce the temptation to numb ourselves to the import of the word of the other. We will have to refuse to cooperate in practices that effectively anesthetize us to the import of the word of the other – e.g., practices like avoiding discourse and discussion. We called the "habit of knowing principles," or the power to grasp "starting-points," the speculative intellectual virtue of understanding, and we not only discussed how this virtue is a condition for the possibility of human(e) correspondence but also why we must learn to practice the moral virtue of justice so that some might develop the intellectual virtue of understanding. Finally, we looked at some examples of misunderstanding that have been committed by students of philosophy and religion and we gave special attention to the problem of logical inversions.

In chapter two, we discussed why someone might want to *correspond to God* – namely, for the sake of eternal life – and how the work of theology might prepare one to more fully correspond to the Word of God. We identified two main errors that might take place in theology: (1) *un*belief, or a failure to earnestly accept the *demand* of what has been revealed to us (a problem of the will); and (2) un*belief*, or a failure to adequately distinguish the *ultimate* from the merely preliminary (a problem of the intellect). One error makes it impossible for us to *stand* before God *whatever happens*; the other makes it impossible for us to stand *before God*, the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. We can prevent the artificial poverties that these errors may produce and promote "the good life" by learning to appreciate, to a greater extent than has become customary, today, the importance of individuality and humanity to "the good life." Indeed, whatever else it means for us to come to have eternal *life* by corresponding to God, it will involve *becoming* individuals and humans. Theologians, as such, ought to acknowledge this as they carry out their different tasks.

In this chapter, we will discuss the possibility of *fully* corresponding to God such that one may come to have life *to the full*. If we are going to have life to the full, we are going to have to develop individuality and humanity *fully*. In this chapter, I will give the reader a theological account of why coming to have life to the full will require us to think and work to become *friends of God*. If we are going to consistently move in the direction of "the good life," we are going to have to learn to order our lives in the direction of our true destiny – i.e., to know where we come from and where we are going. In short, we are going to have to cultivate wisdom. We can help one another become wise by speaking words of encouragement and correction to one another, but when we speak to others

about the truth of a human life, we cannot bring them to the end of eternal life by force.[4] Instead, we must speak in such a way that we help them, especially our students, to live in a "middle state" that is better than the state that they have been occupying. We have to "make an analogy."

I am convinced that it is best for us to practice not only the speculative intellectual virtues but also the theological virtues – i.e., faith, hope, and charity. So, in addition to the task of clarifying the nature and importance of wisdom, I will take up the tasks of making a distinction between the wisdom of (the love of) the world and the wisdom of (the love of) God and showing the reader why *thinking* human perfection *perfectly* only becomes possible for us as *we* receive and accept (i.e., practice) the theological virtues. With these tasks in mind and with the hope that "a gain to being" might "become an event" for the reader, I will speak of the importance of becoming *children* of God (faith), *servants* of God (hope), and *friends* of God (charity).[5] My hope is that the following pages will help the reader to come to see that the truth, or fulfillment, of individuality is immortality, that the truth of humanity is co-presence, and that we can only achieve the *continuity* of immortality and *intensity* of fully human(e) co-presence by way of participation in the mind and work of charity – i.e., by *thinking* the love of God for us and by *working* to

[4] I have said that we cannot bring another to the end of eternal life by force. Now, while I do think that we have a role to play in helping others determine themselves for this end, I do not mean to suggest that we are in a position to give someone "the good life." I will discuss the importance of giving one another encouragement and correction below, but I do not mean to suggest that whereas we cannot make someone "good-spirited" (*eudaimonic*) by force, we can, in our own power, make someone "good-spirited," in some other way – e.g., simply by persuading them to live rightly. Nor do I mean to suggest that whereas I cannot, in my own power, make the other "good-spirited," she can, in her own power, make herself "good-spirited" simply by choosing to live rightly. She will have a role to play in the process of becoming "good-spirited," but as sinners, we are not in a position to simply make ourselves "good-spirited." Instead, the possibility of becoming "good-spirited" only comes to us as a gift from God which we can accept (by "choosing life" and working to live together fully) or reject (by chasing pleasures and advantages and working to get rid of anything that might prevent us from enjoying such things securely).

[5] Cf. *Theological Essays*, pp. 70-71, § 16-24.

develop charitable character-friendships, as opposed to mainly, or even mostly, seeking to practice pleasure-friendships or advantage-friendships or non-charitable character-friendships.[6]

The Call to Wisdom

In chapter two, we discussed the way the teacher *as such* must live in the tension between the (rhetorical) need to *interest* her students and the (logical) need to *know* the truth of the subject matter. The (rhetorical) need to interest her students will require the teacher to translate what she has come to know, or to say the same thing *in other words*, and the (logical) need to know the truth of the subject matter will require her to carefully attend to the truth of that which has been disclosed to her so that she will be able to say *the same thing* in other words. Furthermore, insofar as one can only give what she has to give, I have argued that coming to "know the truth" is necessarily prior to having the capacity to "teach the student."[7] Nevertheless, in real time, someone may inherit an obligation to speak with authority before she has become confident in her knowledge of the truth. Where the teacher is under pressure to speak, she must restrain herself from *saying more than she knows*, and yet, she is not a good teacher unless she also embraces the challenge to speak up when the time is right – that is, unless she resists the temptation

[6] In perspectives of faith, the phrase "non-charitable character-friendships" is a contradiction in terms – where one lacks charity, one lacks true virtue, or true character. However, in perspectives of unfaith, it may seem possible to speak of virtue apart from charity. I have set the terms "charitable character-friendship" and "non-charitable character-friendship" in contrast, here, to anticipate the difference in the quality of the friendship made possible by faith and the quality of the friendship that is possible in unfaith. Becoming friends of God involves coming to practice a higher quality of friendship than the kinds of friendship that are possible in unfaith – through faith, hope, and charity.

[7] In other words, "the kingdom of God cannot as such be *brought* into language without *coming* into language, without x → a. Its truthful "reception according to the mode of the receiver" presupposes that what has been received (a) has come to us "according to the speaking God" (x). Our ability to speak responsibly of God depends on whether "God *comes* into language," whether "He is discussed, *enters* into words"; for "only to that extent can he also be *brought* into language." (*God as the Mystery of the World*, p. 295).

to despair of speaking, or the temptation to *say less than she knows*, when it is her turn to speak. Along with the authority to teach, every teacher inherits the ethical task of discovering the golden mean between presumption and despair.

In other words, teachers have to discern the difference between the time and the place for restraint and the time and the place for expression.[8] Someone who knows when and how to practice restraint and when and how to "go for it" (e.g., to speak her truth) is wise. Life demands decisions. We can only move in the direction of "the good spirit" if we become free to determine ourselves, or if we become *selves* who are free to order our lives toward an end. As I have argued in chapter two, if we want to move in the direction of the truth of a human life with sufficient consistency and power, we will have to develop *individuality* and *humanity*, but one does not learn how to be an individual or a human by being shown a picture of a person or a *homo sapiens*. A photograph, for example, is a product of an art and a science, it is a kind of conclusion drawn from a history of photography and from the study of optics. Likewise, our models – e.g., models of God and humanity – are also products of arts and sciences. Arts and sciences free us for acts like *making pictures* and *evaluating them as pictures*, but one may still wonder: 'what are we to do with the freedoms that arts and sciences provide?' or 'given certain freedoms, here and now, what can I do to move in the direction of the truth of a human life?' These questions may arise when we find ourselves "at the crossroads"[9] – where the sidewalk of single-minded adherence to a system or method or model has come to an end and a momentous decision has to be made.

[8] Cf. Proverbs 26:4-5.
[9] *Cf.* Proverbs 8:1-3.

Coming to have life to the full will require us to order our lives.[10] We will have to accept our freedom and responsibility for the work of determining ourselves and our situation, and we will have to learn to make wise decisions. Only those who have become wise are in a position to truly carry out the work of "judging the conclusions of science and the principles on which they are based."[11] Wisdom, in other words, is the power to make truly good judgments, or to order ourselves towards the truth of a human life. Living well will require us to make distinctions between "what is more important and what is less, what is an end and what is only a means, what is a cause and what is an effect, subordinating the latter to the former, and judging the latter in light of the former."[12] Becoming wise necessarily involves "knowing things in their mutual relations, introducing order among them, and relating them to their ultimate end."[13]

[10] Here, one may also speak of moving in the direction of eternal happiness, or "the good spirit." If we speak of moving in the direction of happiness, we do not mean to suggest that some particular "pursuit of happiness" should be so privileged that one comes to regard morality as "a way of acting which secures for a man what he wants," which would, to put it mildly, amount to "a very strange view of morality" (*Death and Immortality*, p. 23). In other words, if we speak of eternal happiness, we are not saying that prudential considerations should simply outweigh moral considerations. Instead, we have to locate moral considerations and prudential considerations in relation to the goodness of God, and we have to learn to think the right, the true, and the good in a trinitarian pattern, as I will argue below. It is because they do not mean to subordinate moral considerations to prudential considerations that they employ the term *eternal* in the phrase "eternal happiness." Likewise, when I speak of the possibility of immortality, later on, I am not trying to find an "ultimate vindication" for morality, or to provide a "reason for all" to accept a particular set of morals; instead, I am inviting others to understand the meaning of vindication, victory, triumph, happiness, etc. "*in terms of* immortality," as opposed to trying to "seek an external justification for why a man should be concerned about his immortal soul," which would "destroy the character of that concern" (*Death and Immortality*, p. 38). Indeed, "to try to show that one should worship God because he will win in the end, is not to talk of worshipping God at all" (*Death and Immortality*, p. 38). In what follows, I will speak of immortality with the understanding that "questions about the immortality of the soul" are not about whether or not someone can survive death (a blatant contradiction in terms) but, rather, are "questions concerning the kind of life a man is living" (*Death and Immortality*, p. 49).

[11] *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 57, a. 2, reply 2.

[12] *Paths to the Triune God*, p. 136.

[13] *Paths to the Triune God*, p. 136.

Those who have become wise consider "the highest cause,"[14] decide for "the highest good,"[15] and, where they can, they teach others "how to direct their intentions and actions to the ultimate end."[16] To become wise, one must become familiar with the highest causes, or with what it means for us to be alive, here and now, and with what it takes for us to become true, in God's creation, and one must do this by thinking and working in the direction of the highest good. In the perspective of faith, life is a gift and the Way of salvation is also a gift; so, we can only become truly wise if we let ourselves be guided by the Gift of life and follow the Way of salvation.[17] True wisdom only becomes possible for someone through her reception and acceptance in faith of the self-revelation of the Giver of eternal life; for, it is only by receiving "some foreknowledge of [our] end" so we may "direct [our] lives according to that end" that we may become truly wise.[18] In short, true wisdom is a kind of familiarity with the demand of the Word of God accepted in faith – a familiarity which one may seek to develop by corresponding to the Word of God.

It has been said that we become wise by considering the highest good, but some have asked: is anyone in a position to *think* (i.e. to understand and proceed to know and to become familiar with) the highest good? Is it possible for us – and if so, to what extent is it possible for us – to think our relationship to the Giver of eternal life? How can we even begin to think the similarity (e.g., the 'individuality' and 'humanity') between such dissimilars (e.g., God and man) given all of our "paltriness, inadequacy, impairment,

[14] *ST* I-II, q. 57, a. 2, response.
[15] *On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 15.
[16] *Aquinas on God*, p. 21.
[17] Cf. Galatians 5:16-17, 24-25.
[18] *Aquinas on God*, p. 21.

duplicity, and confusion?"[19] In chapter two, I explicated and elucidated the Christian answer to this question – "God makes Godself *understandable as God in Christ, and understood as God in Christ through the Spirit*" – and argued that, on the basis of the self-revelation of God, we can begin to work toward true individuality and true humanity, by seeking to "understand the understanding of God."[20] It is only possible for us to *think* God because God *speaks* or to become wise because Wisdom speaks.[21] Unless God speaks to us, we cannot approach her; but since God speaks, we can work from the "starting-point" of a hearing of faith[22] to the "stopping-point" of a truly human life – i.e., a life that flows from knowing ourselves as we are known by God and from desiring God's will "be done on earth as it is in heaven."[23] To reflect on who we are and where we are (e.g., economically, politically, & culturally) in relation to the Giver of eternal blessedness and to communicate orientational knowledge to others in a way that helps them to develop the freedom to orient themselves in the direction of real union with God: this is the task of theology.

This task will involve *thinking* the relationship between our regard for justice and our regard for truth. We may regard proposition *p* as true because it appears to be right, or to stand in an adequate relationship to thing x. Likewise, we may regard subject *s* to be true because she appears to be just, or to stand in an adequate relationship to the law. A proposition or a person may appear to be good, or lovable, on the basis of our acknowledgement of the law and our recognition that the proposition or person is right, or just, in accordance with the law. Said another way: our regard for her, or love for her,

[19] *Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 41.
[20] *Radical Theology*, pp. 65-67.
[21] Cf. Proverbs 8:1-3.
[22] Cf. Romans 10:14-17; Galatians 3:2-9.
[23] Cf. Matthew 6:10.

as true may proceed from our recognition of her as adequate or righteous, or from our concern for justice. Put yet another way, we may regard her as true "as a natural thing is said to be *true* so far as it is naturally constituted to produce a true [i.e., right] estimation of itself, just as on the contrary, things are said to be *false* [i.e., wrong] which are apt to seem what they are not or as they are not."[24]

However, one may ask: where does the love of justice or our ability to adequately distinguish between the right and the wrong come? What is the ground of correctness? I have answered this question in more detail in chapter one, but the short answer is that we come to regard proposition *p* as right because it appears to correspond to the self-disclosure of thing x, or to the truth which has occurred to us.[25] We regard subject *s* as right because she appears to correspond to the truth we have received and accepted. A proposition appears to be lovable, or good, on the basis of our acknowledgement of truth *t* and our recognition that the proposition or person is right, in accordance with the gift of truth *t*. Said another way: our regard for her, or love for her, *as right*, may proceed from our acceptance of the self-disclosure of thing x, or the occurrence of truth *t*. Put yet another way, we may regard something as right because "it fulfills that to which it is ordered by the divine intellect."[26]

In this way, the goodness, or lovability, of a proposition or a person may proceed from a concern for justice or from the occurrence of the truth. However, in reality, the self-disclosure of thing x, or the occurrence of the truth, is ontologically prior to adequacy,

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[24] *Metaphysics of St. Thomas*, p. 68; cf. *De Veritate*, I, 2.
[25] More specifically: "the correspondence between the discovery and that which is discovered, in the sense of an *adaequatio intellectus ad rem*, is ontologically possible only on the basis of the connection between that which is discovered and that which has already been discovered, on the basis of the overagainstness of the discoverer and that which is discovered, and so on the basis of the event in which that which is lets itself be discovered" (*Theological Essays*, p. 69).
[26] *Metaphysics of St. Thomas*, p. 68; cf. *De Veritate* I, 2.

or righteousness; for "even if the human intellect did not exist, things would still be said to be true in relation to the divine intellect."[27] Whether or not we recognize thing x, the truth of thing x is the truth of thing x – at least, in the mind of God.[28] The question we have to ask ourselves, as I put it in chapter one, is whether or not we are free to correspond with thing x. In other words, though we may seem right in our own minds,[29] are we *true* and *good*? Have our minds and our appetites been ordained to eternal life?[30] Is the truth of God, the Son, in our minds? Is the goodness of God, the Holy Spirit, in us? When we ask about the *truth* and *goodness* of something, we are asking about the *perfection*, or completion, of something – about the perfection of the mind in relation to something, when we ask about the truth, and about the perfection of the thing, when we ask about the good.[31] If we are going to *think* the perfection, or completion, of our relation to God, the Father, we cannot avoid these questions, which is to say: if we are going to *think* our salvation, we must not only inquire about the truth of the Son but also about the goodness of the Spirit.

Christian theologians, as such, make self-conscious efforts to *think* the relationship between the right, the true, and the good, by *thinking* the reality of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Throughout my dissertation I have spoken of moving in the direction of blessedness, or toward the truth of a human life. By recommending that we move in the direction of blessedness, I do not mean to suggest that, for us, when push comes to

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[27] *Metaphysics of St. Thomas*, p. 68; cf. *De Veritate* I, 2.
[28] In this sense, then, man is not the measure of things; rather, "the truth that is caused in the soul by things does not follow upon the soul's judgment, but upon the existence of the things. For from the face that the thing is or is not, utterance is said to be true or false, and the intellect for the same reason is said to be true of false" (*Metaphysics of St. Thomas*, p. 69; cf. *De Veritate* I, 2).
[29] Cf. Proverbs 14:12; See also Prov. 21:2; 12:15; and Judges 17:6; 21:25.
[30] As Thomas Aquinas points out: "the term *good* expresses ordination to appetite, *true* ordination to intellect, so it is that the Philosopher, in the sixth book of the *Metaphysics*, states that good and evil are in things, truth and falsity in the mind" (*Metaphysics of St. Thomas*, p. 67; cf. *De Veritate* I, 2.
[31] Cf. *Metaphysics of St. Thomas*, p. 77; cf. *De Vertitate* XXI, 1.

shove, prudential considerations should ultimately trump moral considerations. At best, this would amount to the kind of pragmatism that I have criticized in chapter one. At the same time, as I have argued in chapter two, the occurrence of truth, which comes to us as a gift from beyond ourselves, calls us to *go beyond* the untruth of inherited laws. In my view, we will not become good-spirited (*eudaimonic*) by pitting justice against truth, or justice against love, or truth against love. Instead, if we want to become good-spirited, we will have to become friends of God, who love one another with a love for justice and truth.[32] We will have to learn to *think* the reality of ourselves and our situation in trinitarian pattern. We will have to locate ourselves in relation to what is right and what is true, and we will have to order our efforts to *think on* and *work for* what is right and true by seeking to understand and answer the call to justice and the call to truth through participation in the love, or goodness, of God.[33]

Unless we *think* the love of God for us and for our neighbors, we will be unable to consistently proceed from the starting-point to the stopping-point of Christian theology. Put another way, only the one who, on the basis of her acceptance of the love of God, self-consciously *thinks* her relationship to custom and revelation is *doing theology*. Those who are merely using their words to establish certain practices or to bring about particular ends but are not working to develop the power to *think* the relationship of their words to the right, the true, and the good (by developing the necessary speculative intellectual virtues) are, at best, only engaging in idle talk and are, at worst, manipulating others for the sake of their selfish desires. Since they do not even try to "know the why" completely,

[32] Cf. Micah 6:8.

[33] One might even say that chapter one is about the way our love of truth proceeds from our grasp of the right; that chapter two is about the way our love of the right proceeds from the occurrence of the truth; and that chapter three is about way the love of justice and the love of truth should be determined by *thinking* and *working* through the acceptance of the love of God.

they are not practicing *sacred science*, except in a partial, or corrupt, way; and insofar as they have not come to "know the why," they remain incapable of practicing *sacred doctrine*, except in an accidental, or "experimental," way because one can only teach what one knows or give what one has to give (though this is not to deny that God may work through our actions *in spite of* our corrupt, or only partially good, intentions).[34]

Speaking to Wisdom

Today, it is important for us to distinguish between *theology* and *God-talk* because many "friends of religion" have expressed a desire to (help others) speak about God more "responsibly" but have not wanted to bother themselves or their audiences with the work of developing the power to *think* (our relationship to) the Giver of "the good spirit."[35] Instead, they have presumed they could speak of God "responsibly" by *thinking* in an unspiritual way. They have presumed that they could speak of God "responsibly" by merely crafting motivational *pictures* or by reducing the possibility and role of human

[34] Cf. Genesis 50:20.

[35] If they were to bother themselves with this work, they would have to turn away from the prospect of advancing their causes and their careers for a season and would have to follow the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:1-2). Only the one who is willing to contemplate the burdens of this life can perform the priestly function for others. Today, scholars tend to identify themselves with the (prophetic) vocation of speaking to the powers that be, or, more specifically, the task of speaking against 'the satan' who presides over the powers that be. Those who identify, unmask, and engage 'the satan' may have to suffer all the wrath made possible by the powers that be, but those who do it well may at least expect to draw an audience. A crowd will gather to see someone fall. The wicked, who are many, respond so passionately to the battle cry of "Equality!" not so much because they desire to become equal to those who possess superior virtue but because they want to bring them down to their level so as to ensure that no one has an advantage over them (cf. *On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 91); for the wicked, who are many, are eager to get rid of anything that prevents them and their group from enjoying temporal goods securely (cf. *On Free Choice of the Will*, pp. 7-8, 11). So, although, in the end, her audience may turn against her and demand her crucifixion, the prophet can expect to draw a crowd. However, those who are called to sit with others and call them out of shyness (i.e., mistrust of humanity; cf. *Lectures on Ethics*, p. 210) and enmity are threatened with unemployment and have to convince others to meet with them and must wait around for the other to show up, often only to find out that the other, unconvinced of her need for any greater intelligence or of the possibility of greater happiness, has skipped out on her appointment. Today, it seems that many fear this kind of insecurity more than they fear the cross. It seems many fear the Garden of Gethsemane more than the Cross of Golgotha. We can see this reflected in the general population's tendency to rank their fear of (having their own shyness and enmity exposed by means of) public speaking higher than their fear of death on their lists of greatest fears.

intelligence to the possibility and role of *reasoning* in the mode of technical reason, from an abstract, egocentric, epistemological *guarantee* – e.g., that whatever one finds to be clearly and distinctly "within him" cannot be proven false by another, or the abstract assurance that A = A[36] – to a serviceable and agreeable "image of God." I have argued that those who reduce the possibility and promise of human intelligence to the possibility and promise of modern cognitive techniques have not only committed an offence against *themselves and others* by endangering the freedom of the individual but also an offence against *God* by endangering the blessedness of humanity. On the basis of their projects, or their own projections, they have sparked important movements and built impressive careers, but for the sake of their projections and for the pleasures and advantages they have promised us, God has been "talked to death"[37] and religions have had to suffer numerous rounds of "friendly fire."[38]

Whereas many "friends of religion" have practiced pleasant and advantageous God-talk on the basis of some image of God that aims to capture the attention of those who share in "a new sensibility," I have argued for the practice of a Christian theology to be carried out on the basis of faith in the self-revelation of God, and I have argued that *we* can move in the direction of life and blessedness by practicing Christian theology. At this point, wanting to secure for herself "the knowledge of good and evil,"[39] one might ask: what kind of speech is appropriate for speaking about God on the basis of the gift

[36] Cf. *God as the Mystery of the World*, p. 117.
[37] Indeed, the greatest threat to the community of faith comes from within. So, Eberhard Jüngel warns: "[theology] must and should be done so that our talk about God does not end up silencing him. Compared to atheistic thoughtlessness, this is the much greater danger for theology and for the Christian faith; that God will be talked to death, that he is silenced by the very words that seek to talk about him" (*God as the Mystery of the World*, p. vii)
[38] As Phillips observes: "harm can be done to religious beliefs by the very philosophical analyses which set out to defend them" (*Religion and Friendly Fire*, p. ix), and, throughout the history of philosophy of religion, "religious beliefs have been *distorted* by religion's friends" (*Ibid*, p. 2).
[39] Cf. Genesis 3:5

of the faith of Jesus Christ (δια πιστεως Ιησου Χριστου)? Now, I have already argued that the theologian will have to restrain herself from saying more or less than she knows, and I have also argued that it is only possible for the theologian *as a sinner* to come to know the truth of a human life if God speaks to her in such a way that God gives her (the form and content of) the truth, or makes her into *a justified sinner*. Still, the question may arise and one may become (over)eager to ask: "what signs mark the difference between (the discourses of) faith and (the discourses of) unfaith"?[40]

Like others before me, I suspect that it is "an evil and adulterous generation" which insists on a sign,[41] and yet I acknowledge that this may be a legitimate question for us to ask insofar as we "live among a people of unclean lips," that we find ourselves caught in the midst of "the present evil age"[42] and have a need to make distinctions between what makes for authentic faith, as opposed to inauthentic faith, so as to "press on to take hold of that for which Christ took hold of [us]."[43] and that the teacher *as such* has to find ways to meet her students where they are.[44] Nevertheless, in some cases, it may be best for the teacher to confront her student and redirect the attention of the student to *why* he

[40] No one can *say* "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit (Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:3), but it is not the case that everyone who *utters* the phrase "Jesus is Lord" speaks to the truth of a human life (Cf. Matthew 7:21.). We will have occasions to "test the spirits" at work in the words of others (Cf. 1 John 4:1), though we should be careful that we do not become obsessed with the work of discovering the errors of others; for, as Kierkegaard has pointed out, the work of tracking down hypocrites can only produce "the most mediocre defense against hypocrisy" (*Works of Love*, p. 15). What is more important to our life and blessedness is that we learn to examine ourselves (which we can only come to do as we receive help from our friends), knowing that the difference between the one who genuinely *says* "Jesus is Lord" and the one who disingenuously *utters* "Jesus is Lord" is this: the one who has authentic faith has come to "repent and believe in the good news" (Cf. Mark 1:15) so that she is determined to obey his word (Cf. 1 John 1:5.), even as she speaks to her enemies (Cf. Matthew 5:43-48). We know this, but since there is disagreement among us concerning what obedience to the Word of God looks like, or amounts to, in some contexts, the question may arise: in this or that context, what makes an analogy, such as "Jesus is Lord," an analogy of faith, or how should "the rule of faith" be applied in *this* culture, *this* city, or *this* company, here and now?

[41] Matthew 12:39; Cf. Matthew 16:4; Luke 11:29.

[42] Cf. Galatians 1:4.

[43] Cf. Philippians 3:12 (NIV).

[44] Cf. Isaiah 6:5, 9.

wants to ask this question, as when Augustine question's Evodius's desire to "hunt down this mysterious evil teacher"[45] and, later on, his desire to search "for a defense for people whom no law condemns."[46] In other cases, it may be best for the teacher to firmly warn the student, saying: "the one who is busily occupied tracking down hypocrites, whether he succeeds or not, had better see to it that this is not also a hypocrisy, inasmuch as such discoveries are hardly the fruits of love."[47] However, the teacher should also keep watch over herself, lest her unwillingness to give the student any positive answer is rooted in her own unexamined misanthropy, or as Pink Floyd aptly put it: her own "dark sarcasm."

In many cases, it may be best for the teacher to provide a more positive answer – one that has been crafted to bring the student to a place that is nearer to the truth than the position the student has taken, or to a "middle term." To speak in such a way that one aims to bring someone nearer to the truth by speaking a middle term to them, whether this term mainly helps another by providing (emotional) support or (intellectual) correction, is to make an "analogy." Since creatures are not in a position to exhaustively comprehend the Creator (though, as humans, we can hope to attain to blessedness, or to the truth of a human life, by clinging to the self-revelation of the Giver of truth),[48] we can only responsibly hope to occupy and to help others occupy "a middle state" between complete wisdom and complete ignorance.[49] Nonetheless, we can hope to (help others) come to occupy a better state by speaking to (the Giver of) the truth of a human life by way of analogy. So, keeping in mind that "there can be no responsible talk about God without analogy," this chapter should be understood as an attempt to

[45] *On the Free Choice of the Will*, p. 3.
[46] *Ibid*, p. 9.
[47] *Works of Love*, p. 15.
[48] *ST* I-II, q. 12, a. 7, main response and reply to objection 1.
[49] *Cf. The Symposium*, p. 37.

identify the end of (the discourse of) faith and help others locate themselves in relation to this end by way of analogy and as an attempt to do so in such a way that "it will be entirely accurate to say of [my] human words that they correspond to God."[50]

Now, we have been and, here, still are discussing a cultural problem – namely, our growing ignorance of the importance of the speculative intellectual virtues for the work of thinking salvation; so, it is appropriate, here, for me to remind the reader: "the problem of Christ and culture can and must come to an end only in the realm beyond all study in the free decisions of individual believers and responsible communities."[51] While we have a duty to attend to the ways others have responded and are responding to enduring problems, the church cannot guarantee that all doctrines and practices which were normative in the past will be or should be normative in the future, which is not to say that we cannot give reasons to believe in the unsurpassability of the self-revelation of the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. However, it is to say that the *content* of a Christian life cannot truly be defined in a one-size-fits-all manner because the difference between the life of faith and the life of unfaith lies in the *way* someone receives what happens to her (i.e., the possibilities that have been played into her way) and in the *way* she either accepts opportunities to move in the direction of life and blessedness or does not. The one who believes in Jesus Christ has been saved by the grace of God and lives *before God*.[52] We can work to encourage one another to live in this way, and we can

[50] *God as the Mystery of the World*, p. 281.
[51] *Christ and Culture*, p. 233.
[52] On the difference between the believer and the nonbeliever, Wittgenstein once remarked:
> "Suppose someone were a believer and said: 'I believe in a Last Judgment,' and I said: 'Well, I'm not so sure. Possibly.' You would say that there is an enormous gulf between us. If he said, 'There is a German aeroplane overhead,' and I said 'Possibly I'm not sure,' you'd say we were fairly near. . . . The difference might not show up at all in any explanation of the meaning. . . . It will show, not by reasoning or by appeal to ordinary grounds for belief, but rather by regulating for in all his life." (*Lectures and Conversations*, pp. 53-54)

summarize and clarify what we know about this kind of work and this kind of life; but, we belittle ourselves and our intelligence if we think that someone can simply capture the *content* of the faith of Jesus Christ once-and-for-all within some definitive doctrinal statement.[53] To claim that one has done so would display a lack of character.[54]

Put another way, one should not understand the problem of the speakability of God, the Giver of eternal life, as a problem of trying "to overcome in Promethean fashion the qualitatively infinite chasm between God and man."[55] Whatever wings one might fashion for oneself with materials borrowed from (her limited experience with) the earth will not be able to withstand the fires of the rising sun. Indeed, it is unlikely that the same prophetic "image of God" or "theological system" will remain relevant, or continue to support authentic discussion, for more than thirty years![56] This is not to say that one should not bother to speak of God. All of the words we speak should be spoken toward the Giver of blessedness! Instead, the point that I want to make and have been making is that those who wish to speak of God responsibly should seek to "do justice to the

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As I have argued in chapter one, the one who believes in God does not hold her belief tentatively and wager belief in proportion to the evidence. Instead, it is closer to the truth to say the believer believes in the Word of God the way a child believes in his mother, whose "veracity and authority is to him no abstract truth or item of general knowledge, but is bound up with that image and love of her which is part of himself, and makes a direct claim on him [to obey] (*A Grammar of Assent*, p. 35)." Furthermore, about the contrast between belief and unbelief, in a religious sense, one might say: "many a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion. A conclusion is but an opinion; it is not a thing which *is*, but which we are '*quite sure about*' (*A Grammar of Assent*, p. 89). This kind of conviction may strike the contemporary reader as rather dangerous; however, I will remind the reader that something of this kind is necessary for those who wish to become an individual, as opposed to a mere person for hire.

[53] Indeed, it is inappropriate for theologians to approach Christian doctrines merely as "definitive doctrinal statement[s] of a truth that we cannot understand but only accept or reject"; instead, theologians should regard them as "hermeneutical guideline[s] that [induct] us into a process of reorienting our life toward the creative presence of God and [help] us to move through the questions and answers posed and provoked by the gift structure of Christian faith again and again in our own way and at our particular place in history" (*Crucified and Resurrected*, pp. 39-40).

[54] Cf. *Philosophy's Cool Place*, p. 121.

[55] *God as the Mystery of the World*, p. 282.

[56] Cf. *Paths to the Triune God*, p. 321; *Dialectic of Salvation*, p. 1.

difference between God and man by seeking to understand the *nearness* of God."[57] The knowledge of God is not to be mistaken for anything that can be built solely upon the immediate assurance that A = A, or upon any knowledge that "was within" someone prior to the gift, or advent, of the One who has come near. It is only because God has come near to us that we are able to draw near to Her. We must remember: "while we still were sinners Christ died for us."[58] It is only because God has spoken to us that we are in a position to think and speak of Her.[59]

We are only able to truly discern the difference between faith and unfaith as we come, by the grace of God, to recognize the contexts in which we find ourselves. As we receive power from the Spirit, we must work to become *truly situated*, or rightly oriented, in an environment, a society, and a culture, and in a church, or a community of faith, which is embedded in these. Becoming truly situated will involve not only learning "right doctrine" (orthodoxy) and engaging in "right practice" (orthopraxy) but also developing "right experience" (orthopathy).[60] We have not arrived unless our *being-there* has wholly been transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ. In each of these ways, we must receive and accept the power to become his disciples.[61] For the sake of "the good life" and "the good spirit," there is more work to be done than simply discovering and correcting wrong teachings and wrong practices for the sake of speculative pleasures or world-historical advantages. Those who cling to mediocre goods, such as pictures of their own nature that have been developed in unfaith, reject the gifts of God's Spirit because "they are

[57] *God as the Mystery of the World*, p. 282.
[58] Cf. Romans 5:8.
[59] For an instructive discussion concerning "the problem of sexist language" in theology, cf. *Paths to the Triune God*, pp. 11, 249-258.
[60] Cf. *The New Creation*, pp. 146-149.
[61] Cf. Acts 1:8.

foolishness to them."[62] It is important for us to acknowledge that the demand of the Word of God seems foolish to those who live in unfaith. Insofar as we live in unfaith, we experience the demand as foolishness.

As we speak to others living in unfaith, it is important that we recognize this aspect of our/their disorientation. Otherwise, we might be tempted to "help" them by reducing the demand of the Word of God to the sort of demand that fits neatly with their actual self-image, or their picture of who they *essentially* are, which has been developed in a perspective of unfaith. When we "help" others this way, we tempt them to presume they already know the truth of a human life apart from faith in the self-revelation of God (e.g., by means of some special insight) or to (continue to) resign themselves to the fate of only knowing themselves in an unspiritual way – by simply accepting their "contingent and actual identity as [their] true one" and trying to content themselves "with identifying and locating [themselves] relative to the relativities of this finite existence."[63] In either case, we tempt them to think that they do not have to work to *become individuals and humans* as they, by the grace of God, *come to have*, or *learn*, true self-knowledge. Whenever someone operates in a mode of presumption or despair, both of which are forms of foolish complacency,[64] she separates herself from the possibility of coming to know "the highest causes" by trusting in the Lord, as opposed to merely leaning on our own understanding.[65] We are not born in possession of wisdom.[66] Instead, we need help from

[62] Cf. 1 Corinthians 2:14.
[63] *Theology and Philosophy*, p. 208.
[64] Cf. Proverbs 1:32-33.
[65] Cf. Proverbs 3:5-6.
[66] Here, one should keep in mind that wisdom is for grown-ups. There are, certainly, very outstanding students among us, but there are no prodigies of wisdom because, as Cornel West rightly remarks: "You can't sing the blues at four when you don't know what the hell you singin' about. You can be a mathematical prodigy, and you can be a prodigy in classical music, like Mendelssohn or Mozart. But, you can't be a blues prodigy. You gonna have to live. You gonna have to suffer. You gonna have to have some pain and hurt in your life, in order to sing some blues" (Blues for Smoke, MOCA TV, Episode

others to develop wisdom, and someone who is unable to learn and consider the highest causes is unable to move in the direction of wisdom. Someone like this will not work to develop herself as she should, and one who continues like this is destined to become, at best, "a useless man"; if not today, then in thirty years' time.[67]

If we insist that our nature simply "is what it is," even if we admit that we do not yet fully know "what it is," we will not work to truly develop the freedom of self-consciousness. If we do not have a desire to locate ourselves in relation to where we come from and where we are going or if we simply regard the past and the future as "more of the same," we will not work to become truly present. We will not practice "waiting for God" so that we may become free to receive the unique opportunities that are being played into our way and to accept them as opportunities for us to move in the direction of, or determine ourselves for, eternal life. Instead, our lives will be dominated by error and anxiety and characterized by ignorance and violence. We will continue to accuse ourselves of weaknesses and failures in ways that turn our gaze away from opportunities to live well (i.e., to be given over to the devil)[68] or to dominate others in inhuman(e) ways in our self-important attempts to wrest victory from this world of death and meaninglessness (i.e., to be given over to the satan).[69]

Becoming truly present will require us to truly acknowledge where we come from and where we are going and work to get there. We will have to "enter the kingdom of heaven," or begin to locate ourselves and others in relation to the beginning and the

17; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6uVK4EQK7L4). For human beings, becoming wise necessarily involves coming to know what is wrong with the world and with my actual self, and one is not born with this knowledge.

[67] Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1, Chapter 5, p. 6.

[68] Or "the accuser"

[69] Or "the adversary"

end of a human life and order our steps according to God's will so that we may withstand the devil and the satan.[70] Becoming truly present will require us to acknowledge our true location *coram Deo* and to order our steps toward our true destiny – through faith, hope,

[70] My use of this typology has scriptural precedents. In the New Testament (except in the Gospel of Mark, where no temptation is attributed to "the devil," only "the satan," and the Book of Revelation which sometimes refers to "the devil, or Satan" [e.g., Rev. 12:9; 20:2]) , when the temptation to evil takes on the form of a desire to get rid of a burden, whether by deception/manipulation (Matt. 4:1, 5, 8; Luke 4:3, 5-6, 9; Acts 13:10; Eph. 4:27; 6:11; 1 Peter 5:8) or exclusion/elimination (Luke 8:12; John 6:70; 8:44; 13:2; Eph. 4:27), or to seek pleasures in excess (Matt. 25:41; 1 Timothy 3:6-7) or in an altogether irrational manner (Matt. 13:39; 2 Timothy 2:26; James 4:7), or to, in any way, become a slave to the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15), the temptation or problem is attributed to "the devil." However, when the temptation to evil takes the form of a desire to compete with another and cause division (Matt. 4:10; 12:26; 16:23; Luke 10:18; 11:18; Romans 16:20; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:14; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; 1 Timothy 1:20) or to gain some advantage for oneself (Luke 22:4-5; Luke 22:31; John 13:27 [cf. John 12:6]; Acts 5:3; Acts 26:18), the temptation or problem is attributed to "the satan."

Luke 13:16 seems to be an exception to this rule, as does 2 Corinthians 12:7. In Luke 13:16, a women who is crippled is said to have been bound by Satan for eighteen long years, but, perhaps, Luke means to place the emphasis on her disadvantage relative to the privileged position of the leader of the synagogue who was "indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath" (Luke 13:14). In 2 Corinthians 12:7, Paul speaks of a "thorn . . . in the flesh" as "a messenger of Satan," but, here, with this phrase, perhaps, the emphasis is not to be placed so much on the fact that he has been made weak by the thorn in his flesh (though he does gain an occasion for boasting in the power of Christ on account of his weakness [2 Corinthians 12:9]) but on the fact that all those who compete with one another for advantages and boast in what they have achieved will have to face the contingency of their gains and the mediocrity of their achievements someday. In other words, it is possible to read "a messenger of Satan," as *a messenger who reveals the futility of the satanic pursuit of worldly advantages*.

Now, one could also make a case that "the devil" is, in the New Testament, identified mainly with the corruption of the mind and then the works of someone through the corruption of the mind; whereas "the satan" is mainly identified with the corruption of works and then minds through the corruption of one's own works or the works of another. This might help to explain why Mark does not speak of "the devil." After all, Mark has his eyes, most of all, on the powerful works of Jesus Christ. Of course, in popular religion, the devil and the satan are not usually differentiated in a very careful and attentive way. This simple identification of "the devil" and "the satan" with one another as "the tempter," or the source of our temptations, is not straightforwardly problematic and has a precedent in scripture (cf. Rev. 12:9; 20:2), but something is lost, here, when no distinctions are made. 2 Thessalonians 2:9 suggests a way to understand the interrelations of "the devil" and "the satan." There, we are warned that the satan "will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie" (NIV). One might speak of the "the devil" as the liar, and "the satan" as the user of lies and the abuser of others, through the lies spoken into our minds by "the devil."

In broad terms, one might say that "the devil" is the enemy within and that "the satan" is the enemy without; however, this kind of inner/outer dualism may tempt some to prioritize the problem of "the devil" or the problem of "the satan" in a one-sided way, such that the predicament of "the whole person" never comes into view. So, I prefer to identify "the devil" with the temptation to lie to oneself and to others about the nature and import of the burdens of this life and "the satan" with the temptation to use whatever means necessary to overcome challenges and secure advantages for oneself and others. Finally, I have found this to be a helpful way to understand why, in the Gospel of Matthew, "the tempter" who comes to Jesus in the wilderness is identified as "the devil" in Matt. 4:8 and again in 4:11 (and also in 4:1 and 4:5) but is called "Satan" in 4:10. In Matt. 4:8, the temptation is to exaggerate and then crave the splendor of the kingdoms of the world. In Matt 4:10, the temptation is to use any means necessary to gain the splendid powers that one craves.

and love. Toward this end, as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to do so, we should aspire to *think* paths to blessedness *theologically*, as opposed to merely *picturing* human nature in accordance with some "new sensibility." To think something *theologically* is to locate it in relation to the reality of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and to order one's steps by remembering its beginning in God and anticipating its end, or perfection, in God. In other words, we order how we live (in relation to something) by telling a story (about the thing). We become wise by becoming familiar with what is true and good in and through the stories we tell and the stories we are told, and we grow in wisdom by being exposed to "the dialectic of familiarity and strangeness" that takes place in and through metaphorical language[71] and by then wondering at possible "gains in being" introduced to us through our participation in the dialectic of familiarity and strangeness.[72]

So, if one wants to speak of the way of salvation so as to invite others to wonder at some possible "gain in being," i.e., so as to *address* and *call* her audience, one should speak in a way that "fluctuates in the middle space between the arbitrary possibility of 'this way and also another' on the one hand and the rigid necessity of 'this way and no other way' on the other – as one does when one engages in narration.[73] In the following pages, I discuss the possibility of Christian perfection by participation in the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, or by becoming *children of God*, *servants of God*, and *friends of God*. Much of what I have to say could be said "this way and also another."

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[71] Metaphorical language helps us to grow in wisdom in this way: "it makes both a state of affairs and a pattern of language use strange by employing an unusual word to signify a state of affairs in an unusual way. At the same time, it presupposes that this familiarity will be *assimilated into* the familiar world, so that the familiar world will be *expanded*" (*Theological Essays*, p. 68). Metaphors point beyond our fixations with something actual in the direction of the possibilities that surround what is actual, and they invite us to wrestle with "one aspect of the sense [of a word] that is normally attributed to the word in the semantic unity of a sentence." In this way, metaphors "expand and specify the narrated world" (*Theological Essays*, pp. 68-69).

[72] Cf. *Theological Essays*, pp. 70-71.

[73] *God as the Mystery of the World*, p. 305.

Indeed, much of what I aim to say has been said in different ways: for example, when I argue that Christian perfection, or coming to have eternal life, involves (a) becoming a truly *individual* human, (b) becoming a truly *human(e)* individual, and (c) becoming these more *continually* and more *intensely*, one may remember that Aquinas has argued that for beauty three things are required: "(a) integrity or perfection, (b) right proportion or consonance, and (c) splendor of form."[74]

At the same time, there is a certain necessity at work in the way I present the following discussions. Whichever terms we use, these *are* the conditions for beauty, and it seems that any adequate discussion of our sanctification must include some mention of our justification and our glorification. While these terms may not be employed, unless we *think* the sacred realities to which these terms point – i.e., the beginning and the end of our transition from misery to blessedness – we will lose our bearings. So, while I am chiefly concerned with the possibility and the call to become friends of God by living according to God's will, or according to the wisdom of charity, one cannot make sense of the idea of charity without some recourse to the ideas of faith and hope, just as one cannot adequately think the reality of the Father without also thinking the reality of the Son and the Spirit.

Furthermore, while I accept and acknowledge that "the gain in being asserted by the Christian faith" is, indeed, "primarily to be proclaimed as the justification of the sinner,"[75] with the following pages, I am mainly trying to say something about possibilities for sanctification (i.e., coming to have a tendency toward eternal life and blessedness)

[74] *Metaphysics of St. Thomas*, p. 88; cf. *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 39, a. 8. Note: "splendor of form" could also be translated as "brightness" or "clarity," because "things are called beautiful which have a bright color" (*ST*, vol. 1, p. 383).
[75] *Theological Essays*, p. 70.

and glorification (i.e., coming to rest in eternal life and blessedness). However, one cannot speak in a Christian manner about the possibility of sanctification by grace through hope and the possibility of glorification by grace through charity without saying something about the reality of our justification by grace through faith. Nonetheless, I will focus more on the relationship between sanctification and glorification, here, because it seems to me that this relationship has not been given sufficient attention in recent days, especially among Protestant theologians. By clarifying for the reader the nature of the end of our salvation and its relation to the beginning of our salvation, it is my hope that the discussion that takes place in the following pages will become an occasion for the reader to hear anew and to begin to proclaim an "eschatological declaration of time, which *interrupts* world history as it proceeds 'through the course of time' with an announcement of its end based on the turning point which has taken place in the history of Jesus Christ" and that my reflections on the heart of the Christian "declaration of time" might empower the reader to *rethink her humanity and remake herself and her situation* by encouraging her to embrace "a new attitude of man to the world in which he lives."[76]

Becoming Children of God

Our desire to "enter the kingdom of heaven" does not occur in a vacuum. Human efforts to search for happiness have a starting-point: "it is the experience of contingencies such as accidents, sickness, hunger, oppression, death, and vulnerability to sin in all its

[76] *God as the Mystery of the World*, p. 301. As Eberhard Jüngel has pointed out: "since both the end which is to announced to the world and the turning point which has already happened are possibilities which *have come* to the world together with the God who has come to the world, the announcement of a new age in the history of the world can assert itself only indirectly in that it demonstrates itself in terms of the being of the world until now," and "this happens in that the announcement of the new age makes the world's being up to now appear as a being *which has been made old* by the *new age* and which is predetermined now to pass away" (*Ibid*, pp. 301-302). In the following pages, I venture to give a theological account of some possibilities for the transformation of the being of the world, from age to age.

concrete historical manifestations, which motivates the search for happiness."[77] As I have argued in chapter one, the question of truth arises in response to and (if not explicitly then at least implicitly) in protest to some experience of dissatisfaction. This is not to deny that God is the author of our salvation. It is only to say that the work of truly locating ourselves in relation to the beginning and the end of our lives necessarily involves apprehending the contingency of our own existence, or squarely facing (the mediocrity of)[78] our birth, our self, and our death,[79] and making a strong effort to become a "self-affirming self,"[80] who "takes the anxiety of nonbeing into [herself]" and courageously affirms herself *in spite of* nonbeing.[81] As a condition for the possibility of such spiritual self-affirmation, we have to acknowledge: "we and our world *might not have been*" and yet "our world and we *are* . . . though we could not have been."[82] We have to embrace the knowledge that we might not have been, that we might not make it through the night, and that we could have become different than what we have become.

Without trying to escape from our freedom,[83] we have to face our experiences of *thrownness* – that "we find ourselves thrust into a finite life with limited chances," that "we experience this as a challenge, a burden, or a gift," and that "the way it appears to us is decisive for our way of orienting ourselves in our world and in dealing with the chances given to us."[84] If we tend to experience *being-there* as a burden, we will tend to accuse ourselves and others of weaknesses and failures in ways that effectively turn our eyes and

[77] *Paths to the Triune God*, p. 164.
[78] So that "we can acquire the virtue of humility," which is a far more precious treasure than all [worldly] progress (*Waiting for God*, pp. 59-60).
[79] Cf. footnote # 41 from Introduction.
[80] *The Courage to Be*, p. 29.
[81] *The Courage to Be*, p. 66.
[82] *Becoming Present*, p. 133.
[83] Cf. *The Courage to Be*, p. 49.
[84] *Becoming Present,* p. 133.

theirs away from opportunities to live well. If, instead, we tend to experience *being-there* as a challenge, we will be tempted to "win at all costs" and will tend to dominate others in inhuman(e) ways. If we experience *being-there* as a gift, we will tend to live a life of giving and forgiving (i.e. a life of charity). Some are children of the devil (*ho diabolos*); some, children of the satan (*ho satan*); some, children of the god (*ho theos*).[85] Whether or not we become children of God will depend on whether or not, by receiving and accepting the self-revelation of God, we come to experience *being-there* as a gift.

Now, we are not in a position to simply choose which movements our bodies and minds immediately produce in response to earthly events or what *being-there* feels like in the moment, but we can work to improve (our experience of) *being-there* by learning to interpret our own emotions and feelings in a different light.[86] Of all the activities that we can practice, or of all the operations we can perform, the act of contemplating the beginning and the end of our emotions and feelings has long been celebrated, by philosophers, at least, as the most excellent, or most powerful (*krastistē*), form of human activity and also the most sustainable form of human activity, "for we are more able to contemplate continuously than we are to do anything else whatever."[87] Contemplation is the most excellent form of human activity insofar as it is only by thinking about ourselves and our situation that we can *infinitely* transcend ourselves and our situation. Moreover, whenever contemplation is enacted virtuously, it promises to make one self-sufficient, or

[85] For a discussion of the distinction between "the devil" and "the satan," see footnote #70. For a brief, but very helpful discussion of the history of the formation of the concept of "the god," cf. *Theology and Philosophy*, pp. 217-218.
[86] As I am using the terms, here, an emotion is an involuntary movement (e.g., an elevation of the heart rate, or a "leap" from one thought, or pattern of thought, to another) and a feeling is a passive "being inwardly conscious of" an occurrence (cf. *The New Creation*, p. 152), or "immediate self-consciousness" (cf. *The Christian Faith*, § 3.2, p. 6). As I am using the terms, an emotion is a transition on the plane of potentiality/actuality; whereas, a feeling is a transition on the plane of possibility/reality.
[87] *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 10, Chapter 7, p. 224.

to provide a way for one to overcome her restlessness. We all need the necessities of life, but "when these necessities have been supplied sufficiently, the just [i.e., political] person needs others toward whom and with whom he will act justly, and similarly with the moderate person, the courageous, and each of the rest," whereas "the wise person . . . is capable of contemplating even when by himself, and the wiser he is, the more capable of doing so he will be."[88] Virtuous thinking is the most sustainable form of human activity in the sense that it, alone, is "cherished for its own sake" and is most conducive to rest, whereas doing and making aim to bring about something apart from the act of doing or making – things that very often require "external equipment"[89] and can only be maintained "without leisure."[90]

The (economic) freedom of choice and the (political) freedom of action are very valuable. Every mortal should be concerned with what he can make of his life, and every human should be concerned with what he can do for himself and for others. We should earnestly seek to develop these freedoms; nevertheless, there is something divine present in someone who has come to have freedom as autonomy. She is free to co-determine the way she will experience her emotions and her feelings, by accepting or rejecting her memories of them. As she receives and accepts the Word of Truth, she becomes free to participate in the immortality of the Soul of the world – i.e., to experience her world in the light of glory, or interpret her emotions and feelings in a spirit of gratitude for the Gift of salvation, such that she comes to live a life of grace.[91] Those who fully accept the Word of Truth and seek to "make [themselves] immortal, insofar as that is possible"[92] will "love

[88] *NE*, Book 10, Chapter 7, p. 224.
[89] *NE*, Book 10, Chapter 8, p. 226.
[90] *NE*, Book 10, Chapter 7, pp. 224-225
[91] Cf. John 1:12.
[92] *NE*, Book 10, Chapter 7, p. 225.

their own good will, in comparison with which they scorn everything that is called good but can be lost even though one wills to retain it."[93]

However, those who reject the Word of Truth, instead, use their freedom to trade the Light of the World for darkness,[94] or to interpret *being-there* simply, or mainly, as a burden or a challenge. When we get into the habit of interpreting *being-there* mainly as a burden or a challenge, we begin to lose our autonomous freedom as we become more and more attached to things "that one cannot get or keep simply by willing"[95] – e.g., the various sorts of "external equipment," such as "private property," that promise to (temporarily) help us relieve the burdens or overcome the challenges that we experience upon the earth. We begin to develop inordinate desires for "external goods" (e.g., pleasures of the flesh, health, beauty, and physical strength) or "inferior goods," such as "goods of fortune" (e.g., honors, glory, wealth, and earthly power), or even "moral virtues" (e.g., prudence, justice, temperance, and courage),[96] but, the work we perform in service to such goods is futile, or insufficient for becoming truly blessed, since "no finite good can constitute our ultimate end because its contingencies and limitations cannot satisfy the desire of the will for the universal good."[97]

Here, I am using the phrase "becoming a child of God" as a symbol of the story and the process of becoming a truly *individual* human. Insofar as the way *being-there* appears to us is decisive for us, or generates us, becoming truly individual involves coming to see that *being-there* is a gift, or coming to experience *being-there* in a different light.[98]

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[93] *On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 22. Cf. John 1:13.
[94] Cf. John 1:10-11; see also Matthew 27:20; Mark 15:11; Luke 23:18-19; John 18:40.
[95] *On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 24.
[96] *Paths to the Triune God*, pp. 141-143.
[97] *Paths to the Triune God*, pp. 144.
[98] Here, one can see why I have chosen the image of "children," rather than "heirs," which would also convey the truth that we cannot become a truly *individual* human by our own power but must be made a truly *individual* human, as one is made a child or an heir, by another. I have chosen to use the

I will have more to say about this in the following pages, but coming to see *being-there* as a gift, in the sense of "becoming a child of God," is not simply a matter of ignorance or pretense.[99] Individuality is not to be confused with sheer stubbornness, or pride. The stubborn person simply refuses to correspond with reality whenever the give-and-take of correspondence does not promise pleasures or advantages, but decisions to "make a living" by refusing to accept the demands of life (abiding-in-self and passing-beyond-self in the direction of the truth of a human life) will divide her against herself and her neighbors. Her pride makes her unstable and is itself unsustainable. As it is written: before the Lord, "every knee shall bow."[100] So, we should not spend ourselves in pursuit of such a miserable state of Napoleonic "independence."

Instead, we should aim to become truly individual humans by learning to *think* the unity of ourselves and our experiences and learning to *work* to unify ourselves and our experiences, or to make ourselves and our world fit for *eudaimonia* – i.e., we should aim to become "good-spirited" by "giving birth in the beautiful." In Christianity, we aim to do this by following Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, who "transcends individuals" and yet "is not external and opposed to individuals" but is one in whom individuals can

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image of "children" because I am emphasizing how "the way [*being-there*] appears to us is decisive for our way of orienting ourselves in the world," how options for orientation are *generated* by the way we experience *being-there* (i.e., as a burden, a challenge, or a gift). The child's form of life is *generated* by her parents and by the experiences her parents give to her. As she develops autonomy, if she does, she can begin to *perfect* her form of life, or to move in the direction of glory, but this will require her to become more than a mere child, without failing to acknowledge with humility and gratitude that she is, indeed, someone's child.

[99] Individuality, as I am using the term, is not reducible to "singlemindedness" or "innocence." My work should not be confused with "the foundationalist quest for singlemindedness or purity of heart," which "tends radically to underestimate the multiplicity and uncertainty of our moral concerns" and "tempts us to be insufficiently pluralistic about value and insufficiently fallibilist about knowledge" (*The Priority of Love*, p. 13). As I am using the term, individuality is, in time (or with respect to order), what stability is, in space (or with respect to location), and *perfect* individuality is immortality, which one can only achieve by participation in the immortality of the Soul of the world.

[100] Cf. Isaiah 45:23; Romans 14:11; Philippians 2:10.

find themselves "as moments of its own life."[101] Do not be foolish – the life of faith is not a mere series of attempts to deny an alien reality, or our many experiences of the burdens and challenges in our world, in order to maintain some notional assent to an abstract set of beliefs "already *given* precisely in their formal difference."[102] This kind of absentminded devotion to abstract propositions would effectively split the consciousness of thoughtful adherents[103] and would amount to an unhappy "refusal of reconciliation."[104] So, it is not enough for us to cling to right beliefs (orthodoxy). We will also have to *work* together in the right ways (orthopraxy) to cultivate right experiences of self and situation (orthopathy) and we will not become free to do this unless we *think* the relationship between the right (justice), the true (truth), and the good (love) in a trinitarian pattern.[105]

Becoming Servants of God

However, becoming "good-spirited" is not simply a matter of becoming "healthy-minded" by involuntarily receiving a pleasant form of optimism or by "the deliberate adoption of an optimistic turn of mind."[106] We do not become blessed by becoming unable to feel evil,[107] nor does blessedness "consist in play."[108] This is not to deny there is a time and a place for anesthesia and also for play. One may, temporarily benefit from anesthesia – especially during a period of disability, when a dose of medicine may help someone to "carry on their intercourse with reality."[109] Likewise, one may choose to "play

[101] "Towards a Dialectic of Truth," p. 167.
[102] Cf. *Paths to the Triune God,* p. 167.
[103] Cf. *Systematic Theology, Vol. 1*, p. 3.
[104] *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 141.
[105] For example, when we think about the meaning of the resurrection, "the resurrection must be interpreted with the cross in mind, God with the message of Jesus in mind, and God's actions on the cross and in the resurrection of Jesus with us and our world in mind" (*Crucified and Resurrected*, p. 27).
[106] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 89.
[107] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 84.
[108] *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 10, chapter 6, p. 223.
[109] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp. 119-123.

so that one may be serious."[110] A dose of medicine may help those who are suffering to "carry their own loads,"[111] and, an appropriate moment of play may restore the soul, or help one to think and to work with moral seriousness. It is important for us to remember: "people are incapable of laboring continuously."[112] Nevertheless, we cannot simply medicate or play our way to humanity. We cannot ignore the reality of burdens and, at the very same time, "bear one another's burdens."[113] We cannot ignore the challenges before us and, at the very same time, work to solve our problems, or to transcend our world/history. Having said this, we will not be ready to receive possibilities played into our way and accept them as opportunities to move in the direction of blessedness if we become "so choked with the feeling of evil that the sense of there being any good in the world is lost for [us] altogether"[114]

Furthermore, it seems that we are vulnerable to such radical suffering, that this can *happen to us* in ways that cannot be effectively resisted,[115] and that such *occurrences* are tragically ordinary.[116] It seems that "it is our doom to live under conditions that destroy us."[117] If we, indeed, live under such conditions, how can we summon the energy to work toward the truth of a human life? And how are we to understand the fact that so many have suffered unjustly and have died in despair? In other words, how can come to enjoy some "religious reconciliation with the absolute totality of things"?[118] If we are going to

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[110] *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 10, chapter 6, p. 223.
[111] Cf. Galatians 6:5.
[112] *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 10, chapter 6, p. 223.
[113] Cf. Galatians 6:2.
[114] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 149. We may be terrorized by "the vanity of mortal things," by "the sense of sin," or by "fear of the universe" (*Ibid*, p. 161); or by anxieties of meaninglessness, guilt, and death, respectively.
[115] *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion*, pp. 55, 115-119.
[116] *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion*, pp. 30-31.
[117] *I Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion*, p. 64.
[118] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 164.

carry out the hard *work* of becoming truly human *in spite of* the tragic "world order" we find ourselves in,[119] we are, somehow, going to have to come to believe that burdens and challenges are *more* than burdens and challenges. We are going to have to come to believe that even our burdens and challenges are, contrary to our own immediate sense-certainty, are opportunities for us to draw nearer to the Giver of eternal life (e.g., to share in the sufferings of Christ), or "birth pains,"[120] and come to believe this in a way that effectively shifts the "habitual center of [our] personal energy."[121]

Since we cannot step outside of ourselves and force such a shift, or conversion, to happen, whether or not we will receive the energizing sense of possibility, or hope, we need to work at becoming truly human *in spite of* the burdens and challenges we face is mostly out of our hands. As William James recognized: "if it comes, it comes; if it does not come, no process of reasoning [*or even religion*] can force it."[122] Insofar as one comes to *see* "the more," or *think* the unseen – i.e., the gift of opportunity for moving in the direction of the truth of a human life in the apparent lack of opportunities for gaining pleasures or advantages, or the presence of the god in the absence of apparent goods, or the Way where there is no way – she has become a child of God; and insofar as she *works* toward the truth of a human life, she has become a servant of God.

This is not to say that we have no part to play in the process of becoming children of God or servants of God. We cannot make ourselves someone's child. If we are going to become someone's child, they must adopt us, or accept us as their child. However, once we have been adopted, we can *become their child* by living as their child – e.g.,

[119] *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion*, pp. 12, 25-26, 29, 37-39, 60-61.
[120] Cf. Matthew 24:8; Mark 13:8.
[121] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 196.
[122] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 150.

by striving to honor the parent more perfectly as our parent. Likewise, while it may make sense to speak of serving a sinner against her will (i.e., if we do what is best for her, though she cannot see how it is best for her), we cannot become servants of God unless we have been commissioned for service by God. However, we can *become God's servant* by accepting God's will for our lives. We can commit ourselves to the *work* of salvation, while remembering, as Calvin put it: "the first part of a good work is will; the other, a strong effort to accomplish it; the author of both is God."[123]

And yet, although we have no grounds for boasting in our own accomplishments and to do so would be to "rob the Lord,"[124] we do have a part to play in the processes of accepting the possibilities we have been given as opportunities to "enter life"[125] and of actualizing the power, or potential, we have been given for the sake of blessedness. We can affirm the Gift of God *sub contrario*,[126] especially as we are empowered to see the gift of salvation "hidden beneath its opposite" in the cross of Jesus Christ.[127] We can search, in faith, for the gift of opportunity hidden beneath burdens and challenges, and when we come to sense the gift of opportunity, as we are given eyes to see and hearts to feel our blessedness *sub contrario*, we can then think and work to make "the most of the time."[128] By accepting opportunities in this way, we can partner with God to develop a tendency toward life and blessedness among and within us.

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[123] *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, p. 302.
[124] *Ibid*, p. 302.
[125] Cf. Luke 18:18-30; Matthew 18:8-9; Mark 9:42-50.
[126] For example, we can interpret rejoice when we are persecuted for living well (cf. Matthew 5:11-12), and we can embrace hardships as opportunities to "suffer with Christ so that we may also be glorified with him" (Romans 8:17; cf. 1 Peter 4:13; 5:1).
[127] *Crucified and Resurrected*, pp. 45-46.
[128] Cf. Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5. Here, one should remember that times when we lack freedom of choice or freedom of action may be received and accepted as opportunities to practice freedom as autonomy.

All the while, we must "be careful how [we] live, not as unwise people but as wise [ones]."[129] Alas, we can also move in the other direction, and not only as a consequence of living under conditions that destroy us. We can develop a tendency toward life by living our lives *before the Giver of eternal happiness* and affirming the Gift *sub contrario*, but we can also develop a tendency toward death by living *before a distorted image of who we are*, or by clinging to our burdens and to an adversarial spirit even when it should be clear that someone has given us or wishes to give us good gifts. By developing tendencies to interpret everything as a burden or a challenge, we can become children of the devil or the satan; and by then fixating on the work of hiding and privately carrying our burdens or the work of overcoming our challenges by any means necessary, we can become servants of the devil or the satan.[130] We can also develop hybrid tendencies to engage in satanic service to the devil, or works of *ressentiment*,[131] or in diabolical service to the satan, or works of decadence.[132] In my Introduction, I warned the reader that our minds may be held captive by a distorted image of who we are, that this may lead us to become needy beyond the possibility of satisfaction, and that, on account of our own, restlessness, we may then become unconscionably self-destructive and destructive of others.[133] By now, I hope the reader has come to see more clearly why becoming wise and thinking rightly demand that we "keep watch" over ourselves and one another and how we must go about keeping watch (i.e., by developing the necessary intellectual

[129] Cf. Ephesians 5:15.
[130] Concerning the way interpreting others as burdens or challenges may affect our social relations with others, Kant observed: "Misanthropy is hatred of mankind and may arise from either of two sources, shyness or enmity. In the first case, the misanthrope is afraid of men, deeming them all his enemies; in the second, he is himself the enemy of others" (*Lectures on Ethics*, p. 210).
[131] E.g., when one begins to hoist burdens upon the backs of others.
[132] E.g., when one absconds from society with ill-gotten wealth to enjoy the fruits of the labors of others apart from others and her real responsibilities to them.
[133] Cf. *The Courage to Be*, p. 14.

virtues) so that we may not fall victim to distorted ideas and to the histories and habits of error that they may produce in us.[134]

Among the many distorted ideas that we will have to *think our way through* is the idea that *eudaimonia* is a "thing," such as a "mental state" – i.e., the idea that "the good spirit" is something we can get for ourselves *as a result of merely forgetting our burdens and or overcoming our challenges*, or by means of achieving *pleasures* and *advantages*. While blessedness is an achievement insofar as we have a role to play in becoming blessed, it is not one thing among others that someone can simply consume or produce. I will have more to say about this later, but here, I want to emphasize that, insofar as efforts to secure a thing called "happiness" are futile, those who wish to become wise must not become obsessed with getting results. There is a great temptation to identify ourselves mainly in terms of what we lack, such that we develop a tendency to experience everything as a burden or a challenge.[135] Such a tendency to dwell on what *is not* can keep us from coming to fully appreciate what *is*. Instead of receiving and accepting what *is* as an opportunity for becoming true, either by restraining ourselves (in the case of negative opportunities) or "going for it" (in the case of positive opportunities), humans can lose their way in "all the toil at which they toil under the sun."[136]

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[134] Cf. Acts 20:28-31.

[135] There is a temptation to explain every occasion of human community in terms of 'need.' As Aristotle remarked, "that need holds people together . . . is clear"; however, it is not clear that 'need' must or should be *the* "thing . . . which holds all things together" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 5.5., pp. 100-101). In fact, this idea contradicts the Christian confession that "in [Christ] all things hold together" (Col.1:7) and that "all things are possible with God" (Mark 10:27; Matt. 19:26); and Christian practice "contradicts a view that understands human beings in their fundamental dependence, finitude, and passivity, not merely biologically, but anthropologically, as *deficient beings*" (*Creatures of Possibility*, p. 105). Friends of God, *as friends of God*, are not mainly held together by a sense of need but by a unique sense of possibility – namely, the possibility of coming, by the grace of God, through faith, hope, and love, to fully participate in a "process of *graceful* self-transcendence toward *glory*," or moving toward "the end of the operation of nature itself assisted by grace" (*Paths to the Triune God*, p. 3; *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 62, a. 3, ad. 3), by becoming children of God, servants of God, and friends of God.

[136] Cf. Ecclesiastes 1:3.

If we reduce ourselves or others to mere have-nots and become complacent in the ways we separate the haves from the have-nots, then we will escape from human(e) freedom, or avoid our responsibility to be who we truly are and to let others be who they truly are *in spite of* the threat of nonbeing. We can "*avoid nonbeing by avoiding being,*"[137] but there is a price to be paid. When we *avoid being*, we only affirm ourselves to a limited extent, and while "this limited extensiveness of self-affirmation can be balanced by greater intensity," as in the case of the (idolatrous) fanatic, this intensity "is narrowed to a special point accompanied by a distorted relation to reality as a whole."[138] Finally, whenever we put ourselves at odds with reality, we make ourselves unstable – we build our houses on foundations of sand, or separate ourselves from the possibility of lasting peace, as I have argued in chapter one.[139]

This is not to say that someone who is wise will simply abstain from work, although wisdom does involve knowing the difference between what we can do and should strive for and what we cannot do and should not strive for either because it is not achievable or because it has already been achieved.[140] Someone who is wise knows where she comes from and where she is going and is familiar with the demand of such knowledge. Someone who is truly wise knows that her freedom comes from the unmerited grace that she has received and accepted – i.e., she is grateful for it and humbled by knowing that it has come to her as a gift – and, furthermore, she knows that "one ought to serve in

[137] *The Courage to Be*, p. 66.
[138] *The Courage to Be*, p. 67.
[139] Cf. Matthew 7:26-27. In the words of Anselm Min, "as a virtue of ordering, wisdom is also the basis of peace, the tranquility of order; the wise are peacemakers and become children of God because they share in the sonship of the Son, the begotten Wisdom" (*Paths to the Triune God*, p. 140).
[140] So, when we are recovering from disabilities and addictions, we are taught to pray: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." As D. Z. Phillips also points out: "it is often just as important to know what we cannot do, as it is to face up to what we can do" (*Interventions in Ethics*, p. xiii).

return someone who has been gracious, and ought oneself, the next time, to take the lead in being gracious."[141] As one is able, she should acknowledge where she comes from with gratitude; for, it is, indeed, true that "ingratitude, is sin, transgression."[142] And one should (work to) correspond to the Giver of the Gift she has received not only in word and speech, "but in truth and action."[143] In other words, those who have received gifts of grace should be grateful and should work to repay the goods they have received, or work to become agents of grace, insofar as they can.[144]

Works of grace should be done in the knowledge of where one is going. Our time on the earth is limited. So, we should not delay;[145] instead, we should get to work repaying the goods we have received. Moreover, we should not let ourselves grow weary in doing what is right and true and good.[146] Even though our lives "are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes,"[147] by accepting the opportunities we have been given to enact grace, we can participate in "an appealing regress,"[148] a cycle of grace that might be repeated "to the thousandth generation."[149] And works of grace should be done in the knowledge of where one comes from. We should not stop doing the good, as though it is possible for us to ever "square things" with the Giver of life and blessedness: "for even if I repay my benefactor tenfold, I am still not even with him, because he has done me a kindness that he did not owe. He was the first in the field . . . and I can never

[141] *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 5, Chapter 5, p. 99.
[142] *Church Dogmatics* IV.1, § 57.2, p. 41.
[143] Cf. 1 John 3:18.
[144] Whereas gratitude is the acknowledgement of a good received, grace is the repayment of a good received, though there is an element of grace even in a simple expression of gratitude ("Aristotelian Grace," p. 314).
[145] Cf. 2 Corinthians 6:2.
[146] Cf. Galatians 6:9.
[147] Cf. James 4:14.
[148] "Aristotelian Grace," p. 315.
[149] Cf. Exodus 20:6; 34:7; Deuteronomy 5:10; Jeremiah 32:8.

be beforehand with him."[150] Nevertheless, we can serve our benefactors, even the One who "in his abysmal nature is in no way dependent on man,"[151] by working to help others develop and sustain the freedom to move toward the truth of a human life, or by "doing on the god's behalf, in assistance to him, work the god wants done"[152] – i.e., "to do for other persons what he would be doing for them himself if he were to change places with us."[153]

It is tempting to think that our relationship to world/history is ready made, that we are simply human(e) by nature – an empty thought that promises to release us from, or rather anesthetize us to, many appropriate feelings of responsibility. However, as I have maintained throughout my dissertation, a subject's relationship to world/history "is intrinsic to the very constitution and development of human subjectivity, and not an incidental episode in the life of a subject already constituted as a subject apart from history."[154] Furthermore, it is possible for us to become free to co-determine the shape/course and the import of world/history for future generations. In other words, world/history "is also conditioned by what humans do as individuals and groups."[155] Therefore, someone who knows where she comes from and where she is going might distinguish, but should not separate, the work of salvation from the work of liberation or the command to love the Lord from the command to love your neighbor.[156] Instead, those who receive and accept the power to affirm themselves in the light of the wisdom of God will come to

[150] "Aristotelian Grace," p. 315. Cf. *Lectures on Ethics*, p. 222.
[151] Cf. *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 61.
[152] *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*, p. 175.
[153] *Ibid*, p. 177.
[154] *Dialectic of Salvation*, p. 2.
[155] *Ibid*, pp. 2-3.
[156] Cf. Matthew 22:34-39; 25:31-46.

have a unique sense of possibility:[157] they hope that they may be empowered to *make themselves and their world* fit for blessedness, or connatural with the Giver of "the good spirit," by embracing themselves and their situation with authentic gratitude (as opposed to inauthentic optimism, or any other form of sheer hubris),[158] by courageously taking their anxieties into themselves, or squarely facing their own mediocrity and also the mediocrity of their world/history in relation to *that than which nothing greater can be conceived*,[159] and by continuing to graciously work for the good of one another.

If we want to *make ourselves and our world* fit for blessedness, or if we want to move in the direction of true beauty, or toward our true destiny, we will have to learn to practice a solidarity of others. First of all, we will have to learn to accept difference *as a gift*, as opposed to simply experiencing difference as a burden or challenge that must be overcome by appeals to "common ground." Such appeals to common ground often lead us to propose solutions that sound nice but fail to solve, and very often fail to even address, the real problems in our lives. Furthermore, it is not only the case that none of us is in a position to see *all* the problems in our lives but also the case that, throughout our lives, we must continue to rely on others to help us come to see *many, if not most,* of the problems in ourselves. So, our attempts to develop foundations for rational intercourse (i.e., for understanding one another and thinking together, or "harmonious relationships" [*concordiae*]) should not be reduced to attempts to find some "common ground."[160] It

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[157] Hope is "the sense of possibility that generates and sustains moral agency" (*Though the Fig Tree Does Not Blossom*, p. xiii). To be more specific: hope is "the sense of *the possibility of the good* in the face of evil, injustice and despair" (Dalferth [2020]).

[158] E.g., "the *hubris* of trying to conquer [the evil in one's own being] and to reach reunion with God by one's own will" (*Systematic Theology, Vol. 3*, p. 226).

[159] Cf. *Waiting for God*, pp. 59-65.

[160] By participation in the beauty of God, we become able to develop "'harmonious relationships' (*concordiae*), as regards understanding, among all rational creatures (for those are in accord with each other whose thought is one), and "friendships" (*amicitiae*), as regards affection, and "fellowships" (*communiones*), as regards action, or something extrinsic" (*Metaphysics of St. Thomas*, p. 93). Christian

should be clear by now that, for human beings, "genuine and extensive self-knowledge becomes possible only in consequence of those social relationships which on occasion provide badly needed correction for our own judgments."[161]

Moreover, we depend on others not only for intellectual corrections but also for emotional support and encouragement. As Aristotle once remarked, "without friends, no one would choose to live, even if he possessed all other goods,"[162] but whereas friendship is often analyzed and described in terms of "some common insight or interest or even taste which the others do not share"[163] (and who can deny that such a likeness makes intimacy possible for us),[164] it is the *difference* among friends that makes it possible for them to really support one another.[165] If my "friend" only sees the same burdens and challenges and gifts that I see, how can she help me come to see gifts *hidden beneath burdens and challenges* so that I may more fully become a child and a servant of God?

Secondly, we will have to learn to stand with others, or to practice solidarity, as opposed to simply *standing against* others as burdens to be eliminated or as adversaries in competition for resources or other advantages.[166] Indeed, even a slap that was meant

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perfection not only involves developing harmony and solidarity (or fellowship), but also friendships, or "unions of affection." To show the reader the importance of practicing the love of friendship for the formation of wisdom in the life of the church is a central task of this chapter.

[161] *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 95.

[162] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.1, p. 163.

[163] *The Four Loves*, p. 96.

[164] Cf. *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 27, a. 3; II-II, q. 26, a. 7, 8, 11.

[165] And this is not only often the case subjectively, e.g., within "the friendship of taste" wherein "I am not attracted to another because he has what I already possess, but because he can supply some want of mine by supplementing that in which I am lacking" (*Lectures on Ethics*, p. 205); it is also always the case objectively – no one can give to another what they do not have to give. For this reason, when Kant asks about "that adaptation of man to man that constitutes the bond of friendship," he answers: "not an identity of thought; on the contrary, difference in thought is a stronger foundation for friendship, for then the one makes up the deficiencies of the other" *(Lectures on Ethics*, p. 207).

[166] Cf. Matthew 5:39. Unfortunately, many translations of the New Testament make it sound like we are not supposed to resist evildoers. However, as Walter Wink points out: "the gospel does not teach nonresistance to evil. Jesus counsels resistance, but without violence. The Greek word translated 'resist' in Matt. 5:39 is *antistenai*, meaning literally to stand (*stenai*) against (*anti*). What translators have overlooked is that *antistenai* is most often used in the Greek version of the Old Testament as a technical

to insult and humiliate us, a trial that was meant to strip us of our property, or an order that was meant to offend and make us weary may be interpreted as opportunities for us to stand with others in ways that may help us and them become more aware of the truth about ourselves and our situation.[167] However, some problems cannot be effectively resisted by singular individuals in their isolation; so, we also need to learn to stand with others because some problems require us to engage in collective interventions. It is important for us to come to grips with the demand for group activities, or fellowships (*communiones*), today.

Modern social relationships have been profoundly impacted by globalization processes. As these processes have unfolded, we have been given opportunities to recognize the radical nature of our differences and the rather contingent nature of the foundations of our forms of life. At the same time, various forces (e.g., the rise of prurient relativisms and the fall, or corruption, of capitalism) have tempted us to resign ourselves to convenient essentialisms and to largely isolate ourselves from one another in private devotion to certain programs and strategies crafted for my/our pleasure or my/our advantage. If we want to move in the direction of the truth of a human life, we must learn to practice a solidarity of others because no one individual or group can, by themselves, transform all the structures and institutions of justice that divide us from one another or all the cultural (meaning-making) patterns that tempt us to turn ourselves into mere environments or commodities.[168] Furthermore, we have a moral obligation to

term for warfare. It describes the way opposing armies would march toward each other until their ranks met" (*The Powers That Be*, pp. 99-100). One might say that Jesus commands us to restrain ourselves from reducing others to mere burdens to be eliminated or challenges to be overcome. Instead, Jesus invites us to look for the gift *hidden beneath* our experience of them as a burden or as a challenge.

[167] *The Powers That Be*, pp. 101-111

[168] *The Solidarity of Others*, p. 72.

practice a solidarity of others insofar as we, as citizens of the world, are all responsible for the many issues of injustice and suffering that affect us all.[169] So, today, those who wish to become children of God and servants of God, or truly *individual* humans and truly *human(e)* individuals, as opposed to remaining children and servants of the devil and/or the satan, will have to learn to practice a solidarity of others, even on a global scale.

Becoming Friends of God[170]

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[169] *The Solidarity of Others*, p. 72.

[170] Before launching into this section, it is appropriate for me to issue a warning to the reader. Whenever someone draws attention to the *inwardness* made possible by the love of friendship, it is important that they make some effort to preserve the truth of the Gospel from "the dangers of mysticism" – e.g., to protect believers from antinomianism, denials of heaven and hell, anticlericalism, antisacramentalism, and those who would concoct bases for these positions by way of "mystification" and appeals to "the *spiritus libertatis*" (*The Harvest of Mysticism*, p. 62, 66). Some attempts to emphasize the importance of "becoming friends of God" have been made in the past: e.g., in the medieval German "Green Isle Community" and with "The Religious Society of Friends," which are better known to many as "Quakers." These communities have often struggled to keep "the democratic vision of the mystical union . . . [from becoming] a new form of elitism" (*The Harvest of Mysticism*, p. 425). We should not simply ignore "the dangers of mysticism." Nevertheless, I think that the importance of "becoming friends of God" is worth exploring. At their best religious communities that emphasized the importance of "becoming friends of God" have called for "an integrated existence of both contemplation and action in the world as the ideal form of Christian life" (*The Harvest of Mysticism*, p. 411) and have reminded the church that "the divine life" is characterized, above all, by a certain "inward light," or "passion," that comes to rest, or fulfillment, in and through "the love of friendship."

As we explore the promise of the idea of "becoming friends God" for the life of the church, it is important that we avoid certain excesses and certain deficiencies. So as to promote the development of true character, I will take a moment here, to rehearse some major studies done on the successes and failures of those communities who have had a "mystical" concern for the importance of "becoming friends of God." In *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* Ernst Troeltsch has developed a typology useful for comparing religious communities. There, Troeltsch argues that, viewed historically, faith communities have been *driven* by sociological factors to embody recurring patterns of Christian thought and organization (p. 994). He identifies three types of ecclesiological belief and practice – church, sect, and mysticism. By "church," he means an inclusive, conservative institution committed to a vision of sacramental redemption, requiring relatively low levels of personal commitment (cf. Kierkegaard's "aesthetic" stage of life). By "sect," he means a crystallization of Christianity as a radical religious movement of ethical rigor, an exclusive and voluntary society of "set apart" believers anticipating and preparing for the coming Kingdom of God (cf. Kierkegaard's "ethical" stage of life). By "mysticism," he means a way of appropriating Christian doctrine and practice intended to yield a "purely personal and inward experience" of spiritual illumination, leading to corporate formation solely by means of personal transformations (*The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, p. 993; cf. Kierkegaard's "religious" stage of life).

More recently, in *Habits of the Heart,* Robert Bellah, et al, make use of Troeltsch's types to explore relationships between the characters of religious communities and the characters of their host societies (p. 243). Bellah, et al, argue that, inevitably, overcommitting a community to any particular aspect of Christian faith – church, sect, or mysticism – will eventually bring about some unhealthy, i.e. extreme or deficient, developments in the life of the community, and he warns that many American congregations, finding themselves located in an individualistic culture, are trending toward mysticism

It is written: "there is nothing better for mortals to do than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil."[171] Becoming *eudaimonic* involves developing the freedom to find enjoyment, or coming to *see* gifts of opportunity for peace "hidden beneath their opposite," and it also involves coming to *feel* both the absence of peace, or a sense of dissatisfaction, and the presence of hope, or a sense of possibility, and then *working*

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and that such faith communities are typically prone to "inner volatility and incoherence," "extreme weakness in social and political organization," and also "compromise with the therapeutic model in its pursuit of self-centered experiences and its difficulty with social loyalty and commitment" (*Habits of the Heart*, p. 246). In his view, mystical faith communities should seek to appropriate the *church idea* intentionally, by calling persons to "admit healthy grown-up dependence on others" as they corporately labor to "reconstitute the social basis of society" (*Ibid*, p. 247), and also to appropriate the *sect idea*, by calling mystical communities to "reexamine the nature of their compromises" and begin to practice effective social discipline (*Ibid*, pp. 246-247).

Once again, in *Public Pulpits*, Steve Tipton has advanced this position, calling for church-type, sect-type, and mystical-type religious institutions to work toward more balanced organization identities without abandoning the distinctive soteriological insights motivating each to embody their uniquely inspired commitments to specific social goods (p. 425). Tipton argues that American faith communities should work to develop congregational identities informed by mutually supportive and interpenetrating church, sect, and mystical ideals. By practicing commitments to church, sect, and mystical ideals, religious organizations may, in his view, regain their balance as Christian institutions embedded within their particular publics. He argues that, for mystical-type congregations, achieving their balance will mean developing both *sect-like* dispositions to enforce moral rigor and embody a prophetic witness and *church-like* habits of sacramental presence (*Public Pulpits*, p. 429). Furthermore, Tipton argues that American faith communities should intentionally work at *opening up* to the *church idea*, which is least frequently actualized in our culture and which has become difficult to imagine in an individualistic culture (*Ibid*, p. 442).

As we attempt to clarify the importance of "becoming friends of God" and argue for the theological priority of "the love of friendship," we must not lose our (trinitarian) balance by way of advocacy for mystical-type religion – and so separate the church from the body and from politics that we come to fundamentally misunderstand the nature of the church and ignore its mandate to anticipate the Kingdom of God (*Body Politics*, p. viii); and so tempt others to pursue "seeker-sensitive" forms of religious communication and focus on personal experiences and decisions that we severely limit a community's potential for developing theological depth and render them incapable of processing, with integrity, "issues like doubt and despair or suffering and evil" (*The Megachurch and the Mainline*, p. 123); and so fail to make our policies and our worldviews "credible to the gospel" (*Resident Aliens*, p. 24) that our faith communities become "one more consumer-oriented organization, existing to encourage individual fulfillment rather than being a crucible to engender individual conversion into the Body" (*Ibid*, p. 32). As we argue that we should first (in the order of perfection) focus our attention in the direction of "becoming friends of God," we must not forget that, as Hauerwas has rightly remarked, many societies so threaten to distort the integrity of Christian communities and individuals that "the first social task of the church is to provide the space and time necessary for developing skills of interpretation and discrimination sufficient to help us recognize the possibilities and limits of society" (*A Community of Character*, p. 74) – i.e. that, in the order of generation, we have to first make space and time for "becoming children of God" and "becoming servants of God." Nonetheless, I hope it will become clear to the reader from the following pages, that we can only *fully*, or *perfectly*, become children of God and servants of God by becoming friends of God.

[171] Cf. Ecclesiastes 2:24.

toward the truth of a human life *coram Deo*. In other words, becoming *eudaimonic* involves becoming children and servants of God; however, one cannot *fully* become a child of God or a servant of God by directly aiming to achieve childhood or servanthood as one does when one aims to gain some pleasure or advantage, or by engaging in a strictly calculated "pursuit of happiness."[172] So, while we should commit ourselves to practicing contemplation and a solidarity of others, it is not enough for us to commit ourselves to such goods. The quality of our commitment is very important. Our commitments must be characterized by goodwill.

We study so that we may come to *see* gifts of opportunity, but when we study, "the quality of the attention counts for much."[173] We labor so that we may transcend our world/history, but "however capable and talented a man may be, we still ask about his character."[174] It is possible for us to study and labor *for the sake of happiness* in ways that cannot make us happy. Even the wicked want to be happy, but they do not will to be happy in the right way. Some lack character; so, even when they commit themselves to thinking and to working, "their will is in such a state that unhappiness must follow."[175] The will to live rightly must accompany the will to live happily.[176] Otherwise, one will not delight in wishing and doing the good of someone *for her own sake*, or that which is good *in itself*, but will, instead, "cleave to things that can be called ours only for a time" and will,

[172] As I will argue in this section, if we want to *perfectly* become children and servants of God, we will have to aim at individuality and humanity indirectly, or by way of "becoming friends of God." After all, one cannot become a child or a servant on one's own. One can accept childhood or servanthood and strive to become a good child or servant, but one must be made a child or a servant by another.
[173] *Waiting for God*, p. 57.
[174] *Lectures on Ethics*, p. 11.
[175] *On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 23
[176] *On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 24.

therefore, eventually develop a tendency to neglect what is good *in itself* and to trespass against what is truly good for oneself and others.[177]

No one can continue to contemplate *this* topic or work for *that* cause unless, in some way, she delights in *this* study or *that* labor. Today, we are in the habit of supposing that what we delight in is simply given. Indeed, love occurs, or *happens to* someone, and changes the life-orientation of the one who receives love; in other words, love makes one complacent in, or causes one to place oneself with, an object.[178] Furthermore, when love occurs, it gives birth to desire, or a movement toward the beloved, by which we may become united with the beloved.[179] Finally, insofar as we are united with the beloved, we experience joy, or rest.[180] Love and desire and rest *occur* as moments that cannot be *forced*, or simply chosen and made to take place. However, after they occur, they may be subjected to reflection and judgment. We can *think* about what has happened to us, and while love remains a mystery, desire and joy have a history.[181] By way of reflection, we may come to identify *this* kind of desire with certain kinds of successes and failures, and by coming to know the promises and perils of such desires, we can make a judgment, or decide, for a particular kind of future by committing ourselves to the work of developing the kind of character, or predisposition, that tends toward such a future. In this way, by making good reflective judgments, we can work to develop a tendency toward life; and because we can determine ourselves and our

[177] *On Free Choice of the Will*, p. 25.
[178] *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 26, a. 2.
[179] *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 26, a. 2.
[180] *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 26, a. 2.
[181] We can know love *as mystery* by attending to our knowledge of its effects (i.e., our knowledge of the history of desire and rest/misery) and by supposing that the goods which we witness in the effects of love belong to the mystery of the world in a pre-eminent way; cf. *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 12, a. 12-13; q. 44, a. 1-4.

world in this way, "it belongs to the perfection of the moral or human good that the passions be governed by reason."[182]

Likewise, by making bad reflective judgments (i.e., through corruption in thought, word, or deed) or by neglecting to make good reflective judgments (i.e., through "sins of omission"), our lives may become characterized by a tendency toward death/misery.[183] As we endeavor to make ourselves and our worlds fit for blessedness by perfecting our habits, or by acquiring the virtues, we ought to remember that the freedom gained from the virtues, can be lost "directly" by acting in a corrupt way or "accidentally" by the mere cessation of discipline.[184] So, we must continue to live in the direction of the truth of a human life, or our freedom for life and blessedness will be diminished. This means that we must come to delight in becoming true, but insofar as we, indeed, live under conditions that destroy us, how it is possible for us to come to sufficiently delight in becoming true so as to carry out this process *in spite of* the many burdens and challenges we will face? We have seen that becoming true will require us to become children of God, or truly *individual* humans, and servants of God, or truly *human(e)* individuals, but how on earth can we *continue* to live in the light of glory so that we may draw nearer to "real union" with the Giver of blessedness, or come to more *fully* enjoy the presence of God.

The tendency, or disposition, to *continue to live* is given to us in and through our participation in friendship.[185] For this reason, friendship is "most necessary with a view to

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[182] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Pt. 3, a. 2, § 1767, p. 488.
[183] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Pt. 3, a. 8, § 1853, p. 506.
[184] *ST* I, q. 53, a. 3.
[185] Here, it seems appropriate for me to remind the reader: as we mature, "we not only exist in the world but live in it, and we cannot live in it without interpreting it in order to orient ourselves and thus become capable of acting in it" (*Theology and Philosophy*, p. 204). Furthermore, we cannot learn how to interpret ourselves and our world truly without corrections from our friends; we do not *want* to learn how to interpret ourselves and our world truly except on account of our love for our friends; and our

life" both because "without friends, no one would choose to live, even if he possessed all other goods"[186] and because, for us, "genuine and extensive self-knowledge becomes possible"[187] only if "truthful friends" call us to "account for ourselves and our actions."[188] Now, it is not the case that all friendships make equal contributions to our well-being. Friendship is characterized by "mutual well-wishing and well-doing out of concern for the other,"[189] and the quality of the friendship depends on the quality of the well-wishing and well-doing involved. Unless we have eyes to see the good of the other, we cannot wish for the good of the other, and unless we have the necessary energy to work for the good of the other, we cannot accomplish the good of the other. Now, we are only in a position to see the good of the other, or develop a conception of the good of the other that truly "corresponds to what he himself essentially is," insofar as we are near to her and *abiding-in-virtue*,[190] and we will only continue to correspond to the other in a way that empowers us to truly see the good of the other if *abiding-in-virtue* is the "first commitment" of our relationship and the attainment of moral goodness "cements the association," or is that upon which our nearness is based.[191] Likewise, we are only in a position to work for the good of the other insofar as we see the good of the other and, in recognition of the goodness of the other, are willing to *pass-beyond-self for the sake of the other*. In short, it is only when friends are friends for the sake of *living-in-virtue* that they are "friends in an unqualified sense."[192]

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ability to *continue* to learn and to want to learn the truth *in spite of the difficulties involved* is contingent upon the encouragement we receive and accept from our friends.

[186] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.1, p.163.
[187] *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 95.
[188] *Dependent Rational Animals*, p. 148.
[189] "Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship," p. 629.
[190] "Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship," p. 640.
[191] "Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship," p. 634.
[192] "Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship," p. 634.

More often than not, friends are friends mainly for the sake of pleasures or for the sake of advantages. When friendships are formed and maintained with another "insofar as he is useful or pleasant," they are easily dissolved when the people involved do not remain the same as they were" or when the circumstances surrounding those persons change.[193] Such friends are only prepared to correspond to the other up to a point. Unless they see some opportunity for themselves to consume some pleasure or gain some advantage by doing so, they will not be driving you to the unemployment office or visiting you at the hospital or in prison or going on strike with you or sharing their land with you.[194] Instead, when a conflict of interest arises, pleasure-friends and advantage-friends will break ties. Whenever "waves beat into the boat," one of the friends will no longer be accepted, or taken into the boat, "just as he was."[195] Instead, one of them will be more or less explicitly accused of being a burden or a challenge[196] and will perhaps even be discarded altogether.[197] We lose the support of our pleasure-friends and our advantage-friends at times when we most need the support of a friend, and because such friends are only willing to live together up to a point, they do not fully share themselves with one another.

Furthermore, unless we come to delight in well-wishing and well-doing *in itself*, or *for the sake of the other*, we will not *immerse ourselves in* well-wishing and well-doing. Our well-wishing and well-doing will lack the intensity of complete friendship. Pleasure-friends and advantage-friends neither enjoy the release made possible by complete friendship,

[193] *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.3, p. 167.
[194] Cf. Luke 4:18-19.
[195] Cf. Mark 4:35-36.
[196] Cf. Mark 4:38.
[197] Cf. Jonah 1:12, 15.

or complete communion,[198] nor do they receive full disclosure from the other, and insofar as they have not fully participated in practices of giving and receiving confessions, they have not been fully informed by the import of one another but, instead, remain out-of-touch with the reality of the other. In short, their self-knowledge and, therefore, their own lives are built upon unstable foundations. Unless we *immerse ourselves in* practices of giving and receiving courageous support to/from one another so that we may overcome our problems of the will and *immerse ourselves in* practices of giving and receiving truthful feedback to/from one another so that we may overcome our problems of the intellect, we will not become free to fully make the transition from misery to true happiness. Without the kind of support and correction that we receive from complete friends, we are prone to inordinate desires and to restlessness, and becoming restless is, indeed, "no small punishment."[199]

The Glorification of Love in *The Symposium* and in *The Acts of the Apostles*: A Case Study

In this way, we may come to (think so as to) see the glory and (work so as to) feel the presence of love: from the mystery of the world, love gives birth to movements, and the human(e) response is to think on and work on our histories of desire and joy/misery so as to make good reflective judgments and enact good decisions that prepare us to "give birth in the beautiful."[200] An account of this aspect of all human paths to blessedness, or of the glorification of love, has been developed in exemplary fashion across the various speeches given in *The Symposium* in praise of love. First, Phaedrus proclaims that love is "the oldest god" and "the source of our greatest blessings" because love gives birth to erotic desires that bring persons into relations that give birth to and firmly implant "those

[198] *Lectures on Ethics*, pp. 205-206.
[199] *On Free Choice of the Will*, pp. 17-18.
[200] Cf. *The Symposium*, pp. 43-44.

feelings which ought to be the lifelong guide of men" – namely, "shame at dishonorable and pride in honorable behavior," which give men the courage necessary to avoid acts that might bring about disgrace and to compete with each other to win honor and even "to die for one another."[201]

After Phaedrus, Pausanias accepts that love is the oldest god and that love does give birth to virtue. However, he then makes an important distinction between "heavenly love" (rightly-ordered desire) and "common love" (wrongly-ordered desire) and contends that some work to perfect the intellect and the will, so that we may love one another the right way – as slaves of excellence – is necessarily prior to the emergence of the kind of rightly-ordered desire that gives birth to virtuous habits.[202] Then, Eryximachus makes the case that we may receive the help that we need to perfect the intellect and the will from a harmony-making force at work in the universe (e.g., the unity of consciousness) which pervades all living bodies and reconciles all hostile elements to itself.[203] After which, Eryximachus is mocked for having simply overlooked the problem of wrongly-ordered desires and for hastily espousing a theory that simply eliminates such "hiccups."[204]

Aristophanes takes the problem of wrongly-ordered desires much more seriously. He acknowledges that the problem is an effect of our estrangement from our essential natures, and he celebrates love as the source of a desire that generates wholeness, or fulfillment, by urging us to (re)unite ourselves with another who promises fulfillment.[205] In his view, a person's nature predetermines the form of her erotic desire (e.g., whether she

[201] *The Symposium*, pp. 9-10.
[202] *The Symposium*, p. 12, 16.
[203] *The Symposium*, pp. 18-21.
[204] *The Symposium*, p. 22.
[205] *The Symposium*, pp. 22-25.

desires sexual relations with males or females). In this way, her erotic desire for union with another is simply given, and if she simply accepts love as a gift and does not oppose the love she receives, she will be healed and made blessed.[206] While Aristophanes recognizes *that* we may become estranged from our essential nature, he does not very well account for *why* this has taken place, apart from his observation that it is often in the interests of the ruling class to divide us and make us weaker so as to make us more useful to them.[207] More importantly, he does not provide any clear instruction as to what it might look like for us to become happy, apart from warning us not to oppose love. Like those who spoke before him, Aristophanes' account of love is overly concerned with looking back at "the

[206] *The Symposium*, pp. 26-27.

[207] *The Symposium*, p. 23. As noted above, it is written: "there is nothing better for mortals to do than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment *in* [emphasis added] their toil" (Ecclesiastes 2:24). Unfortunately, today, we tend to suppose that enjoyment is mainly something that one gains *from* their toil, *as a result*. Workers tend to think of enjoyment as something that may take place on holiday, on weeknights, or weekends, and they tend to suppose that this what their wages are for: finding enjoyment, or pursuing happiness, *as a result of their work*. In reality, workers do not receive wages so that they may pursue happiness; instead, we receive wages so that we will continue to work. More often than not, those who own capital, or the means of production, aim to pay us only enough in wages to keep us alive and ready to work for them, and they aim to cultivate among workers a culture of neediness, or spirit of restlessness – i.e., a culture of distorted self-images and selfish desires – so that they are compelled to come back to work on Monday, if they do not work straight through the weekend. As Karl Marx astutely observed: "The worker receives a part of the available means of subsistence from the capitalist. For what purpose do these means of subsistence serve him? For immediate consumption. As soon, however, as I consume the means of subsistence, they are irretrievably lost to me unless I use the time during which I am kept alive by them in order to produce new means of subsistence, in order to create by my labour new values in place of the values which perish in being consumed. But it is just this noble reproductive power that the worker surrenders to the capitalist in exchange for means of subsistence received. He has, therefore, lost it for himself" (*The Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 209).

Trillions of dollars are spent every year on advertisements that train workers to imagine: there is nothing better for mortals to do than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment *from* their toil. Meanwhile, those who control the means of production use the profits we produce for them, a profit that "rises incomparably more rapid" than the wages of workers (*The Marx-Engels Reader*, p. 211), to establish further divisions of labor so as to effectively divide workers from one another and limit the collective power of workers and to support efforts to research, develop, and apply of new technologies so as to reduce their own need of workers, which effectively makes "competition among the workers [expand] and their wages contract" (*Ibid*, p. 216). In these ways, those who own capital have tried to make us to delight in "getting results," which will mainly accrue to their (temporary) pleasure and advantage. In short, they have tried, some unwittingly and some quite wittingly, to separate us from one another and from the Giver of blessedness so as to secure and grow their ownership of capital.

good things of which [love] is the source" with reverence;[208] so, he does not spend enough time looking forward to what becoming blessed might look like.

Agathon points this out to his guests and proceeds to praise the qualities that make for happiness. Unlike the others, he insists that love, who is the happiest of all, is the youngest of the gods – i.e., one who tends to look forward to future possibilities, as opposed to being predisposed to discover necessities by looking backwards, and one who moves others to do likewise.[209] Unlike Necessity, Love "does not act by force."[210] Instead, Love is tender and "sets up his dwelling in the characters and souls" of those who have not become too hard and inflexible,[211] and He takes away our sense of estrangement by orienting us toward beauty and goodness and by filling us with a sense of kinship with and goodwill toward one another.[212]

Finally, Socrates (who is Plato's mouthpiece) speaks, and invites Agathon and the others to acknowledge that every love is a love *of something* and that every desire is a movement *toward something that someone lacks*. In other words, in their experience of love, all lovers – i.e., those who are complacent in something – interpret something as something (lacked) for someone (who lacks that thing). Furthermore, Socrates points out that this work of interpretation is only possible for someone who is situated *in between* having (knowledge of) the good and lacking (knowledge of) the good and only insofar as some *spirit*, or intermediary, makes it possible for someone to see what she lacks and work for it. The point is that we interpret something as something for someone through

[208] *The Symposium*, p. 28.
[209] *The Symposium*, p. 29.
[210] *The Symposium*, p. 30.
[211] *The Symposium*, p. 29.
[212] *The Symposium*, p. 31.

something (e.g., through adequate beliefs, which good teachers aim to cultivate in their students, or through inadequate beliefs).

We carry out this work for the same reason we carry out all other kinds of work – namely, so that we will become blessed, or come to possess the good always; but, unlike the gods, we live under conditions that destroy us. For the mortal creature, the only kind of "everlastingness and immortality" that is attainable is "procreating and giving birth in the beautiful."[213] A mortal who wishes to become immortal can proceed toward this end only "by leaving behind another new thing of the same kind in the place of what is growing old and passing away."[214] So, one who wishes for immortality, as one should, "goes about looking for the beautiful in which to procreate."[215] Finally, it is not the case that all beautiful things are equally worthy of our time. Some goods are better, or higher, than others. A beautiful soul, or form of life, is better than a beautiful body, and the life "which most of all a human being should live" is a life lived "in contemplation of beauty itself," for one who lives in this way will "give birth not to mere images of virtue but to true virtue, because it is not an image that he is grasping but the truth."[216]

Following after Socrates, it seems that, above all, we should aim to gain virtue and to give birth to virtue by seeking to unite ourselves with others who already possess virtue, so that, by living and working together with the virtuous, we may "give birth in the beautiful," or reproduce the same virtue that we find in ourselves or in another. The well-wishing and well-doing that the good friend gives to the other, then, should be given "in recognition of their friend's having good character,"[217] and where the other lacks good

[213] *The Symposium*, p. 44.
[214] *The Symposium*, p. 46.
[215] *The Symposium*, p. 47.
[216] *The Symposium*, p. 50.
[217] Cf. "Aristotle on the Forms of Friendship," p. 633.

character, we should abstain from communion with them. We should restrain ourselves from giving to them or accepting from them well-wishing or well-doing insofar as they are without virtue. As in the case of Alcibiades, those who lack true virtue should be mainly regarded as a burden or a challenge.[218] By keeping them at a distance, we may maintain our own good character, and we may hope that by punishing them in this way – i.e., by firmly refusing to be for them what they would have us to be for them – we may become an occasion for them to examine themselves. In other words, we may hope to become an occasion for others to examine themselves by practicing (moral) cleanliness and maintaining some form of real separation, or boundaries, so as to embody a kind of communicative difference.[219]

As I argued in chapter one, one cannot be helped to discover the *content* of her own essence by another human being except by being given an occasion to witness how her actual desires contradict and limit the desires of another self-conscious, desiring being. This is how I must come to have the freedom of self-consciousness: the limits of my *being-for-another* reveal the content of my *being-in-myself*, and I may become actually individual, or come to possess freedom as autonomy, by witnessing the self-negations of self-conscious others in my presence. If Socrates is going to help Alcibiades, he cannot give him what he wants. Instead, he must find a way to point toward what is truly good and beautiful. Remember: in our social interactions with other self-conscious, desiring beings, "each is for the other the middle term, through which each mediates itself with itself and unites with itself, and for the other, an immediate being on its own account, which at the same time is such only through mediation."[220] Human beings come to know

[218] Cf. *The Symposium*, p. 52.
[219] Cf. *Holiness in Israel*, p. 1-2, 8.
[220] *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 112.

themselves as they *recognize* themselves as *mutually recognizing* one another and as they come to negate, transcend, and preserve the "recognition" supposed by the other. Whereas one may help another to expand her freedom of choice and her freedom of action by playing the role of an authority for another, with respect to the development of freedom as autonomy, "no human being has . . . ever helped anyone by posing [as an authority for another]," except insofar as one has, by acting as an authority, become an occasion for another to *think through*, or negate, transcend, and preserve, the suppositions of so-called "authorities" and, in this way, has "entered into the role of midwife" for another.[221]

The one who is in the best position to perform the role of the midwife, with respect to the development of autonomy, is the one who maintains cleanliness and separation, or the one who only "goes about looking for the beautiful in which to procreate" and "will never procreate in the ugly."[222] At the same time, the one who becomes excessively isolated from all others can neither practice humanity nor help anyone else to develop humanity.[223] If we simply follow after Socrates, it seems the best way to promote humanity is to draw near to those who possess virtue, so that one may receive virtue from them, and to only come close enough to those who are inhumane (i.e., those who lack virtue) so as to help them recognize their inhumanity, or their unacceptability. In this way, one may be helped by the good character of one's friends to move in the direction of (the reproduction of) their virtues, and one may provoke her friends to move in the direction of (the reproduction of) her virtues. So, it seems the way for us to become happy is to

[221] *Philosophical Fragments*, pp. 8-9.
[222] *The Symposium*, p. 47.
[223] This is true whether we interpret humanity as "being there for others" or more truly as "letting others be there for us" (Cf. *God as the Mystery of the world*, p. 180)

restrain ourselves from desiring communion with others except insofar as they are truly lovable, or good. We should not pretend that the vicious and the virtuous are in control of their moral actions. While they may have, at first, had the power to become either one or the other, they cannot now step outside of themselves and undo what they have done. One who throws a stone has power over it until it is thrown, but not afterward; "otherwise throwing would be an illusion" and "the thrower would keep the stone in his hand in spite of all this throwing."[224] So, it seems that prudence requires us to avoid being struck by stones that have been thrown in error and to restrain ourselves from throwing our pearls before swine.[225]

Becoming blessed will involve working to give birth in the beautiful and to exclude others from, or limit their participation in, our communities insofar as they lack humanity, but what this looks like in practice will hinge upon how we *think* distinctions between the lovable and the unlovable and between the human(e) and the inhuman(e). If we carry out this operation in the perspective of unfaith, we will strictly proportion our care for others in accordance with the law – i.e., that which has become normative for us, here and now. However, if we carry out this operation in the perspective of faith, or identify ourselves as *justified sinners* who are coming to know themselves as they are known by God, we will interpret others *as lovable or unlovable* in the context of our acceptance of being accepted by grace in spite of our unacceptability, or through faith that "we are accepted by God although being unacceptable according to the criteria of the law."[226] In other words, we will love others as we have come to love ourselves – i.e., under the

[224] *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 18.
[225] Cf. Matthew 7:6. Still one may ask: how can entropy be overcome in this way, for a closed system will evolve toward a state of maximum entropy?
[226] *Systematic Theology, Part Three*, pp. 224-225.

impact of the Word of God, which, in the Presence of the Holy Spirit, "turns the eyes of man away from the bad and the good in himself to the infinite goodness."[227] Instead of seeing those who lack virtue mainly as burdens and challenges to our community, we will begin to see them (*sub contrario*) as occasions for faithful service to God and as gifts of opportunity to practice true co-presence, by accepting our being accepted by God in such a way that we let them be there for us, and immortality, as we receive power from the Holy Spirit to participate in the "appealing regress," or the everlasting cycle of grace, that proceeds from the Father and the Son.

By the grace of God, through our acceptance of being accepted, we may come to (have good reasons to) extend goodwill to all creatures, whether or not they wish us well in return, and we may form communities of faith wherein individuals give and receive such goodwill to and from one another, which is to say that we can become friends of God.[228] Members of such a community can help one another to *continue* to become children and servants of God so that they may more *intensely* (work so as to) feel the presence of God and (think so as to) see the glory of God. It is only as friends of God that we can fully accept the gifts, or obey the commands, that have come to us from the One who teaches us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength

[227] *Systematic Theology, Part Three*, p. 226.

[228] As children of God, we should wish for the good of others, even those who do not return that same wish, and as servants of God, we should work for the good of others, even those who do not return that same wish, but "friends must . . . have goodwill toward each other and not go unnoticed in their wishing for the good things for the other" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, p. 166). The same person cannot, at the same time and in the same respect, be our friend and our enemy. Nevertheless, we may speak of becoming more perfect children of God and more perfect servants of God *by becoming friends of God* in the sense that, by extending goodwill to my enemy, I am loving God, who loves me and takes notice of my goodwill. Sometimes I use the phrase "becoming friends of God" to highlight the divine quality of the friendships that may be realized among those who have become children and servants of God, and sometimes I use the phrase to highlight the way that we may become more perfect children and servants of God by *continuing* to *intensely* will and do the good of the other *as God's friend, or as someone who is loved and recognized by God and loves and recognizes God in return*.

and to love our neighbors as ourselves.[229] No life is as good as it could be and should be. Rather, "each squanders possibilities that could have been important, and not one fulfills all its promises."[230] We need friends who are free to help release (αφιημι) us from the bondage to sin that we have brought upon ourselves – friends who believe that it is more blessed to give than to receive,[231] who work so they might have something to give to others,[232] and who delight in giving and forgiving so that, together, we may become "fulfilled individuals and flourishing communities."[233] Therefore, if we want to become truly happy, or, rather, fully blessed, we should aim at becoming friends of God.

Becoming friends of God will require us to *go beyond* devotion to inherited laws of limited presence[234] and, instead, learn to practice obedience to "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,"[235] or to actually participate in "the open realm of God's presence," from which "no one is excluded" and "no one can withdraw."[236] Those who love Jesus Christ will obey his commandments.[237] We obey the command of the Lord, or accept the judgment of grace that we have received from the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, when we practice an unconditional commitment to the good of the other as we come to feel it (i.e., the good of the other) in the presence of hope and to see it in the light of faith. Moreover, by *continuing* to practice a commitment to the good of the other *whatever happens*, we may become more *fully* familiar with the truth of our feelings of absence/presence and our visions of ugliness/beauty. This is why we must become

[229] Cf. Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34.
[230] *Transcendence and the Secular World*, p. 42. Cf. Romans 3:10.
[231] Cf. Acts 20:35.
[232] Cf. Galatians 6:9-10; Titus 3:14; Romans 7:4.
[233] *Free of Charge*, p. 17.
[234] Cf. Romans 7:4-6.
[235] Cf. Romans 8:2.
[236] *Transcendence and the Secular World*, pp. 278-280.
[237] Cf. John 14:21; 1 John 5:2-3.

friends of God, as opposed to simply obeying God like moral athletes: as friends of God, we will *delight* in obedience, and this will make it possible for us to share in the presence of God's goodness and the vision of God's beauty with greater *continuity* and *intensity*. For this reason, Aquinas argued that "he will have a fuller participation in the light of glory who has more charity; because where there is greater charity, there is more desire; and desire in a certain degree makes the one desiring apt and prepared to receive the object desired."[238]

Christian perfection involves coming to think God's will and work in the direction of God's will with greater continuity and intensity.[239] Toward this end we are helped by our friends, both in the sense that they provide us with occasions for practicing charity so as to grow in charity and in the sense that they may give us the encouragement and the correction that we need to fully make the transition from death to life. Put negatively, we become perfectly human, if we do, by practicing an unconditional commitment to the good of the other *coram Deo*; put positively, we become fully blessed, if we do, by fully participating in the ultimate presence. As I have been arguing, we may become free to fully participate in the ultimate presence, or the Holy Spirit, by practicing the love of friendship, according to God's will, or love *for the sake of the other* in accordance with the wisdom of charity, as opposed to the love of concupiscence, or love *for the sake of something else* (namely, pleasures or advantages),[240] in accordance with the wisdom of the world.[241] It is by loving others out of gratitude to God and by receiving the encouragement and the insight that comes to us from other friends of God that we may

[238] *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 12, a. 6.
[239] As John Wesley puts it: our efforts to repent and produce the fruit of repentance are "necessary in order to the continuance of [one's] faith, as well as the increase of it" (*John Wesley's Sermons*, p. 379).
[240] Cf. *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 26, a. 4.
[241] Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:18-19.

learn to more perfectly work on (potential) and think on (possible) paths to the truth of a human life. So, by becoming friends of God we may come to more fully enjoy a life lived in contemplation of "the open realm of God's presence" and in service to the "appealing regress," or everlasting cycle of grace, which has been created *ex nihilo* by the judgment of grace we have received from the One who has raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

A picture of what it looks like to live in the presence of the Holy Spirit has been developed in exemplary fashion in *The Acts of the Apostles*. The heart of the gospel message of Luke-Acts is summarized in Luke 4:16-21, where Jesus Christ invites us to *go beyond* all inherited laws of limited presence by simultaneously embracing the favor of the Lord, or accepting our being accepted, and restraining ourselves from wishing for the day of vengeance to come upon sinners, or evildoers. Instead of mainly identifying ourselves as those who *stand against* (αντιστηναι) sinners,[242] in the New Testament, we are invited to identify ourselves as *justified sinners*.

While our enemies *as such* endanger our freedoms for self-assertion, self-preservation, and self-promotion, instead of making decisions to act solely on the basis of calculations serving backward-looking interests in reproducing the same by means of self-assertion, self-preservation, and self-promotion,[243] we are invited to look forward to the possibility of becoming blessed and are instructed to wait for God so as to receive power to discern the difference between the "instrument [which God has] chosen" to move us in the direction of blessedness[244] and the techniques or customs we have developed to reduce the complexity of the world in order to expand our freedom to

[242] Cf. Matthew 5:39.
[243] Cf. Acts 1:21-23.
[244] Cf. Acts 1:4; 1:8; 9:15; Proverbs 16:33.

"make a living" and "be ourselves," here and now, upon the earth. Likewise, when, in *The Acts of the Apostles*, the disciples receive power to live in the presence of the Holy Spirit, they experience the Lord's favor not as something that simply restores them to an original condition of freedom to "make a living" and "be themselves" through the possession of land,[245] or in the context of the necessity of security,[246] but as something that empowers them to live in radical community with one another through the hope they have received for eternal happiness, or in the context of the Gift of a new sense of possibility for giving birth in the beautiful light of the ultimate presence.[247]

Furthermore, in Acts 3:1-10, the difference between (the common, Greco-Roman conception of) the law of limited presence and (the Christian conception of) the law of ultimate presence is presented in a paradigmatic way.[248] Peter and John meet a man who is powerless to help them give birth in the beautiful, except as an occasion for them to practice moral decency. The law of limited presence would instruct them to interpret him mainly as a man in need of a way to make a living and be himself. Since he is lame and has been lame from birth, he only has freedom of choice and freedom of action in a severely limited way. Common moral decency requires them to give him money *if they*

[245] Cf. Leviticus 25:10.
[246] Cf. *God as the Mystery of the World*, pp. 196-197.
[247] Cf. Acts 2:5-6; 37-47. Note the contrast between the law of limited presence which moves everyone *back* to their ancestral lands (cf. Lev. 25:10), i.e., toward the promise of *the good old days*, and the law of ultimate presence which moves everyone *forward* in the direction of blessedness (Acts 2:43-47), i.e., toward the promise of *the new life of, or the holiness of, ultimate presence*.
[248] When I speak about (the conception of) the law of limited presence or (the conception of) the law of ultimate presence, one should remember that everything in nature works according to laws but "only a rational being has the capacity of acting according to the *conception* of laws (*Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 29)." According to Kant, this capacity is the will. The will is a capacity in the sense that we can develop conceptions of laws, and under the right circumstances, we do develop conceptions of laws. Nevertheless, "human freedom is not a capacity but a practice," and "we are not free unless we practice freedom" (*Creatures of Possibility*, p. x). Unless we *think through* our conceptions of the law, or negate, transcend, and preserve the truth of the law as we are empowered to do so by the gift of the occurrence of the truth, we are not free.

have some to give, but they "have no silver or gold."[249] Their situation of economic and political poverty releases them from the requirements of common moral decency. Like the man who is lame, they, too, have to use the time they have been given to find ways to make a living and to be themselves. As lovers of wisdom, they could accept the man's interest in them as an opportunity for them to challenge the man to more perfectly contemplate beauty itself by becoming an occasion for him to discover his own errors. They might aim to help the man develop some critical distance with respect to his own history and beliefs so as help him discover his error and recollect the truth.

Insofar as someone has "gone astray" *during her lifetime*,[250] this is a fine way for us to help her *think through* her histories and habits of error. However, this man has been "lame from birth."[251] He is not in a position to recollect freedom for "the good life." If he is going to move in the direction of the truth of a human life, he is going to have to be given the condition for acquiring the truth and given (the content of) the truth. So, Peter does not merely dialogue with him from a distance nor does he practice the kind of polite disinterest in the fortunes of others that is characteristic of modern liberalism. Instead, he speaks the Word of God to him and takes him by the hand and raises him up *in spite of* the ugliness of his condition, or his unacceptability (e.g., *as a worker, as a pleasure-friend, as an advantage-friend*).[252] He does not presume that the man has "within him" the power to move in the direction of the truth of a human life nor does he simply leave the man, in despair, to suffer his fate alone. Instead, in recognition of the power that Jesus Christ had given him, Peter decides to do a work of charity.

[249] Cf. Acts 3:6.
[250] Cf. Isaiah 53:6.
[251] Cf. Acts 3:2.
[252] Cf. Acts 3:6-7.

Peter draws near to the man and *acts* for the sake of the man, as a friend might act for her friend but, unlike the man's friends who simply carry him to the Beautiful Gate,[253] Peter acts for his sake in and through the power of the Holy Spirit, to give the man a new wealth of power for self-determination that he has never had "within him" and, so, could have never recollected. In the end, this man who had never been able to enter the temple by walking through the Beautiful Gate though he had been brought to the gate by others day after day – a man who had never before been able to "give birth in the beautiful" so that he might move in the direction of eternal happiness – is given the power to enter into "the open realm of God's presence."[254] The man who was healed becomes a powerful witness of the good news. As "the people saw him walking and praising God," his expression of gratitude functioned like an act of grace. In and through the "element of grace" in his thanksgiving,[255] the scriptures were being fulfilled in their hearing[256] – i.e., those who heard his testimony were being invited to acknowledge the Kingdom of God, to begin to live in accordance with the reign of God, or the rule of ultimate presence, or in accordance with the wisdom of charity.

Toward an Ethics of Charity for the Life of the Church

[253] Cf. Acts 3:2.
[254] Cf. Acts 3:8.
[255] Cf. "Aristotelian Grace," p. 314.
[256] Cf. Acts 3:9-10; Luke 4:21. Also, compare Luke 4:22-30 with Acts 3:11-4:22. Becoming blessed or coming to have life to the full, will require us to not only practice humanity, by carrying one another's burdens as Peter and John have done; it will also require us to become stable, or individual – i.e., to live in the power of an indestructible life (Cf. Hebrews 7:16), which is to say: not only as humans, as we see in Luke 4:16-21and in Acts 3:1-10, but also as individuals, as we see in Luke 4:22-30 and in Acts 3:11-4:22. We are shown a picture of what stability/individuality looks like in Luke 4:22-30 and in Acts 3:11-4:22. In both cases, someone who has done an amazing thing in the power of the Holy Spirit accepts others' interest in them as an opportunity to speak the truth to them; and in both cases, after speaking the truth, the powers that be make an attempt to silence them so as to limit the people's exposure to the word of truth which they have spoken. In both cases, despite the desire of some to do them harm and to silence them, they passed through the midst of their despisers and went on their way. Their devotion to the highest good – i.e., to the work of salvation made possible by the grace of God through the faith of Jesus Christ – and to living together with one another in Holy Communion empowered them to continue to "speak the word of God with boldness" (Cf. Acts 4:31).

The law of limited presence – which defines prudence as "healthy attention to one's peace and future prosperity," freedom as "absence of arbitrary or coercive external restraint," and justice as "keeping contracts civilly and distributing basic goods based on merit" – cannot simply be ignored.[257] In our finitude, and especially on our own, we do not have the capacity to stop and heal every lame man we come across. If we decide to work together, we surely have the capacity to stop and heal many, but who, then, should we stop and heal first? Which one of the many catastrophes that have taken place in our world/history should we prioritize? In order to make a rational decision, we will have to construct some *totality* that we can take seriously, at least for the moment, and use it to *measure* the relative weight of the one and the many, but the *totalities* that we construct arise from concern with and attention to a limited set of problems, although they do not have to be formed in a deliberately one-sided way.[258] At times, we will mainly want to practice *immersion* in some totality. At times, we will want to practice *dispersion* out of respect for the infinity of the other. At times, we will want to practice *compassion* for the sake of solidarity. However, it is a mark of maturity to learn how to think through the demands of totality, infinity, and solidarity in a trinitarian pattern.

Likewise, the theological virtues – faith, hope, and charity – mutually involve one another. You cannot have one without the others. Nevertheless, we can, and should, emphasize one of them more than the others in different situations. In this chapter, I have been asking: how can we come to more perfectly participate in "the fellowship of

[257] As Timothy P. Jackson concedes: "it is the chief glory of liberal democracy to have employed the language of 'rights and duties' in an effort to safeguard these three essentials." He then warns: "But neither prudence, nor freedom, nor justice alone can do the work of agapic love, and in the absence of such love, all three of these other goods wither" (*The Priority of Love*, p. 7). In my view, we very much need to hear and heed this warning, today.

[258] Cf. *Paths to the Triune God*, p. 321.

eternal happiness?" I have acknowledged that moving in the direction of blessedness, or communion with God, necessarily involves becoming children of God and servants of God, or becoming truly *individual* humans and truly *human(e)* individuals. I have argued that individuality and humanity are quite indispensable to the truth, or perfection, of a human life, conceived as a life lived in contemplation of the law of ultimate presence and in service to the "appealing regress," or everlasting life of grace, which has been created, *ex nihilo*, by the judgment of grace we have received from the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. I have argued that, as one *thinks* and as one *works*, one must not transgress against one's own individuality or humanity or against the individuality and humanity of another. Only an *individual* human can have an *eternal* happiness, and only a *human(e)* individual can have an eternal *happiness* – i.e., it is only by *letting Jesus be there for her as the Christ* that someone can be at peace with the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

So, indeed, we must become children of God and servants of God, but I have also argued that we must become friends of God. Moving toward the truth of a human life, or becoming blessed, in the sense that I have been giving to these terms throughout my dissertation, necessarily involves becoming children of God, becoming servants of God, and becoming friends of God, or receiving and accepting the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Furthermore, the way of salvation involves justification by grace through faith, sanctification by grace through hope, and glorification by grace through charity. In this chapter, I have been giving special attention to the relationship between the work of grace called sanctification and the possibility of glorification, which is the end of our salvation. In order to speak intelligibly of the end of our salvation, I have had to remind the reader of the beginning of our salvation in the faith of Jesus Christ and in the

divine activity of the One who raised him from the dead. Still, I have mainly attended to the possibility of Christian perfection, as a tendency toward eternal life and blessedness and as rest in eternal life and blessedness. I have tried to clarify the relationship between the love of God (charity) and the will of God (the wisdom of charity) and to show the reader the connection between these ideas and the idea of friendship, in part, because it seems to me that these relationships deserve more attention than they have received in recent years, especially among Protestant theologians.

I suspect that some have become inattentive to these relations partly because "the Protestant Principle" – i.e., the principle that "in relation to God, God alone can act and that no human claim, especially no religious claim, no intellectual or moral or devotional 'work,' can reunite us with him"[259] – has often been asserted in a way that has tempted many to suppose that works of charity, my works and the works of my friends, do not play a serious role in our salvation and partly because our modern preoccupations with safeguarding the anesthetized state of "peace" made possible by adherence to modern laws of limited presence – projects for which God was only "thought as the back-up insurance for one's own process of self-security"[260] – have left us ill-disposed to develop the *trust* that makes complete friendship possible and ill-disposed to *think* the demand of the law of ultimate presence (or the will of God).

In my view, we ought to humbly and gratefully admit that "since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, *no one can merit the initial grace* of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion" and yet we ought to courageously affirm that "moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, *we can then merit* for ourselves and

[259] Cf. *Systematic Theology, Vol. 3*, p. 224.
[260] *God as the Mystery of the World*, p. 169.

for other the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life."[261] This does not mean that we cannot say that "we owe our salvation wholly and exclusively to God *himself* and that God *alone* is the necessary and sufficient prerequisite for our salvation and for Jesus Christ's significance for us"[262] – provided that we do not play the call to accept the gift of God against the call to work out our salvation in a one-sided fashion. It is true that we have been saved by grace through faith and that our salvation is "not [our] own doing" but is "the gift of God" and "not the result of works, so that no one may boast."[263] It is also true that, since God so loved us, we are called to accept the gift of God's grace *by working out our salvation* as "dear friends,"[264] both with "fear and trembling"[265] and with "*trust in God*"[266] – believing that although "no one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us."[267]

In this chapter, I have argued that one can only become *perfectly individual* by "giving birth in the beautiful," or coming to participate in the immortality of the Giver of the good spirit; that one can only become *perfectly human* by receiving and accepting the other *as a gift*, or insofar as I "*let someone else be there for me*;"[268] and that we can only *continue* to *intensely* engage in thinking and working to become perfectly individual and human by "becoming friends of God," or by practicing an unconditional commitment to the good of other in accordance with the will of God, which one can

[261] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Part 3, a. 2.3, § 2010, pp. 541-542.
[262] *Crucified and Resurrected*, p. 155.
[263] Cf. Ephesians 2:8-9.
[264] Cf. 1 John 4:11.
[265] Cf. Philippians 2:12.
[266] *God as the Mystery of the World*, p. 180. Trust is certainty which removes security (cf. *God as the Mystery of the World*, p. 196).
[267] Cf. 1 John 4:11-12.
[268] *God as the Mystery of the World*, p. 180.

only discern by becoming familiar (with help from other friends of God) with the demand of the Word of God. Throughout my dissertation, I have been arguing that becoming human individuals necessarily involves coming to have the virtues of understanding and science, and, in this chapter, I have argued that becoming *perfectly* human individuals will involve coming to practice the wisdom of charity. With what I have written, I have tried to explicate and elucidate the nature and importance of each of these speculative intellectual virtues for the "working out" of our salvation, in general, and for the work of philosophy of religion and theology, in particular. I have argued that the extent to which we make the transition from misery to blessedness will greatly depend on the extent to which we become individual and human selves and friends of God by practicing intellectual virtue in accordance with the gift/law of the ultimate presence, as opposed to merely continuing to practice habits of artificial intelligence in accordance with the laws of limited presence.

Finally, as I conclude this work of philosophy of religion and theology, it seems to me that further studies should be undertaken, especially among Protestant theologians and pastors, to develop a more perfect account of the ethics of Christian charity, so that we may come to more fully grasp the works appropriate for *the justified sinner* and then work to more perfectly determine ourselves and our world for the blessedness of having complete individuality and humanity in Jesus Christ. Toward this end, Timothy P. Jackson has made a strong case for the priority of charity, or "agapic love," in the good life and in Christian reflections on the good life. In his view, agapic love "involves three basic features: (1) unconditional willing of the good for the other, (2) equal regard for the well-

being of the other, and (3) passionate service open to self-sacrifice for the sake of the other."[269]

He argues that Christian reflections on the good life presuppose some familiarity with the reality of this idea of love, the truth of which Christians know in and through the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and that a Christian ethics should prioritize the work of coming to understand the duties of charity not only because charity is a central theme and a much celebrated virtue in the New Testament but also "because of [agapic love's] chronological priority (loving care is the first thing we must receive as infants), its axiological priority (without care we do not mature into responsible persons), its lexical priority (without care we have no substantive access to other goods), and its priority of itself (care's agenda is to make others caring)."[270] As he puts it, agapic love "has a unique priority, it is the necessary condition to realizing and sustaining other human values in any adequate form."[271] If we want to make the most of the Way to eternal blessedness, or the unique possibilities for corresponding to the Giver of such blessedness which have come to us as a gift from the One who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, we will have to practice the mind and the works of charity so as to become familiar with the way that charity "supports other virtues and values, but . . . also transcends and governs them."[272]

As I understand them, Jackson's "three basic features" of agapic love correspond, roughly, to what I have called *becoming friends of God* (or coming to have a tendency to will the good of the other *for her sake*), *becoming servants of God* (or coming to have a tendency to accept service from others and to serve others, or to let others be there

[269] *The Priority of Love*, p. 10.
[270] *The Priority of Love*, p. 69.
[271] *The Priority of Love*, pp. 10-11.
[272] *The Priority of Love*, p. 69.

for you *as gifts*, in a way that is characterized by an openness to self-sacrifice for the sake of the other), and *becoming children of God* (or coming to have a tendency to know oneself and others as you and they are known by God). I have argued that it is only by *becoming friends of God* that we may perfectly *become servants and children of God*, but further research and further writing could be done to (help others) distinguish the characteristics of the true servant of God and the true child of God from those of the many counterfeit tokens in circulation.

In my view, Jackson does an admirable job of handling the relationship between love and sacrifice with nuance and sensitivity – for example, by acknowledging that Christian feminists have rightly warned us that "an occlusive or uncritical emphasis on crucifixion may be disruptive, not just of secular society between women and men but also of the kingdom of God"[273] and that "a preoccupation with the cross as the unique epitome of Christian virtue leaves us with a truncated ethics, insensitive to context."[274] Furthermore, he does not, in my view, lose sight of the importance of what I have called

[273] *The Priority of Love*, p. 21. Barbara Andolsen, for example, has criticized some theologians for an overemphasis on images of the crucified Christ and the virtue of self-sacrifice. She argues that some have been tempted to overemphasizes the virtue of self-sacrifice because they have operated with an excessively androcentric view of the human predicament and have, therefore, identified pride as the predominant sin of humankind. However, Andolsen gives an alternative, historical account of the lives of women and argues that throughout much of our history, women have tended to commit sins of sloth more than they have tended to commit sins of pride, and she argues that our fascinations with the cross have discouraged women from seeking to fully develop their potentials, i.e., by engaging in appropriate acts of self-assertion, which would, for many women, amount to a corrective move away from the sin of sloth ("Agape in Feminist Ethics," p. 151.) For Andolsen, mutuality, as opposed to self-sacrifice, is the cornerstone of Christian ethics. In her view, the good of mutuality is the grounds for love and self-giving, so that self-giving should occur only in pursuit of mutual love, and she proclaims that situations demanding sacrifice should be viewed as "symptomatic of disruptions in the primordial harmony" and rightly insists that sacrifices should never be performed *for the sake of sacrifice* (*Ibid*, p. 155). In the terms that I have been using, I think that Andolsen is right to point out that our accounts of what *humanity* requires should not transgress against our *individuality*. However, it also seems to me that she elevates a preliminary concern for properly regulated advantage-friendships to a place of ultimacy. For reasons that I have discussed in chapter two, I do not think that her notion of 'mutuality' can bear the weight that she has placed upon it, or fulfill the role that she has given to it. Although, again, I do think she is right to take up the cause of individuality, which is so essential to our *eudaimonia*.
[274] *The Priority of Love*, p. 25.

individuality to our blessedness, but he maintains that "for all the redemptive power and uncanny resolution behind Jesus' crucifixion, it still represents the acceptance of real vulnerability and loss."[275] This is absolutely true; but were I to revise Jackson's account of the relationship between charity and sacrifice, I would draw more attention to the way that those saints who have come to delight most in service to others have, in an uncanny way, come to rejoice in their sufferings, and I would do more work to cultivate a sense of the saintly possibility that, by grace through faith, hope, and charity, we might also come to see and feel opportunities for joy *hidden beneath their opposite*.[276]

The cross is not, for Christians, the epitome of Christian virtue; rather, it is a powerful reminder that there is no place in life or death where God's love isn't present and creative – overcoming evil with God and nonbeing with being. Likewise, the lives and

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[275] *The Priority of Love*, p. 4.

[276] In order to carry out this work of venerating the saints, I think someone would have to think through "the question of immortality" in a more complete and satisfactory way than Jackson has done – who complains: "Saint Paul undercuts his own splendid panegyric on love (1 Corinthians 13) when he asks, 'If the dead are not raised at all . . . why are we putting ourselves in danger every hour?' (1 Cor. 15:29-30). When he goes on to propose that 'if the dead are not raise, "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die"' (1 Cor. 15:32), he retreats from strong *agape*'s affirmation of this world in spite of evil and fails to treat charity as its own reward and the absence of charity as its own punishment" (*The Priority of Love*, p. 83). These claims suggest that Jackson – who would, I think, agree that truly loving another involves wishing and doing what is *best* for her, as one is able – has not very well understood the relationship between charity and immortality or the way that immortality belongs to the truth of a human life. His own criticisms of Paul, then, should not be seen as criticisms that flow from an adequate comprehension of the subject of immortality; instead, his criticisms are corrective reactions against a popular picture of "eternity as postmortem perdurability" that would, indeed, amount to "a cruel denigration his life and its suffering/joy," to "instrumentalizing charity, making it a means to extrinsic ends," and to "dogmatism about what can be known with certainty about one's possible afterlife and its relation to God's justice" (*The Priority of Love*, p. 84). As such they are reasonable reactions from someone who openly admits: "I am not sure how to interpret either the act of creation or those biblical passages (e.g., Matt. 8:11-12; 19:28-30) that refer to the "kingdom of heaven" and "eternal life" (*The Priority of Love*, p. 85). However, one could respond, instead, by objecting to the view that (the freedom of) *the self* is a private property that one might be restored to as one might be restored to ancestral lands at Jubilee (cf. *Creatures of Possibility*, p. x) as opposed to "a specific way of living a human life" (*Radical Theology*, p. 15) that may come to be embodied by those who have received the grace you have given (contrast Leviticus 25:10 with Acts 2:4; 3:43-47). One comes closer to the heart of Christianity when one asks not, how is it possible for me to survive my death (cf. *Death and Immortality*, pp. 1-2), but rather when one asks, in sober view of the threat of nonbeing: "How then am I to seek you, Lord? When I seek you, my God, what I am seeking is a life of happiness. Let me seek you that my soul may live, for as my body draws its life from my soul, so does my soul draw its life from you. How, then, am I to seek a life of happiness?" (*The Confessions*, p. 216).

the deaths of the saints remind us of the power of God at work in the world. They help us to imagine what is possible for us. We should make serious efforts to venerate the saints, provided that we do not apply our understandings of the possibilities of saintliness in a one-sided and heavy-handed way, such that we tempt others to adopt a distorted image of who they are to their own misery – e.g., to the shame of those who have been "beset by affliction and absurdity through no fault of their own,"[277] or in a simplistic, overly moralizing way that "makes for malaise in civilization and maladjustment in the individual."[278]

In *The Priority of Love*, Jackson carefully affirms "the importance of giving people their due"[279] while also showing his reader how agapic love precedes and transforms justice insofar as agapic love is "most characteristically productive . . . of worth," which justice, as the term is "now standardly used,"[280] functions to distribute.[281] He does not attend to the relationship between Christian charity and social justice in a one-sided way nor does he fail to engage in charitable discourse. He clearly "acknowledges a broad and complex range of traits, values, and action-guides as legitimate, even indispensable,

[277] Cf. *The Priority of Love*, p. 82.
[278] Cf. *The Priority of Love*, p. 40.
[279] *The Priority of Love*, p. 34.
[280] Cf. *The Priority of Love*, pp. 37-38.
[281] *The Priority of Love*, p. 28.

for a well-lived life"[282] and aims to preserve the best insights of meritarians,[283] naturalists,[284] liberals,[285] and feminists,[286] by thinking through their criticisms of his position dialectically.

Throughout *The Priority of Love*, Jackson maintains that charity "never falls below justice, never gives less than is due,"[287] that it "sometimes rises above . . . justice,"[288] and that it "does transcend and transform both contractarian and utilitarian emphases by casting higher and wider the net of moral attention."[289] He warns us not to think of the question of love simply as a question of how to distribute a limited resource – i.e., not to think of love as "a fixed quantity of undifferentiated psychic energy, with family, friends, strangers, enemies, and finally oneself all competing to receive the largest portion" – but, rather, as a question of the beginning and the end of a human life.[290] Finally, he argues

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[282] *The Priority of Love*, p. 15.

[283] At the heart of the meritarian critique is recognition that our interest in meeting the needs of others may conflict with our interest in giving others their due and in securing our own due. A preoccupation with "pity" can devolve into a decadent egalitarianism, wherein heroic virtues are undervalued, those who should receive special attention and care (e.g., heroes, family, and friends) go unrecognized, and the reality of (the differences among) our powers of being, i.e., the basis for cultural achievement, is denied (Cf. *The Priority of Love*, p. 40).

[284] At the heart of the naturalist critique is the recognition that an obsession with morality can become personally and socially impoverishing – i.e., the psychic toll paid for the sake of morality can be too high and may lead to social friction – if the morals that one clings to call for "too massive a self-denial, if not self-delusion" (Cf. *The Priority of Love*, pp. 40-41).

[285] At the heart of the liberal critique is the recognition that the move to talk about "true virtue" and "true self-knowledge," as opposed to my/our actual self-knowledge, amounts to a refusal to abide by liberal procedures for reaching civil agreements and that such a refusal threatens the public peace (or rather anesthesia) secured by liberalism. One might argue: "although the price is personal alienation in the face of our radical freedom and polite disinterest in the private fortunes of others, it is a price worth paying because of the public peace it provides" (Cf. *The Priority of Love*, pp. 41-42).

[286] At the heart of the feminist critique is the recognition that women could be harmed by an insistence on the priority of charity (1) because women are expected to engage in a *depth* of self-denial that is not expected of men and (2) because women would be more profoundly affected by the negative impacts of the *scope and motivation* of the self-denial called for by an ethics of charity, which have already been called into question by the meritarian and naturalist criticisms rehearsed above (Cf. *The Priority of Love*, pp. 42-46).

[287] *The Priority of Love*, p. 18.

[288] *The Priority of Love*, p. 46.

[289] E.g., by acting "to liberate potential persons out of the pre-personal, not merely to respect persons already in existence" (*The Priority of Love*, p. 212). Much as I have emphasized the need to *become* selves, Jackson emphasizes: "we all grow into personhood through the care of others, both care given *to* us *by* others and care given *by* us *to* others" (*Ibid*, p. 212).

[290] *The Priority of Love*, p. 47.

that the wisdom of charity does not rule out preferential relations but that it does relativize them, so that "one loves spouse, friends, fellow citizens, et al. first of all as neighbors,"[291] with gratitude for the way our participation in the life of God "makes special associations more stable"[292] and with a kind of humble acceptance of our being accepted, which does not merely prepare us to "live and let live" but also to generously give life "to the full."[293]

In these ways, and in others unmentioned, Jackson has a lot to teach us about the wisdom of charity. His work admirably witnesses to the priority of love in our lives and to the promise of the wisdom of charity for us, for our societies, and for future generations. What remains to be done, I think, is further work to elucidate the present demands of the wisdom of charity in our lives *as spouses, friends, fellow citizens*, *et al*. This work will require us to both appreciate the real differences among our "special relations," with a "burning concern for the liberation of the oppressed and suffering"[294] and to locate them within "a vision of all things *sub ratione Dei*," or in relation to God, understood as "the ultimate origin and end of all things."[295] Contemporary theologians have tended to focus on the former task with insufficient concern for the latter, but perhaps a healthy dose of Aquinas could help us begin to locate our "special relations" *sub ratione Dei*.

In the Second Part of his *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas argues that charity essentially consists of "the love of friendship," as opposed to "the love of concupiscence" – or the kind of love that is directed towards "that which is loved simply and for itself," as opposed

[291] *The Priority of Love*, p.47.
[292] *The Priority of Love*, p. 48.
[293] *The Priority of Love*, p. 213.
[294] *Paths to the Triune God*, p. 10.
[295] *Paths to the Triune God*, p. 158.

to that which is "loved, not simply and for itself, but for something else."[296] The end of charity and, indeed, the end of every virtuous action is "real union" with God, the Giver of true blessedness, and he argues that union with God is caused "effectively" by the love of friendship insofar as "when a man loves another with the love of friendship, he wills good to him, just as he wills good to himself."[297] In this way, through the love of friendship, "the beloved is present with the lover," which is to say that there is "real union" among them.[298] As argued above, the love of concupiscence (i.e., pleasure-friendship and advantage-friendship) does not so perfectly unite the beloved with the lover. So, members of the church should be exhorted to practice complete friendship with one another toward "real union" with the goodness of God and instructed as to how examine one's own relationship to God and neighbor and how to practice complete friendship with others toward the goodness of God, today.

Furthermore, Thomas Aquinas notes that friendships can be distinguished not only "in respect to diversity of ends" but also "in respect of the different kinds of communion" that characterize the friendship – e.g., by whether one mainly relates to another in the form of natural communion, or family ties, and civil communion, or social ties.[299] Jackson's *The Priority of Love* is mainly an invitation to embrace the priority of love, or an invitation to locate our concerns for social justice in their relationship to the goodness of God and to hope that we may be united with the Giver of eternal life through (the wisdom of) charity. Concerning the many "special relations" we may come to have with others, Jackson warns that "if the priority of *agape* is not decidedly embraced, then special

[296] *ST* I-II, q. 26, a. 4; *ST* II-II, q. 23, a. 1
[297] *ST* I-II, q. 28, a. 1.
[298] *ST* I-II, q. 28, a. 1.
[299] *ST* II-II, q. 23, a. 5

relations will tear one apart."[300] According to Jackson, "if love of God and neighbor take precedence . . . then the other relations may find their proper place."[301] I agree with him wholeheartedly on this point. Individuality is indispensable to living well. Furthermore, we are not in a position to put our lives in good order until we have learned how to locate ourselves between the beginning and the end of our lives truly, or to find our place in the goodness of God. As I have been arguing, unless we learn to *think* the love of God for us and for our neighbors, we are not in a position to consistently order our participation in special relations in ways that are conducive to "the fellowship of eternal happiness."[302]

At the same time, I also recognize that world/history is ever-changing, that life demands decisions, and that living a human(e) life demands respect for others in their difference; so, it seems to me that further studies should be undertaken concerning the relationship between prudence, freedom, and justice and (the wisdom of) charity so as to develop guidelines for thinking about and working toward more charitable "unions of affection."[303] This work should pay special attention to "the signs of the times" and to the perspectives of the poor and the oppressed, so that we may become more aware of the various forms of artificial poverty that are "rooted in structural injustice."[304] However,

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[300] *The Priority of Love*, p. 47.
[301] *The Priority of Love*, p. 47.
[302] Cf. *ST* II-II, q. 23, a. 5.
[303] And, here, it seems to me that the work that Thomas Aquinas has done to address some of the difficulties that tend to arise when we think about the subject and the object of charity (Cf. *ST* II-II, q. 24, a. 1), the quantity of charity (Cf. *ST* II-II, q. 24, a. 3-5, 10), the perfection of charity (Cf. *ST* II-II, q. 24, a. 8), the loss of charity (Cf. *ST* II-II, q. 24, 10-12), the range of charity (Cf. *ST* II-II, q. 25, a. 1-6), and the order of charity (Cf. *ST* II-II, q. 26, a. 2-9, 11-12) may prove helpful to future studies of the relation between (the wisdom of) charity and prudence, freedom, and justice. Often, especially among holiness traditions, the importance of intentional acts of consecration (cleanliness) and separation (boundaries) are over-emphasized, to the point that members of the family of God lose sight the crucial role that practices of friendship and communion plays in the sanctification of the saints. A preoccupation with *my sinlessness*, as opposed to *the love of God*, has taken root in some holiness traditions. A healthy dose of Aquinas and his many discourses on the relationship between charity and Christian perfection might serve as a corrective measure for these traditions, today.
[304] Cf. *Dialectic of Salvation*, p. 71.

we must beware the temptation to forsake the call to human(e) intelligence in order to "get results." Throughout my dissertation, I have tried to (help the reader) come to grips with the kind of intellectual poverty that has been produced by our practices of artificial intelligence, and I have tried to explicate and elucidate what it means for us to practice the speculative intellectual virtues, or to think well, as humans, as philosophers of religion, and as theologians and how the speculative intellectual virtues enable us to participate more fully in "the fellowship of eternal happiness." The extent to which we *become free to* make the transition from death and misery to life and blessedness will greatly depend on the extent to which we practice the (intellectual and theological) virtues necessary to become truly individual humans and truly human(e) individuals.

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