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Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology

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A 1987 photo of the skylight at the GTU's Flora Lamson Hewlett Library. In 2017, the GTU unveiled a new logo and website that drew inspiration from the skylight.

Humbly Connecting Theology and Ministry: *A Reformed, Christian Reflection*

Henry S. Kuo

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Graduate Theological Union
Berkeley, California, USA.*

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A new year on Holy Hill brings with it new challenges, changes, and blessings. Of course, it is impossible to avoid mentioning the torrid political situation in the United States. The GTU comprises one of the most diverse student and faculty bodies in the United States, unfortunately a rarity in academic theology and religious studies. The neighborly presence of a variety of religious traditions is a treasured gift that few in the nation enjoy. How many Christian seminaries are situated next to, or even within walking distance to, mosques or Islamic centers, or Buddhist temples? But in these difficult times, White supremacists and Nazis were galvanized and they mobilized; and several strands of Evangelicalism either were silent or gave support to those far-right movements, although it must be emphasized that a few brave voices such as Russell Moore and Richard Mouw sounded the alarm about such a situation.¹ Far-

¹ I have personally decided to make a distinction between evangelical Christianity and Evangelicalism by capitalizing the latter to denote a right-wing religious movement that, in many aspects, has been co-opted by the nationalist and xenophobic far-right. The concept of being “evangelical” has roots deep in Christian history, and is rooted in the radical and life-affirming nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, I do not wish to abandon it to the exclusive use of Evangelicals.

right elements have converged upon the University of California and sought to use “free speech” as a platform for hate speech. Such movements not only fly in the face of what the GTU is about, they corrode the nature of love, cooperation, and harmony that form the bedrock upon which the GTU is built. No doubt, we are not alone in such an experience. Seminaries and divinity schools that embrace the diversity of humanity have felt similar worries.

Positing a “Progressive Spirituality”

In the movie, *Hero*, Jet Li plays an unnamed warrior from a small kingdom in China. He was sent to assassinate the King of Qin, who will become the Emperor Qin, the first emperor of a unified China. To do so, he needed to place himself within ten steps of the Emperor, which necessitated him to procure evidence that the Emperor’s most feared enemies were silenced. One of those enemies was a master calligrapher, and according to the assassin, he commissioned him to write the character for “sword” because it supposedly betrays his swordsmanship. The assassin presents the calligraphy to the Emperor as one way to get near him.

Near the end of the movie, the Emperor muses at the calligraphy and suddenly had a Eureka moment. As he describes it, the calligraphy does not present the calligrapher’s swordsmanship at all, but his “sword spirituality,” comprising the three stages leading up to his highest ideals relating to the sword. At the most elementary stage, the sword and its wielder are one – the person becomes the sword, and the sword becomes the person – so that even a blade of grass becomes a dangerous weapon. At the intermediate stage, the sword becomes spiritual, residing in the heart, so that the wielder does not need the sword to kill his enemy. But the ultimate stage, the ultimate ideal of swordsmanship, is when the sword disappears. The wielder embraces everything around her so that the desire to kill

disappears, leaving only peace in its wake. In such a situation, turmoil and violence transform into harmonious peace.

I bring up this movie to suggest that what progressive movements are rather weak in is a deep spirituality that makes justice not just an issue of righteousness and propriety, but an issue of the heart. The challenges that arose this past year in the public sphere, in my estimation, has brought this matter up to mind, and they are reflected in the scholarship published in this volume. Progressive ministry and theology cannot simply focus on reordering the world in a right way, assuming that those who don't comply will simply have to "get with the program." This is akin to remaining in the first stage of "sword spirituality," where coercion and violence becomes instrumental to a righteous (or, indeed, unrighteous) end. And certainly, coercive methods of conversion and alignment with the church's mission have been practiced in the past and today, with lasting damages to the church's witness. Although some Christians, such as Pope St. John Paul II, have apologized for the Crusades, the work of reconciliation and harmony between Christian and Muslim groups is much more difficult and continues to this very day. Such a difficult *boni ardui* has a spiritual component in which mutual conversations that seek to understand different religious and theological frameworks become spaces for reconciliation and harmony. It is this spirituality that beckons those from outside the walls of the conversation to traverse its porosity and participate in it.

My reflections come from the purview of (Reformed) Christian theology, which takes seriously the presence of human sin and, as such, does not foreclose the likelihood of people for whom the ideal picture of justice is oppression, and for whom God's vision of justice constitutes infringement on their personal liberties and privileges. But this dire view of human nature must be held in tension with theological anthropologies insisting that fundamental goodness still exists in humanity. God, Creator of all good things, intends for

goodness to be a constitutive and critical element of human nature. Debates on the pervasiveness of sin aside, the lesson we need to take is the necessity of framing justice so that everybody will *want* to participate in efforts to bring societies and the world one step closer to perfect justice. That is, they participate in the work of justice, not out of coercion but desire. It is this desire that powers faculty and students of the Graduate Theological Union to do the interdisciplinary and interreligious scholarship, for at the end of the day, this is scholarship that is built upon the desire to find solutions to make the world a better place.

But at the base of that desire is a humility that recognizes that the work of justice is not an individualistic endeavor. Once upon a time, theologians and scholars occupied the privileged echelons of the theological and religious hierarchy, but only a very few institutions exist today where ivory towers are meticulously maintained. (Indeed, those ivory towers are expensive to maintain!) There is less and less space for theologians to dwell in the realm of the abstract, assuming that people will understand what is going on. Johann Baptist Metz, in his political theological writings, recognized this coming challenge as he constructed his vision of political theology as a “practical fundamental theology.”² The humility we need is one that embraces the art of meaningful solidarity and dense networking across boundaries in order to formulate practical strategies, game-plans, and messaging efforts in suffrage for justice. Understood this way, progressive ministry and theology recognizes the unsustainability of separating theology from ministry. Pravina Rodrigues’s critique of comparative theology in this issue draws attention to this separation more broadly in that theology does not take into account the complex ways in which religious identities are practiced. Those theological ivory towers, gleaming they may be,

² See Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, trans. J. Matthew Ashley (New York: Herder & Herder, 2007).

can hide foundations of colonialism, racism, and various oppressions, which may also attest to why they are crumbling fast. Ministers and spiritual leaders need to not see themselves as somehow being subservient, less “knowledgeable” than the theologians – in fact, the truth is they already are doing theology, perhaps with even more facility than the theologians themselves! While she does not bring this up, such a humility is a part of the spirituality of academic inquiry that Professor Elizabeth Liebert reflects on in her Distinguished Faculty Lecture.

It is when ministry and theology overlap significantly that new ways of doing ministry and theology can be generated, and it is upon this methodological foundation – where “religion meets the world” – that interdisciplinary, interreligious scholarship matters. This year’s Surjit Singh Lecture by Jeffrey D. Long draws on his religious peregrinations to posit a Jain-inspired approach to dialoguing across different worldviews. Jennifer Fernandez’s article places in conversation Max Weber, Michel Foucault, and Hannah Arendt to trace a theological history of work, and to uncover its suppressionist forces that exalts work into potential idolatry. Jaesung Ryu draws on Hans Urs von Balthasar’s theology to forward a pastoral approach to responding theologically to trauma, particularly among Korean comfort women.

I am not suggesting that theologians, here, need to be ordained. Rather, theologians in a time of change need to be part of the solutions they propose. In this way, they exercise forms of ministry that could be valuable resources for ordained ministers. Additionally, ordained ministers, many of whom are seasoned theologians, are resources for theologians and scholars as well. When the wall between theological academia and ministry break down, new ways can be proposed so that other walls of hostility, not just between world and God, but between neighbors and strangers, can be torn down as well. Humility, when done well, brings into

solidarity both rich and poor, East and West, the powerful and downtrodden, so that together the world can become more human. Indeed, more merciful.

Changes at the GTU

In Japan, skyscrapers often contain extremely complex earthquake-resistant technologies, but no amount of mathematical modeling or laboratory testing could test the effectiveness of those technologies than an actual earthquake. I surmise that this is what the GTU and many religious and theological institutions are facing, not a literal earthquake (hopefully) but an earthquake of values. And while we might seem helpless in the midst of this epistemological earthquake, we are heartened by what GTU students and faculty have been doing. Some have participated in marches and protests against hate, many in clerical robes, demonstrating that right-wing Evangelicals who have allied with hatred and evil do not have the final word. They do not speak on behalf of all Christians and of all religious communities in the United States. Others have marched alongside Muslim and Jewish brothers and sisters in solidarity as Islamophobia and anti-Semitic sentiments run high throughout the country.

More importantly, through exercising “scholarship in activism,” GTU members actuate what it means for the GTU to be “where religion meets the world.” In the midst of the political earthquake that Trump unleashed, while evil ghosts and spirits of ages past – be it in the form of Nazism or White supremacy – have arisen from the fissures, it is in the shaking that demonstrates the importance and effectiveness of the GTU’s interreligious, justice-minded approach, one that critically analyzes and resources wisdom from our ancestors past and brings it into critical conversation with present challenges. It is in the rise of injustices past that the GTU was made for such a time as this.

But, as with every earthquake, assessments are important in order to improve upon existing systems. Change always happens after such shaking, and on that note, I draw the reader's attention to two changes at the GTU that affect the BJRT. First, over the course of 2016-2017, administrators have been working on a new rebranding for the GTU. As this journal was being produced, the new rebranding was in the process of being rolled out. The previous logo, in use from 1962 to 2016, featured a flame that represented the spirit that is common across all religious traditions. It was, perhaps, a better reflection of the cooperative and aspirational ecumenical spirit of the 1960s and 1970s. Such cooperative and ecumenical spirit continues to endure at the GTU, but in light of the contexts the GTU finds itself in, the new logo symbolizes the intersections, convergences, and diversity of scholarly approaches and perspectives already represented on Holy Hill. As a publication affiliated with the GTU, the editors have seen fit to bring the BJRT in line with this rebranding. As such, the design of this year's issue has been changed and made simpler. The website has been retooled completely to reflect the rebranding. As before, copies of the BJRT are available for free in PDF on both the website and the Academia.edu page, and hard copies are available for purchase on Lulu.com.

Second, the BJRT joins the GTU community in welcoming the 7th Academic Dean and Vice President of Academic Affairs, Uriah Y. Kim. Dean Kim is the second alumnus of the GTU to serve as Dean, having completed his dissertation in Hebrew Bible, and returns to Holy Hill from Hartford Seminary in Connecticut. One of the priorities for Dean Kim is the BJRT. For the past 3 years, the Journal has been housed under the generous administrative support of Student Affairs, specifically under the Professional Development Program. However, the wide variety of methods coming from many religious traditions is a unique aspect of the Journal that is rarely seen in religious and theological journals in existence right now.

What this means for the BJRT is that in the coming year, which will be reflected in Volume 4, the Journal will transition into Academic Affairs. Readers should know that this transition will not lead to changes in existing processes thus far. Volume 4 submissions will still be due February 1, 2018. The Instructions and Style Guide, as well as existing procedures, will not change. Any such changes will be communicated to the public through the BJRT website, our new Facebook page (link is on the website), and our Academia.edu page.

2017 is a challenging year for the world, and I am sanguine as to whether 2018 will be better. But the work of religious scholarship and praxis moves onward, especially at Holy Hill. The BJRT is honored to continue to capture at least some of what happens in the scholarship at Holy Hill, and to host conversations from across the nation and world, in its mission to be a nexus for where “religion meets the world.”

Academic Life and Scholarship as Spiritual Practice

Elizabeth Liebert, SNJM

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The 40th Distinguished Faculty Lecture, 2016 Graduate Theological Union

Every November since 1976, the GTU's consortial faculty nominates one of its own to be the distinguished faculty lecturer. The laureate embodies the scholarly and teaching excellence, as well as the ecumenical spirit, that characterizes the GTU. The 2016 lecturer is Dr. Elizabeth Liebert, SNJM, who is Professor of Spiritual Life at the San Francisco Theological Seminary (SFTS) and directed for many years the Seminary's Program in Christian Spirituality. A past president of the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality, she was appointed academic dean of SFTS in 2009, becoming the first Roman Catholic dean of a Presbyterian seminary.

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In 1991, in an address to the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality, I began with the following quotation from theologian Miroslav Volf: "Right (communal) doing' seems in some sense a precondition for right understanding." Volf adds: "The obverse is also true; 'wrong doing'—especially if deeply patterned and long-lived—leads to twisted understanding."³ On that occasion, this quotation

³ Miroslav Volf, "Theology for a Way of Life," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, eds. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 257.

provided a platform for my claim that practice, as I carefully defined it, is constitutive to the study of Christian Spirituality.

Twenty-five years after this address, as a pastoral theologian who has specialized in Christian spirituality, I am still engaged with the role of practice. Tonight, I would like to take the issue of practice in a somewhat different direction and explore the possibility that academic life, and scholarship in particular, is *itself* a spiritual practice. This claim may be self-evident to some; after all the medieval university was originally staffed by religious persons who assumed that their scholarship was spiritual practice. But for others, living on this side of the Enlightenment, scholarship is simply (though profoundly) our professional calling, and we may not perceive it as having anything to do with our spiritual life, if we even claim to have a spiritual life. Others may stumble on the terms “spiritual,” or “spiritual life,” wondering what they mean when I use them as part of my claim. Still others will wonder if the same claim can be made outside of Christianity.

Mapping the Territory

Let’s consider first the term “practice.” Rebecca Chopp notes that a practice is a “socially shared form of behavior ... a pattern of meaning and action that is both culturally constructed and individually instantiated. The notion of practice draws us to inquire into the shared activities of groups of persons that provide meaning and orientation to the world and that guide action.”⁴ Chopp, and others following Alasdair McIntyre’s treatment of practice in *After Virtue*⁵, understands practices to be bodily, social, interactive, cooperative and share rule-like regularities. They contain standards of excellence, and

⁴ Rebecca Chopp, *Saving Work: Feminist Practices in Theological Education* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1995), 15.

⁵ Alasdair McIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 181-203.

thus necessitate self-critical reflection as part of a larger communal discourse.⁶

These scholars' understanding of practice focuses on larger-scale communal practices over longer periods of time that address fundamental human needs and that together constitute a way of life. There are other scholars, often from the social sciences, who use the term "practice" to refer to *any* socially meaningful action, and, in this understanding of practice, can include smaller and more discrete actions. However, in terms of academic scholarship, the McIntyrian sense of practice makes perfect sense: what scholars do is shared broadly, over long periods of time, addresses human needs and constitutes a way of life. Scholarship is bodily, social, interactive and cooperative: we actually engage in actions such as research, writing, experimenting, drawing conclusions from data, and other methodologically consistent behaviors that others agree has a reasonable chance of advancing knowledge and/or uncovering truth—and, I would add, constructing something elegant and beautiful.

In what follows, I will assume that we can agree that scholarship is, among other ways it might be described, a practice, something we *do* regularly, and repeatedly, at certain points publicly, and in ways accountable to other scholars, for the purpose of building a body of knowledge about a certain angle of inquiry that, at least in the long run, advances the good of humans and all creation.

But what about the term "spiritual?" The first thing we might notice is that it is the adjective form of the noun "spirit." In common usage, the English word *spirit*, from Latin *spiritus* "breath," usually refers to a non-corporeal substance, and is contrasted with the material body. It is understood as a vital force that constitutes

⁶ See Craig Dykstra, "Reconceiving Practice," in *Shifting Boundaries: Contextual Approaches to the Structure of Theological Education*, eds. Barbara Wheeler and Edward Farley (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 35-66.

the living quality of material beings. The term may also be used to refer to consciousness or personality, or to any incorporeal or immaterial being, such as demons or deities. If we stay with these common-sense understandings of “spiritual,” however, we can easily get lost in a dualism that pits body and spirit, material and immaterial, a pitfall that we would do well to avoid.

At this point, I have to claim my particular standpoint within Christianity. I ask those of you who profess other religious standpoints to critique the adequacy of my logic from within your own traditions.

Christian theology uses the term "Spirit" to describe a person of the Trinity, the "Holy Spirit," which is to say, to describe both God's reality and God's manifestations in creation. The term “spiritual” appears early in Christian texts, in I Corinthians 2:11-16. There are other texts, of course, particularly in the Fourth Gospel, referring to Spirit, but this Pauline text actually helps define “spiritual” as participating in the very life of the divine:

For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also, no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

That is, according to Paul, only humans can know the human spirit, and likewise, only God (here: “Spirit of God”), can know God's spirit. But God's Spirit has been given to *us*, so we can ourselves (at least begin to) interpret and participate in God's reality and activity.

Paul understands that spirit is an interior reality (“the human spirit that is within”). For Paul, spirit is that gift given to human persons that enables them to partake of the divine. It is more pervasive and deeper than other interior realities; it points us to the very source of meaning in the universe, because it points us to the Creator of all that is.

But is that spirit merely, or even primarily, immaterial it has so frequently been interpreted? According to Paul, spirit is that aspect of the human that participates in the life of God, and like God’s Spirit, is therefore likewise concerned with the fullness and flourishing of all creation. So, the spiritual life joins us to God’s creative activity toward that flourishing. Hopefully, we are at last coming to recognize that flourishing is very much material, bodily, fleshly, earthly, as well as immaterial.

The key that directly connects this passage to our concern comes a couple verses later in that same Pauline passage: it is the simple and profound statement: “But we have the mind of Christ.”

The Christian theological claim, in general outlines, goes like this: If Christ is the Incarnated Word of God, that is, God taken flesh in a real human person, Jesus of Nazareth, and if that human person is indeed the Christ, the Anointed One, the Savior, returning all things to God, then we too participate with Christ in God’s own life. “But we have the mind of Christ,” says Paul—we have been given the enormous gift of participating in the very life of God. The spiritual, then, is what is open to the action of the Spirit that comes to us as gift. But, to have access to it, one must dispose oneself by means of practices (*askesis*, from which comes the word “exercise,” and carries the sense of bringing mastery via repetition⁷).

⁷ Javier Melloni, *The Exercises of Ignatius Loyola in the Western Tradition* (Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2000), 21.

It will help in developing the larger argument on scholarship as spiritual practice to digress briefly into the academic discipline of Christian Spirituality, as it has struggled over the years with various understandings of the word “spirituality.” To understand this term, I will offer a definition of our GTU colleague, Sandra Schneiders: Spirituality is “the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives.”⁸ In this definition, Schneiders is being particularly careful to define spirituality in a broad and human-based way so that, hopefully, all or most persons from a variety of religious traditions, or no tradition, can identify with the word.⁹

Schneiders is not alone in this orientation. Walter Principe points us in the same direction: “A person’s ‘chosen ideal’ and the striving to live toward that ideal is ‘spirituality’ at the existential level.” Note that that ‘chosen ideal’ need not necessarily be framed religiously.¹⁰

When we examine Schneiders’s anthropologically based definition, we see that three active elements comprise this definition:

⁸ Sandra C. Schneiders, “The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline,” in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, eds. Elizabeth A. Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 6. See also Sandra Schneiders, “The Study of Christian Spirituality,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Arthur Holder (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 16.

⁹ Schneiders locates Christian spirituality within the wider universe of spirituality by giving the formal categories specifically Christian content. “The horizon of ultimate value is the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ, and the project involves the living of his paschal mystery in the context of the Church community through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Living within this horizon of ultimate value, one relates in a particular way to all of reality and it is this relationship to the whole of reality and to reality as a whole in a specifically Christian way that constitutes Christian Spirituality.” See Schneiders, “Study...Contours,” 6.

¹⁰ Walter Principe, “Toward defining spirituality” (1983), cited in Lucy Bregman, “Spirituality: Unpacking a Glow Word,” in *Bearings for the Life of Faith* 6, No. 2 (Autumn 2016): 6. Bregman points out that the chosen ideal need not be religiously specified.

- Conscious involvement
- A project of life integration through self-transcendence
- Directed toward the ultimate value one perceives

Both Schneiders and Principe clearly indicate that spirituality is neither purely spontaneous, nor something that is done to us without our participation by another agent, nor simply a collection of episodic experiences. Instead, spirituality includes intentionality—conscious choice is integral to this definition. We chose to engage in certain activities either because of their intrinsic value or because of where these actions lead. Those actions are determined in light of their end. Their final goal is something that is highly valuable, and indeed, sets the primary orientation and direction of one’s life. Furthermore, this end is not purely self-referential; it’s not about one’s purely private satisfaction, but it pulls us out of our limited horizons, propels us beyond ourselves to attain this ultimate value. Theistic persons typically understand that ultimate horizon to be God/Ultimate Mystery, but it can also be other penultimates, such as the full development of human personhood, enlightenment, the good of the cosmos, the transcendentals of unity, beauty, goodness, truth, and so on.

Of course, one could put a less than altruistic goal at the center of one’s life: pleasure, sex, money, and power all too frequently become enshrined in the position of “ultimate value that one perceives.” Here, Schneiders insists that an adequate understanding of spirituality excludes such negative life-organizations as addictions and exploitative projects that seek one’s own good at the expense of others. The “ultimate value” must function “as a horizon leading the person toward growth.”¹¹ I want to underline that there is an inescapably moral dimension to this understanding of spirituality: true spirituality does not use power to dominate and destroy; rather

¹¹ Schneiders, “Study of Christian Spirituality,” 16-17.

it enhances individuals and communities, breaks down power differentials, and sets individuals and communities free to live deeper and fuller lives.

Schneiders further claims that spirituality in this broad sense is characteristic of humans prior to any religious or theological reflections and ways of nurturing it. Spirituality is an “anthropological constant,” by which she means that it is constitutive of the human person. Thus, persons of multiple religious and theological perspectives, or none at all, can share this definition—or at least that is her aim.¹² Approaching spirituality this way also allows for multifaceted exploration through as many avenues of human inquiry as are appropriate to the particular problem, question, or reality under consideration. Looking around at our multi- and non-religious cultures, it is very clear that, in contemporary usage, the terms “spiritual” and “spirituality” have long since escaped the parameters imposed by any theological categories—for better or for worse!

We can, I believe, connect Schneiders’ definition back to Paul’s use of the term “spiritual.” We have already noted that Paul sees “spiritual” as pointing directly to the Holy Spirit, to God’s own self and that the adjective “spiritual” designates the quality of living in the light of that divine Spirit. This Spirit searches everything, our spirits included. Since, Paul claims, we have been given this Spirit, with this knowledge that Paul calls wisdom, we can order our lives in light of God’s Spirit, searching everything. My claim here is based on Paul’s claim: we can order our lives around searching out manifestations of the true, the good and the beautiful to such a degree that these become our ultimate goal. It’s quite possible, therefore, to express this reality in a framework broader than the Christian distinctives that I used to construct it.

¹² Ibid., 26-27.

To sum up the discussion so far: A spiritual practice can be understood as the regular, repeated, intentional, embodied, actions that lead, step by step, toward enhanced good, true and beautiful, shared with and evaluated within a community of shared practice according to agreed-upon standards of excellence. Scholarship, in this understanding, can become a primary vocation, and its practice, indeed, a spiritual practice.¹³

Scholarship as Spiritual Practice

Now that we have constructed a common understanding of spiritual practice and scholarship as spiritual practice, let me invite you into a spiritual practice that I believe can be embraced by scholars of many disciplines and many religious traditions.

Lectio divina, or divine reading, appears early in the western monastic tradition and even earlier in Origin, Ambrose and Augustine. (That means, incidentally, that *lectio divina* is “abroad in the land” during the rise of the Western university starting around the 11th C.) In the Benedictine context, *lectio divina* was the consistent reading and rumination, usually of the scriptures, that permeated the entire day. In the 12th century work entitled *The Ladder of Monks*, Guigo II formalized these steps into the method often taught today as *lectio divina*:

¹³ Spirituality scholar Belden Lane puts this matter of spiritual practice a lot more poetically than I have just stated it. He also models scholarship as spiritual practice, in his case, scholarship at the intersection of spirituality and study of the natural world. In an unpublished manuscript, he speaks of allowing nature to become his teacher at a deeply primal level – so deep that he hears particular aspects of nature actually “speak” back. In his description of this relationship, I found this description of spiritual practice: “Not only [do we need] a hands-on exposure to specific teachers in the natural world, but a commitment to an exercise of contemplation. It means learning to still oneself, on a regular basis, before the wisdom of those who teach with unfamiliar tongue. This can take many forms ... Whatever the discipline, the outward journey (toward the reality contemplated) requires an equally-challenging inward journey.” Belden Lane, prepublication notes, *For Love of a Tree: Restoring the Great Conversation*, Prologue.

- *Lectio*/reading
- *Meditatio*/ruminating
- *Oratio*/praying
- *Contemplatio*/resting¹⁴

Although I will, for convenience sake, walk through the steps in the order provided by Guigo, I do so with the caveat that the order is not at all sacred. Practiced day after day, hour after hour in and around other more mundane activities, the steps of *lectio* take on a life of their own, changing order, weaving in and out, and circling back to a step just completed or jumping ahead to the next most important step in a dynamic that has its own life.¹⁵

Adapted to our more anthropological stance and language, and for purposes of scholarly inquiry as a spiritual practice, let me offer brief explications of these familiar steps. But first a word about intention.

Intention is a strategy for beginning a spiritual practice that is strongly advocated by Ignatius of Loyola. In every one of his Spiritual Exercises, he tells the one making the Exercises: “Ask for what you desire.” Asking at the head of the activity is a way to invite yourself to enter consciously into the practice, to dedicate it to the service of the Divine or of truth, and begin to focus your attention—a very practical way to “show up” more fully. A basic intention that may work for us as scholars: follow the good, true or beautiful wherever they take you and share this journey with others.¹⁶

¹⁴ Later promoters of this way of praying the Word of God in the Christian tradition include Dominic Guzman, John of the Cross, John Calvin and Richard Baxter; Ignatius of Loyola has also adapted it to the orientation promoted in his *Spiritual Exercises*.

¹⁵ I first ran across the notion of *lectio* as a model for a spirituality of teaching in an essay by Maria Lichtman, “Teaching and the Contemplative Life,” *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* (Fall 1998): 14-21. I have taken her idea in a different direction, however.

¹⁶ For most scholars, an intention such as this was probably set long enough

After setting our intention, we take up the first of Guigo's steps, **Lectio / Reading**. In its origin, *lectio* was text-based—either a written text spoken aloud, or a text heard and subsequently memorized and recited. The goal of this repeated reading, hearing, and speaking was to anchor the text deep within. Our more anthropological orientation might extend to loving attention upon whatever is the subject of study. You look deeply at the phenomenon or the data, noticing its particularity, the disparities it contains, divergences from other examples, its uniquenesses. You may find it surprises you, you may notice its difference from you. You turn it around and around in your mind, imagination, and intuition, being exquisitely curious about it in all its particularity.¹⁷ (If you are familiar with Guigo's practice, you may notice that I am claiming something for *lectio* that bleeds over into *meditatio*, but bear with me, as I want to push the analogy with *meditatio* to a different place.)

In Simone Weil's "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies with a View to Love of God," the central point has to do with developing the capacity for attention. For Weil, prayer consists in the orientation of all the attention of which the soul is capable toward God. She advocates attention in everything related to study, even such boring activities as grammar and algebra proofs, so she would certainly include the kinds of activities we listed as activities of our scholarship. Attention in everything is a part of developing this absolute attention for God: "Without our knowing or feeling it, this apparently barren effort has brought more light into the soul. The

ago that we may not consciously attend to it any longer. Or, also likely, we never did consciously set this intention, we just learned how to do our particular brand of scholarship and kept doing it. But, as part of a spiritual practice, the intention can be set anew every time one picks up the scholarly task. In the middle of a sluggish writing project or a frantic teaching schedule, it may need regular renewing – mine certainly does.

¹⁷ On curiosity, Albert Einstein once said, "I have no special talents. I'm only passionately curious." Letter to Carl Seelig, March 11, 1952, quoted in Belden Lane, *For Love of a Tree*, unpublished manuscript, Ch. 2.

result will one day be discovered in prayer.” Clearly, attention is a spiritual practice in her mind. Helpfully, in the very next paragraph, she widens her perspective to include non-believers: “Quite apart from explicit religious belief, every time that a human being succeeds in making an effort of attention with the sole idea of increasing his grasp of truth, he acquires a greater aptitude for grasping it, even if his effort produces no visible fruit.”¹⁸

If that is what attention *does*, what does Weil mean by “attention”?

Attention consists of suspending our thought, leaving it detached, empty and ready to be penetrated by the object, it means holding in our minds, within reach of this thought, but on a lower level and not in contact with it, the diverse knowledge we have acquired which we are forced to make use of. Our thought should be in relation to all particular and already formulated thoughts ... Above all our thought should be empty, waiting, not seeking anything, but ready to receive in its naked truth the object which is to penetrate it.¹⁹

Weil makes another claim: attention is difficult, more difficult than simply working long hours. She believes that there is something in us that is repugnant to the laser like attention she is proposing, and requires our vigilance.²⁰ Clearly, this kind of attention, at this cost, is, for Weil, a spiritual discipline for students and scholars.

Close to thirty years ago, Jesuit Walter Burghardt defined contemplation to be “a long loving look at the real.”²¹ I think

¹⁸ Simone Weil, “Reflections on the Right Use of Schools Studies with a View to the Love of God,” in *Waiting on God* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1951), 51-59, quotations on pp. 52-53.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 56.

²¹ Walter J. Burghardt, “Contemplation: A Long, Loving Look at the Real,” *Church* 5 (Winter 1989): 14-18.

Burghardt and Weil are talking about the same activity, the same quality of attentive openness to what is there, as it is, as unclouded by our own assumptions as we can allow it to be given our situated humanness. Weil suggests a more imageless path, and Burghardt a path that can be full of images—the traditional apophatic and kataphatic distinction. I don't think we need to choose between them; the choice may come precisely from the object of our attention, or it may come from the way our practice begins to open up with much repetition. In either case, says Weil, the object of our attention may reveal its bit of the truth to us—as a gift.

Meditatio/rumination: In the classic spiritual practice, *meditatio* was the continual rumination on whatever the text opened up. In the context of academic scholarship, the parallel, I propose, includes such activities as framing a line of investigation, and formulating a research question, then deciding, given the question, an appropriate method that balances one's own subjectivity with rigorous attention to what is really there. Then comes the long process of engaging that reality at depth, over time, and noticing what happens between you, the observer and the observed (both are changed). As Church historian and spirituality scholar Belden Lane says, "I won't love what I haven't first learned to know in exquisite detail," and also approvingly quotes George Washington Carver: "If you love it enough, anything will talk to you."

Lane points us to the dynamic interaction between knowledge and love as he acknowledges that love itself becomes a way of knowing.²² The effort to know always more deeply is part of the spiritual practice. We engage in learning to know long before but in hope that the knowledge may someday blossom into love, which in turn opens up into a whole new level of knowledge. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

²² Belden Lane, *For Love of a Tree*, unpublished manuscript, Prologue.

Oratio: The classic spiritual practice of *oratio* includes addressing God directly in light of one's *lectio* and *meditatio*. Scholarly practice entails engaging in dialogue about the reality one has been attending to and exploring through appropriate scholarly disciplines. It could be talking to oneself, it could be talking back to one's subject or writing about it. Such solitary activities are a big part of scholarship. But it could also be talking to others about one's subject, teaching about it (how many of us test out what we are thinking in the classroom!), speaking in public about the subject; here the scholar controls the exposition in large part.

But there is still another level: deep collegial sharing where each party engages as both initiator and receiver, listening together to how others see the same reality. Notice that the understanding and relationship to the subject develops differently in a community of inquiry than it does if one simply pursues the inquiry as a solitary being or maintains the initiative in its exposition.

Quantum theorist David Bohm claims that even science, often understood to be the bastion of experiment and the antithesis of conversation, is actually based on deep conversation. He's not talking about scholarly discussion, where ideas are batted back and forth and a subject of common interest is analyzed and dissected, with each participant attempting to forge a strong position that ultimately prevails over the perspective of others. He has in mind something very different that he calls "dialogue." It occurs when colleagues become open to the flow of a larger intelligence. In this kind of dialogue, participants do not seek to win, only to participate together in a larger pool of meaning that is always developing—a larger pool of common meaning that cannot be accessed individually. In this kind of dialogue, the whole organizes the parts, and it can form individuals into a powerful learning community.²³ Scholarly *oratio*, perhaps?

Contemplatio: In the classic exercise, contemplation consists of simply resting, present to all that is, in particular to the Divine hovering within and around. Is there an analogy in our scholarship?

With contemplation, we return again to Belden Lane's dynamic of knowing/loving/being present, and to Simone Weil's understanding of absolute attention being prayer, and Walter Burghardt's description of contemplation as a patient, leisurely, unhurried, loving look at the real, allowing ourselves to be open to it, to be captured by it, to accept it on its own terms, to love it, and to respond to it in such a way that the world becomes better.

In my experience of trying to put into words the contemplative aspect of scholarship, I find my prose falters, and I turn to poets and philosophers, to metaphor and image. A taste to follow, but you will find your own.

Rainer Rilke speaks of "inseeing," which he describes by way of a very homely, earthly metaphor, that of a dog. He says:

I love inseeing. Can you imagine with me how glorious it is to insee, for example, a dog as one passes by? Insee (I don't mean in-spect, which is only a kind of human gymnastic, by means of which one immediately comes out again on the other side of the dog, regarding it merely, so to speak, as a window upon the humanity lying behind it, not that) — but to let oneself precisely into the dog's very center, the point from which it becomes a dog, the place in it where God, as it were, would have sat down for a moment when the dog was finished, in order to watch it under the influence of its first embarrassments and inspirations and to know that it was good, that nothing was lacking, that it could not have been better made."²⁴

²³ See David Bohm as cited in Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Doubleday/Currency, 1990), 238.

²⁴ As cited in Meng-hu, "Dogs and silence," *Hermit's Thatch* (blog), *Hermitary*,

Inseeing, contemplation, delight indeed.

The philosopher we've already met this evening, Simone Weil, closes the "Right Use of School Studies" with these words: "Academic work is one of those fields which contain a pearl so precious that it is worth while [*sic*] to sell all our possessions, keeping nothing for ourselves in order to acquire it."²⁵

In an early essay describing a spirituality of education, Parker Palmer offers some thoughts relevant not only to the contemplative dimension of scholarship, but also to the whole aspect of scholarship as spiritual practice. He observes:

To know in truth is to become betrothed, to engage the known with one's whole self, an engagement one enters with attentiveness, care and good will. To know in truth is to allow oneself to be known as well, to be vulnerable to the challenges and changes any true relationship brings. To know in truth is to enter into the life of that which we know and to allow it to enter into ours. Truthful knowing weds the knower and the known; even in separation the two become part of each other's life and fate ... In truthful knowing, the knower becomes co-participant in a community of faithful relationships with other persons and creatures and things, with whatever our knowledge makes known.²⁶

So, how is scholarship a spiritual practice? The careful work of the scholar can be transformative precisely in the way it brings us face to face with the radical otherness of what it is that we study. And in the very wrestling with this otherness we might even be transformed. That is, not only might our scholarly opinions and

April 23, 2008, <http://www.hermitary.com/thatch/?p=436>. No specific reference to Rilke's corpus given.

²⁵ Weil, "Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies," 59.

²⁶ Parker Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: The Spirituality of Education* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 31-32.

conclusions be revised, but also the very way we act and live might also change. And the world itself.

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Scientific Practice as a Spiritual Experience

A Thankful Response to Beth Liebert

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The 40th Distinguished Faculty Lecture Response

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Beth graciously invited me to offer a brief response on “how (I) see scientific methodologies being or having the potential to be spiritual practice.” I am honored and delighted to do so by turning to one of the three major CTNS programs of the past decades and to my own experience of the practice of natural science.

The CTNS program “Science and the Spiritual Quest” (SSQ) was a multimillion dollar program funded by the John Templeton Foundation extending from 1996 to 2003. In it, CTNS sought out scientists of international stature in such areas as physics, cosmology, evolutionary and molecular biology, the neurosciences, computer sciences, and mathematics who were also practitioners of one of the world religions including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. We asked each of them one central

question: In your experience as an accomplished scientist and participant in a global spirituality, how is the doing of science a spiritual experience?

The responses from these scientists were profound. They included the following:

- doing science is a spiritual experience;
- doing science requires an ethical commitment grounded in spirituality;
- natural is a form of divine revelation; we're reading the book of nature, God's second book, and it complements Scripture;
- science gives us knowledge about God's purposes in creating the universe and humanity's place, purpose and destiny;
- science discloses the mind of God through the laws of physics;
- science tells us the story of the cosmos as the history of God's activity in the world;
- science leads us to God, the ultimate reality and source of the universe, and this God is present and imminent throughout the universe.

All this is well summarized by Jewish cosmologist Joel Primack, who wrote: "The doing of science is a spiritual experience. Nothing compares with the wonder and exhilaration you feel when hard work yields a secret about the universe that perhaps only you have discovered."

The discoveries of SSQ harmonize wonderfully with what Beth just told us tonight about her central claim, namely that "academic life, and scholarship in particular, *is itself* a spiritual practice." Beth

augmented this claim in several ways. First, drawing on Rebecca Chopp, Beth notes that practice is a “socially shared form of behavior ... a pattern of meaning and action that is both culturally constructed and individually instantiated.”¹ How perfectly this describes the spiritual practice of science as a community project of international and intercultural dimensions, its shared history and normative paradigms, all infusing the lives of individuals who through rigorous methodologies seek to discover for themselves science’s truths about nature for the sheer sake of such participatory knowledge.

Next, Beth drew on the writings of our dear GTU colleague and mentor Sandra Schneiders, who gave an anthropological definition of spirituality as involving “conscious involvement, the project of life integration through self-transcendence, and one pointed toward the ultimate value one perceives.”² To me this fits nicely with science as a spiritual practice requiring one’s total conscious involvement in its theories and experiments, the demand to integrate personally all one learns objectively about nature by committing to the path of self-transcendence and the giving up of oneself wholly to the rigors of scientific research, and finally reaching the ultimate value offered by science to its practitioner: discovering the all-encompassing reality of nature of which we are a part, its staggering intelligibility, and its endlessly expanse and exquisite beautify, the natural context of our material existence, a universe whose very matter at last is seen as truly mattering.

Finally, Beth turned to the distinguished philosopher Simone Weil who points to “attention” as that which “consists of suspending

¹ Rebecca Chopp, *Saving Work: Feminist Practices in Theological Education* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 15.

² Sandra Schneiders, “The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline,” *Christian Spirituality Bulletin*, Vol. 6 (Spring 1998): 3.

our thought, leaving it detached, empty, and ready to be penetrated by the object ... ready to receive in its naked truth the object which is to penetrate it.”³ What an apt description of the attention that is called for in both theoretical and experimental science. I remember well staring at an equation with only two Greek letters and an “equals zero” ($\delta\delta=0$) on the blackboard at the University of California - Santa Cruz where I did my Ph.D., an equation which encapsulated all of the details of the 256 coupled equations at the core of Einstein’s General Theory of Relativity. There I learned to dwell in and with these four letters and, through complex and demanding mathematical reasoning, to open up their secret contents, and to discover a representation of the physical universe contained within them.

I also remember lowering the temperature of liquid helium in my lab towards absolute zero degrees Kelvin and watching as, cooling, it went superfluid: total quiescence, bubbles gone, liquid silence. In both cases I was engulfed by attention to the phenomena in nature, phenomena which lie way beyond ordinary human experience and hint at nature in her secret modes of being, and to the pure mathematics that embraces all that we know empirically about the Big Bang universe. These were truly spiritual moments for me, moments in my long spiritual quest for reality, truth, goodness and beauty expressed in the hidden folds of nature and by the contemplation of its most serene mathematical regularities. These were rare moments, passionately sought out and immensely prized by me, moments of *lectio divina* where the sacred text is the mathematics we write down on paper and the universe endlessly

³ Simone Weil, *Waiting for God* (New York: Harper Classics, 2009), 62

lying beyond it which this mathematics reveals, a universe in which we “live and move and have our being,” a universe which science discovers through its direct, personal and corporate experience as a “spiritual practice.”

In all this I am grateful to Beth for fleshing out the deep and moving connections between academic life and spiritual practice, and I welcome many more such conversations with her in the years to come.

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Art History as Spiritual Practice: A Case Study

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The 40th Distinguished Faculty Lecture Response

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I am very grateful to Professor Liebert for the opportunity to reflect on the important topic of “Academic Life and Scholarship as Spiritual Practice” that was brought to the fore tonight, and I would like to offer the following thoughts as a sort of experiential case study from the realm of religious art.

After completing my undergrad work, I had the unique opportunity to embark on a yearlong *wanderjahr*, funded by the Thomas J. Watson Foundation, to explore an inkling of an idea that had started to form. I had been simultaneously studying Tibetan Buddhism and Christian medieval manuscripts, and was fascinated with the idea that art-making itself could be construed as a sacred journey within the religious art of both traditions. I set off one day in April, my backpack bursting at the seams like Samwise Gamgee’s – but instead of crockery and spices I had pigments and brushes. I

would go on to work with illuminators and iconographers in their scriptoria and Thangka painters at the Norbulingka Institute in the Dalai Lama's exile community in Dharamsala.

During that trip, I had the pleasure to correspond with, and then later interview and observe an iconographer named Aidan Hart who is a member of the Orthodox Church in Britain. He believes that he is called to perceive the essence – or logos – of his subjects, in holy persons as well as events and sacred landscapes, and then manifest this in paint.¹ He does not copy subjects, but relies on the inspiration of the Spirit to unearth these spiritual qualities – what Gerard Manley Hopkins called the “instress of a thing”, and what Prof. Liebert invoked so eloquently in her lecture this evening.

In his own words, he underscores the traditional role of these sacred objects:

Icons are not only manifestations of heaven to earth...but are an offering of man to God, a priestly prayer in paint rather than word.²

The kind of experience of viewing that religious and liturgical art entails aims to unite the heavenly and earthly realms as an imperfect mirror of a heavenly archetype. To explain further, in many ways, all religious art is the embodiment of a sacred journey for maker and viewer. The process of visually narrating encounters with sacred space through visual and verbal emblems is a multi-dimensional process where art-making and viewing both form re-enacted pilgrimages in and of themselves.

Anagogic imagery is well-rooted in Christian mysticism. For example, the 12th century philosopher and theologian Hugh of St Victor presented an image as a vehicle towards finding God within.

¹ See Aidan Hart, *Beauty, Spirit, Matter: Icons in the Modern World* (London: Gracewing, 2014).

² Aidan Hart. “Icons and the Spiritual Role of Matter,” *l'Osservatore Romano*, December 7, 2011, English edition.

With its Old Testament iconography and layers of meaning, Hugh employs the image of Noah's Ark, which becomes a form of visual exegesis.³ The ark visually articulates the interior life (in the form of ladders advancing through the various stages of contemplative life and vision) as well as actually becoming the mystical body of Christ, with his limbs and head extending beyond the boat itself. This was meant to assure the viewer of God's presence within.⁴

The nineteenth century, the poet, artist, and visionary William Blake (who probably would have come into contact with Victorine mysticism via Dante or St. Teresa of Avila)⁵ spoke of 'entering into' his 'images of wonder',⁶ and expressed the hope that they would help the viewer gain a closer proximity to the divine as well as to break off the 'mind-forg'd manacles' of societal oppression.

I am going dwell here on Blake because it was a nineteenth-century context that I would ultimately focus on for my first book.⁷ The example also provides a good model for how being rooted in practice has positively impacted my scholarly research pursuits. That being said, I offer the following as a brief case study of Prof. Liebert's theory of scholarship as spiritual practice presented this evening.

To clarify, what I mean is that studying (and occasionally painting alongside) artists working within specific religious and liturgical traditions during my Watson fellowship year allowed me to take seriously the idea of painting as a meditative process. By the

³ Steven Chase, *Contemplation and Compassion: The Victorine Tradition* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003), 79.

⁴ Chase, *Contemplation and Compassion*, 81.

⁵ Kathryn Barush, *Art and the Sacred Journey in Britain, 1790-1850* (London: Routledge, 2016), 124-6, 129, 150.

⁶ "If the Spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought ... or could make a Friend & Companion of one of these images of wonder", he declared, "then would he meet the Lord in the Air & then he would be happy." William Blake, "A Vision of Last Judgment for the year 1810, Additions to Blake's Catalogue of Pictures &c' (1810)," in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, eds. David Erdman and Harold Bloom (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 560. Hereafter, *Works by William Blake*.

⁷ K. Barush, *Art and the Sacred Journey in Britain, 1790-1850*.

time I landed in the nineteenth century, I noticed that Blake's ideas resonated with that of the traditional icon painter. He said, for example, "Prayer is the Study of Art/Praise is the Practise of Art/Fasting &c. all relate to Art."⁸ This also resonates with aspects of the *Lectio Divina* that Prof. Liebert discussed this evening.

Blake's discursive self-awareness and synthesis of aesthetics with mysticism allowed me to position him as both pilgrim and painter, and situate his work within that of a historical trajectory of earlier religious artists and illuminators. At a time when anti-Catholic rhetoric was still rampant, Blake would give a Spanish, Roman Catholic saint associated with 'mental pilgrimage' – St Teresa of Avila – a privileged place in his own mythopoetic system.

Blake's student, fellow artist Samuel Palmer related that '[Blake] was fond of the works of St Teresa, and often quoted them with other writers on interior life' and that 'St Teresa was his delight'.⁹ He gave her pride of place at the 'Wine Press of Love' (which serves as the gateway to Beulah in his illuminated book *Jerusalem*). He also started to insert an image of a small, nun-like figure into places where his visual and written texts would resonate with Teresa's writings. Of particular interest were themes regarding spiritual and corporeal vision or 'locution', the soul's pilgrimage through four transformative 'states'; and her ultimate experience of transverberation, or mystical union with the divine.

Using a number of other case-studies, I then started to tease out themes of Catholic influence that ran through the art and theology of this tricky, pre-Emancipation period when Roman Catholics were struggling to regain civil liberties in the UK, including the right to worship.

⁸ William Blake, "Annotations to the Laocoön" (c.1826-7), in *Works by William Blake*, (London), 274. For the reader, "&c." is an eighteenth/nineteenth century convention for shortening "et cetera." The dashes indicate line breaks. Generally, Blake's work contains slightly idiosyncratic capitalization, spelling, and so forth.

⁹ Samuel Palmer, 'From Palmer to Anne Gilchrist, 2 July 1862,' in *The Letters of Samuel Palmer*, Vol. 2, ed. Raymond Lister (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 663.

The overarching theme of art making as pilgrimage provided a new interpretive angle for my project. It also contributed to studies of the cultural and religious history of Britain by tracing a common enterprise and conceptual framework – that of spiritual journey – across a variety of systems of religious belief. By doing so it presented a historiographical critique of both secularist and denominational assumptions in literary criticism, cultural anthropology, and art historical studies of the period.

My project was a drop in the bucket. I hope, though, that the trajectory of my research *process* illustrates in some small way the flourishing that can take place when, as Prof. Liebert has described, scholarship meets spiritual practice. Temporal boundaries have been broken down in my scholarly practice, allowing me to confront the ‘radical otherness’ of the past that was discussed this evening.

Although the case study I have focused on here is historic, my more recent research has taken a sociological turn as I study aspects of pilgrimage practice today. I’ve had the opportunity to walk, pray, and break bread with people in marginalized communities who feel the same sense of alienation that Blake did in his own time. Given the political climate of the country at the present, I’d like to take advantage of being the last speaker before the Q&A and ask Prof. Liebert whether she would like to address the importance of ‘keeping on keeping on’, to paraphrase Bob Dylan. That is to say, how can we affect change through continuing our work – indeed, our vocation - of creating scholarship as a spiritual practice, at a time when this is so crucial?

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Many Views, Many Truths, One Truth:

A Jain-Inspired Approach to the Diversity of Worldviews

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The 25th Surjit Singh Lecture, 2017 Graduate Theological Union

The GTU has been a leading center for ecumenical and interreligious studies, and the Singh Lecture reflects this spirit. It is named after Surjit Singh, who was professor emeritus of Christian philosophy at the San Francisco Theological Seminary and was a member of the GTU's core faculty. The 2017 lecture was delivered by Dr. Jeffery D. Long, who is Professor of Religion and Asian Studies at Elizabethtown College. Dr. Long's works focus on Hinduism, Jainism, Indian philosophy, as well as religious pluralism, comparative theology, and interfaith engagement. Among his books are *A Vision for Hinduism* (2007), *Jainism: An Introduction* (2009), *Historical Dictionary of Hinduism* (2011), and the forthcoming *Indian Philosophy, An Introduction* (2018).

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Introduction

As human beings committed to diverse worldviews, how do we learn to navigate the fact that our neighbors have beliefs and values different from ours (whatever those beliefs may be)? Is agreement necessary in order for there to be peace? Or is there a way for us to value difference without compromising on our own most deeply held beliefs? Are there certain beliefs that are incompatible with

peaceful co-existence? In this lecture, I will explore a way to approach these difficult questions. Taking my inspiration from both Jain and Hindu traditions, I will explore the limits of religious pluralism and the role of philosophy in articulating a way forward for conflicted humanity.

Background and Context

I have reached a point in my career at which I can never be sure, when I give a presentation, how familiar people are either with me or with my work. To those of you to whom all of this will be brand new, welcome! I hope you find what I have to say interesting and engaging. To those of you who have heard some or all of this material previously, my sincere apologies!

When discussing a controversial topic like religion, I find it is always helpful to be clear to one's audience what one's perspective is and where one is coming from before launching into the material itself. I was raised a devout but independent-minded Roman Catholic and grew up in a small town in Missouri. When I was ten years old, my father suffered a debilitating injury from a truck accident. The suffering he experienced prompted him to take his own life two years later. It was from these experiences that my lifelong interest in religion and philosophy emerged. I began a search for answers to the big questions in life and felt I should cast as wide a net as possible, not only studying the teachings of the tradition in which I was raised, but a diverse range of religions and philosophies; and I found much that was wise and true in every tradition that I studied.

I was particularly drawn to the traditions of India. In contrast with the view I found among many in my small-town community that only one religion will lead its followers to eternal life, the others

being condemned to eternal damnation, I took great comfort in the words of Gandhi:

Religions are different roads converging upon the same point. What does it matter that we take different roads so long as we reach the same goal? In reality there are as many religions as there are individuals. I believe in the fundamental truth of all great religions of the world. I believe that they are all God-given, and I believe that they were necessary for the people to whom these religions were revealed. And I believe that, if only we could all of us read the scriptures of different faiths from the standpoint of the followers of those faiths we should find that they were at bottom all one and were all helpful to one another.¹

And in the words of Sri Ramakrishna:

I have practiced all religions—Hinduism, Islam, Christianity—and I have also followed the paths of the different Hindu sects. I have found that it is the same God toward whom all are directing their steps, though along different paths. He who is called Krishna is also called Shiva, and bears the name of the Primal Energy, Jesus, and Allah as well—the same Rama with a thousand names.²

God can be realised through all paths. All religions are true. The important thing is to reach the roof. You can reach it by stone stairs or by wooden stairs or by bamboo steps or by a rope. You can also climb up a bamboo pole...Each religion is only a path leading to God, as rivers come from different directions and ultimately become one in the one ocean... All religions and all paths call upon

¹ Cited in Glyn Richards (ed.), *A Sourcebook of Modern Hinduism* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 156, 157

² Swami Nikhilananda, trans. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1984), 60.

their followers to pray to one and the same God. Therefore, one should not show disrespect to any religion or religious opinion.³

My journey eventually led me to take *dīkṣā* (initiation) in the Vedānta tradition of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda: a tradition committed, at its core, to religious pluralism—the belief that truth can be found in many religions and philosophies, and realized through many spiritual paths.

When I took up the study of Indian traditions as my professional path, I found that this idea of religious pluralism was not well regarded in the academy. Religiously conservative scholars objected to the idea of many true and valid paths, and more secular scholars felt this approach lent itself to a simplistic and superficial understanding of religious traditions in all their rich difference and variety.

While I found many of these objections to be legitimate, I nevertheless remained convinced that religious pluralism expressed an important truth: that there is wisdom to be found everywhere, and that the best approach to differences in worldviews is to seek to learn what one can from each perspective and integrate the insights of many views into one's own, thus advancing towards truth.

I also found, as I was exploring the philosophical traditions of India, that the tradition which seemed to have formulated this insight with the greatest logical precision was the Jain tradition. It was in Jain philosophy that I found the conceptual tools for expressing pluralism such a way as to address the objections that contemporary scholars had launched against this position.

In the meantime, as both my life and my career have unfolded, I have witnessed the world descend ever more deeply, it seems, into

³ Cited in Richards, 65.

the darkness of violence and inter-religious conflict. It is my view that religious pluralism is not only an important position because it is intrinsically true, but also because humanity desperately needs to find a way to appreciate difference, even on such topics as dear and central to our self-understanding and sense of well-being as religion. The single greatest threat to humanity, and all of life on earth today, is, I think, climate change. Religiously based conflict, however, is a close second, and is in fact intertwined with the ecological crisis. If we feel empathy and compassion for our neighbors, it is more likely that we will work together in the face of ecological catastrophe and manage to survive, and perhaps even flourish. But if we have already been divided by religious and other ideological disagreements to a point where we do not see one another as fully human, then the struggle has already been lost.

It is from this background and perspective that I now turn to the question of how to think about religious diversity and the conflict of worldviews.

Why Are We So Violent?

“Why,” we often ask ourselves, “is there so much conflict, so much violence in our world, especially in the name of religion?” Each of the major world religions includes some variation of the famous Golden Rule: the principle that we all should treat others as we wish to be treated. Yet it is the rare religious tradition that has never, at any time in history, been used as a justification for violence against those who are regarded as other: the heretic, the heathen, or the infidel.

Some would argue that all this irrational violence, violence which goes against the central ethical insights of the traditions in the name of which it is committed, is a reason to reject religion altogether: that adherence to beliefs which are incapable of

scientific verification does not belong in a society that wishes to regard itself as advanced or enlightened.

The irrationality of religiously motivated violence—its self-contradictory and self-negating character—can be traced, according to this line of thought, to the irrationality of religion itself. If this root cause of violence could be eradicated, so the argument goes, violence itself would subside, and we could all share a more peaceful and habitable world. In the words of one of my favorite artists, John Lennon, “Imagine no religion.” Indeed, *religion* has become a dirty word in many quarters, even among those who find much wisdom in the world’s religions, and who prefer to call themselves ‘spiritual but not religious.’ *Religion* is simply equated with bigotry and fanaticism.

Are matters really this simple, though? One of the lessons of the twentieth century should certainly be that ideologies rooted in the rejection of religion are no less capable of inhumanity, and of violence on a massive scale, than are religious ideologies. Indeed, when coupled with the capabilities of modern technology, the violence undertaken in the name of non-religious ideologies like Communism and Nazism has in fact taken far more life than pre-modern history’s witch-hunts, crusades, and inquisitions. Think of the Holocaust, or the Killing Fields of Cambodia, which lost one fourth of its population in a frenzied mass murder carried out in the name of an anti-religious political ideology.

The evidence, therefore, would suggest that it is not religion, specifically, that is at the root of violence. Any ideological difference, any difference of worldview, can be marshaled in defense of the notion that we ought to kill one another. And we can also observe many historical situations in which there have been diverse religions and this diversity has *not* been accompanied by violence or

persecution. Religious difference by itself is an insufficient explanation for violence undertaken in its name.

Regarding violence in the name of non-religious ideologies, we are again faced with deep irrationality; for, like the religions of the world, some of the non-religious, secular ideologies that have served as rallying cries for slaughter are, like the world's religions, rooted in humane ethical visions. Marxism is not rooted in a desire to foment violence, but the desire to ensure that resources are distributed in an equitable fashion—certainly a noble end, with which many religious persons agree (as the Dalai Lama agreed with Mao, before he realized what Mao had in mind for Tibet).

If it is not the religious or non-religious character of a worldview that renders it a possible justification for violence, there must be something additional, something that is projected onto a worldview which distorts it, turning it into something it was not originally intended to be. The modern Hindu sage, Swami Vivekananda, claims that the source of inter-religious violence (and we could add, violence across worldviews more generally) is not the worldviews themselves, but rather a set of attitudes that become entwined with them. He defines these as *sectarianism*, *bigotry*, and *fanaticism*.⁴ Broadly, these three could be defined, respectively, as the tendency to fragment a community because of differences in views (rather than striving for co-existence), a tendency to dislike others because of their worldview, ethnic or national origin, gender, or sexual orientation, and a way of adhering to one's worldview that precludes appreciation for other views. The danger, the seductive power, of these destructive tendencies lies in the fact that, when one succumbs to them, one feels that one is in fact behaving

⁴ Swami Vivekananda, "Response to Welcome at the World's Parliament of Religions, Chicago, 11th September 1893," in Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 1 (Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 2003), 4.

righteously, that one is being faithful to the values that one's tradition upholds.

The tragedy is that in so doing one is actually betraying those very values by embarking on a slippery slope which may lead to hating and killing one's neighbor in the name of a tradition that teaches one to love one's neighbor as oneself. One of the great frustrations I have experienced in engaging with people of all religions over the years is the tendency to identify the intensity of one's devotion to a tradition with the extent to which one becomes unhinged and irrational when talking about it. A fanatic is not more devoted to his religion than a so-called 'moderate.' It is, in fact, likely that the fanatic has not understood the deeper nuances of being committed to a view while simultaneously showing respect for other views, even those which may appear to be opposed to it, while the moderate sees such respect as a duty that follows from one's religious commitment.

Why, again and again, do we succumb to these tendencies—these *pāpa saṃskāras*, or evil habits, as they are called in the Sanskrit language of the spiritual and philosophical traditions of India? The thread underlying this unholy trinity of sectarianism, bigotry, and fanaticism, it seems, is fear: fear that the other will undermine our precious values, or that the other will take resources from our community, or that the other is in fact evil and means to do us harm.

According to the traditions of India, this fear is itself rooted in a deeper ignorance, which is really the root of all the evil in the world. One might ask, "Ignorance of what?" The answer is, "Ignorance of our true, spiritual nature, and the ways in which this nature binds us to all beings." We are all, ultimately, one. Each of the Indian traditions has its own way of expressing this unity. In the Hindu philosophy of Vedānta, the term for this basic unity is *Brahman*, the

infinite existence, consciousness, and bliss—*anantaram sat-chit-ānandam*—that is the essential nature of all beings, and manifests in each of us as our *Ātman*, or fundamental Self. The Buddhist traditions speak of Interdependent Origination, or Interbeing—*pratītya-samutpāda*—the basic interconnectedness of all beings. The Jain tradition speaks of the universal reality of the *Jīva*—the life force, or soul, which is the essential nature of all living things.

Our violence against the other is made possible by our seeing the other as wholly other: as so other that we are blinded to the ways in which we are the same. As the Western philosopher Spinoza observed, our love for others tends to diminish to the degree that they are different from us. At one extreme end, there is the psychopath, who has no regard for the well-being of anyone other than himself. Fortunately, such persons tend to be quite rare. But it is all too easy for many of us to withhold our love from those whom we do not know—people outside of our immediate community of daily interaction. It is even easier for us to withhold our love from people who hold a different worldview, who speak a different language, or who have a different physical appearance from ourselves. It is even easier yet to withhold our love from living beings that are non-human, and thus to inflict violence which we would never consider inflicting on our fellow human beings, including consuming them as food. In fact, the ease with which we inflict violence on non-human life is a template for our violence against one another; for our violence against our fellow humans is facilitated if we can regard them as non-human: as animals. It is not uncommon to hear enemies in a conflict described as ‘animals.’ I recall my father, a veteran of the Vietnam War, describing how, in his military training, he was discouraged from thinking or speaking about the Vietnamese people as human beings. The soldiers were instead conditioned to refer to the Vietnamese people only with

derogatory ethnic slurs meant to render them less than fully human in the soldiers' minds.

In the act of “otherizing” the other—that is, of attending only to the ways in which the other is unlike ourselves and projecting onto the other only the traits we do not wish to see in ourselves—we commit, one could say, the original violent act. On the basis of this otherization, this literal alienation, progressively greater violence becomes possible. One could say that from bigoted and hateful thoughts flow bigoted and hateful words; and similarly, from bigoted and hateful words flow bigoted and hateful actions.

At the same time, valuing otherness negatively, and focusing only upon the ways in which the other is like us, can also constitute a kind of violence. An example of this is the fallacy of “colorblindness,” in which we assert that we will simply treat everyone the same—perhaps the same as we wish to be treated ourselves. This sounds deceptively like the Golden Rule, except that by failing to attend to the ways in which others are, in fact, different from ourselves—culturally, for example—we may end up treating them poorly. It is necessary to deepen our understanding of the Golden Rule to mean not only treating others as we wish to be treated, but treating others as we would wish to be treated under the same circumstances, with the same background of history and cultural assumptions: treating others as we would wish to be treated if we were them.

The Jain Philosophy of Infinite Diversity

This brings me to my central thesis, namely, that the Jain philosophy of infinite diversity, or *anekāntavāda*, can be of great assistance in cultivating empathy, nonviolence, and recognition of the common, fundamentally spiritual nature of every being we encounter, as well as a deeper appreciation for each being's distinctive uniqueness.

One can integrate the spirit of this philosophy into one's life without necessarily adopting Jainism in its entirety, although it certainly does invite one to explore the rich, profound tradition in which it emerged.

What is the Jain philosophy of infinite diversity, and how can it help us to follow the middle path between seeing the other as wholly other—thus allowing the other to be an object of potential violence—and appreciating the other only inasmuch as the other is like us—thus allowing us to resist learning from difference and expanding our view of reality? How can Jain philosophy help us live peacefully with those who are different from us, yet share a common spiritual nature?

To understand the Jain philosophy of infinite diversity—or as I have also called it, the Jain philosophy of relativity—it is necessary first to understand some basic facts about the Jain tradition itself, as well as the broader Indian cultural milieu in which it developed and in which it has thrived for thousands of years.

The Jain tradition itself is truly ancient. According to Jain teaching, what we now call Jainism is as old as the universe itself, describing the nature of reality throughout all cosmic time. From a less philosophical, more historical perspective, some have argued that Jain practice can be traced to the Indus Valley Civilization, which was at its height from approximately 2600 to 1900 BCE. This is not a widely-held view among scholars, given the lack of firm data about the culture of this ancient civilization, and the fact that we are not yet able to read its writing system, or even to know definitely which language or languages it depicts.

According to Jain teaching, this tradition can be traced to a series of twenty-four beings who have lived in our region of the universe over the course of our current cosmic cycle, a period extending back many millions of years. The stories of the lives of

these founding figures, called *Tīrthaṅkaras*, is difficult to correlate with historical scholarship, but a number of them are attested in independent, non-Jain sources from ancient India: specifically, the twenty-fourth Tīrthaṅkara, Mahāvīra, who likely lived in either the fifth or sixth century BCE and who was a contemporary of the Buddha.

Mahāvīra, like *Buddha*, is not a family name, but a title. Just as *Buddha* means *Awakened*, *Mahāvīra* means *Great Hero*, and refers to the heroic effort required in the Jain path to freedom from the cycle of rebirth. Mahāvīra is also known as *Jina*, or Conqueror—a militaristic image, but one that refers to the conquest of one’s inner enemies, including the impulse toward violence. A *Jaina*—or *Jain* in contemporary Indian languages—is a follower of the Jina.

Jainism, Buddhism, and the dominant Hindu traditions of India all affirm that all living beings are far more than their physical bodies. We are spiritual beings, dwelling in a physical form that has been shaped by choices we have made while dwelling in earlier physical forms. When our bodies die, our essential spiritual reality continues in another form.

This process of rebirth is described in one of the Hindu scriptures, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, in the following way: “Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you...nor in the future shall any of us cease to be. As the embodied soul continually passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth, and then to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. The self-realized soul is not bewildered by such a change.”⁵

Becoming a “self-realized soul” is the aim of all of these traditions (although the Buddhist tradition does not use the term

⁵ *Bhagavad Gītā: As It Is*, with translation and commentary by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (Los Angeles: Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1972), 21-24. The original verses are *Bhagavad Gītā* 2:11-13.

“self” in relation to this process, seeing it as carrying a residuum of egotism, a quality which all of these traditions aim to overcome). A self-realized soul is free from the cycle of death and rebirth, having learned the lessons that our experiences as embodied beings teach us. All of our choices—specifically, those infused with ego-based desire—lead to inevitable results. The principle of cause and effect that governs this process is called *karma*, which can be translated as *action*, or as *work*. One’s karma, one could say, is the work one has to do in one’s lifetime, the work one brings into one’s lifetime from one’s previous existence, and that one will carry over into other lifetimes until one has become free from it.

This freedom, or *mokṣa*—liberation from the cycle of rebirth—is the result of self-realization, or absorption in one’s true nature, also called *nirvāṇa*. This is the ultimate aim of Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu spiritual practice. Each of these traditions can be seen as reflecting different variations on this common theme, and as employing different strategies for realizing this common end.

In the Jain tradition, the living being is known as *jīva*, which can be translated as *soul*, but literally means *living being* or *life force*. There are as many *jīvas* as there are living things: a number that is virtually infinite. Each *jīva* possesses four qualities to an infinite degree, which are therefore known as the *ananta-catuṣṭaya*, or the *four infinitudes*. These are infinite knowledge (*jñāna*), infinite perception (*darśana*), infinite bliss (*sukha*), and infinite energy or power (*vīrya*).

As long as we are bound to the cycle of rebirth, though, we do not realize the infinite potential which these qualities reflect. This is because our *jīva* has been associated, for countless lifetimes, with *ajīva*, or non-living matter. Karma, according to Jainism, is a type of *ajīva* which adheres to the *jīva* as a result of the passions, or *kaṣāyas*

that we feel when we have an experience.

Experiences are of three basic kinds: pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. The kaṣayas which tend to correspond to these are, respectively, attraction, aversion, and indifference. The key to stopping fresh karma from entering one's jīva is to cultivate a state of *samāyika*, or equanimity, whether one is experiencing something that is pleasant, painful, or neutral. *Samāyika* is not the same as indifference; for we feel indifferent to an experience only because we do not feel that it affects us. *Samāyika* is living in the recognition that the inherently pure, blissful nature of our fundamental self cannot be destroyed or disrupted, no matter what external circumstances we are experiencing. It is being 'alike in pain and pleasure.' This means that we do still experience pain and pleasure. But we do not allow them overwhelm us. The distinction between equanimity and indifference is an important one. If we do not attend to this distinction, we may develop the false impression that we are to be indifferent to the sufferings of others; but this is the precise opposite of what the Jain tradition teaches. For an essential element in the cultivation of equanimity is the practice of *ahiṃsā*, or nonviolence in thought, word, and deed. The feelings that can drive us to desire harm for others attract the most destructive karmas to the soul. They need to be conquered if one is to experience the true, lasting peace of *nirvāṇa*. *Ahiṃsā* is the foundation of Jain ethics. The entire Jain way of life, right down to its strict vegetarian diet, is based on the ideal of *ahiṃsā*. Perfect *ahiṃsā* is impossible for householders—persons living lives fully engaged with society, and which involve earning a material livelihood and raising a family. The practice of *ahiṃsā* to the highest degree humanly possible falls to ascetics—Jain *munis* and *sādhvīs*, or monks and nuns. The image for

which the Jain tradition is probably best known is of Jain ascetics gently sweeping the ground in front of them to avoid even accidentally treading on tiny organisms on the ground, and sometimes wearing a *muhpatti*, or mouth-shield, to avoid ingesting them from the air. (I should note here that not all Jain ascetics wear a mouth-shield, and that even those who do, do not do so at all times. And there are some ritual occasions when householders wear them as well.)

It may be counterintuitive to claim that a tradition which enjoins such a strict way of life, seeing a thoroughgoing practice of *ahiṃsā* as essential to the attainment of spiritual liberation, possesses a philosophy of infinite diversity that can aid in an acceptance of all worldviews.

Why is this so? It is because one might expect Jains to assert that all other traditions fall short of the true practice of nonviolence, and so fail as paths to a higher spiritual state; and indeed, there have been Jains throughout history who have made such statements. Jain reflection on the nature of the *jīva*, however, has led to *anekāntavāda*, the Jain philosophy of relativity.

How did this remarkable development occur? Historically speaking, the earliest instance of this philosophy can be found in the Jain *Āgamas*, or scriptural texts, in which are presented the Jain community's memory of the teaching of Mahāvīra himself.

In one of these scriptural texts, Mahāvīra responds to a set of questions posed by a disciple on the nature of the cosmos and the soul.

[T]he Venerable Mahāvīra told the Bhikkhu Jamāli thus:...[T]he world is, Jamāli, eternal. It did not cease to exist at any time. It was, it is and it will be. It is constant, permanent, eternal, imperishable,

indestructible, [and] always existent. The world is, Jamāli, non-eternal. For it becomes progressive (in time-cycle) after being regressive. And it becomes regressive after becoming progressive. The soul is, Jamāli, eternal. For it did not cease to exist at any time. The soul is, Jamāli, non-eternal. For it becomes animal after being a hellish creature, becomes a man after becoming an animal and it becomes a god after being a man (*Bhagavatī Sūtra* 9:386).⁶

Mahāvīra is here explaining that those who claim the cosmos is eternal and those who claim it is non-eternal are both correct, from different points of view. According to the Jain worldview, there has always been a cosmos. It is, in this sense, eternal. It is not, however, static. It undergoes constant change, its character being vastly different during the various phases of a cosmic cycle, known as progressive (or *utsarpiṇī*) and regressive (or *avasarpiṇī*). It is, in this sense, not literally the same universe from era to era. In a similar vein, the individual soul, or *jīva*, is also eternal. It has always existed and will always exist. It inhabits numerous forms, however, over the course of its journey to freedom. The same soul can be, in one lifetime, a human being, in another an animal, in another an entirely different kind of being altogether. These forms are not eternal. They perish and pass away, to be replaced by another, and another, and another until liberation is achieved. The answers to the questions, “Is the cosmos eternal or non-eternal?” and “Is the living being eternal or non-eternal?” depend upon whether the questioner has in mind the totality of the cosmos or its current state of affairs, or the *jīva* as such or the type of body it currently inhabits.

In this way, seemingly incompatible answers to these questions

⁶ Translation by Matilal. Quoted from Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Anekāntavāda: The Central Philosophy of Jainism* (Allahabad, L.D. Institute of Indology, 1981), 19.

can both be seen to be true. There is that in all of us which is eternal, and that in all of us which will pass away forever. The two are not mutually exclusive.

This approach to seemingly contrary answers to the same philosophical question became, in the hands of Jain intellectuals over the course of two and a half millennia, a complex system of logic according to which the views of rival systems of thought could be reconciled into an integral synthesis.

One of the main debates among the various schools of philosophy in ancient India was over whether the essential nature of reality could best be described in terms of impermanent moments of existence or in terms of an eternal, unchanging reality on which the illusion of time and change is projected by the mind. Buddhist traditions tended to adhere to the first view. According to Buddhism, it is our attachment to entities that we falsely view as solid and permanent that is the primary cause of our suffering, and our bondage to the cycle of rebirth. Hindu traditions tended to adhere to the second view, holding that our true nature is infinite being, consciousness, and bliss, with no real differentiation and no division across time. It is our adherence to that which is impermanent and changing, in this view, that is the cause of our suffering and bondage.

Jain thinkers, with their both/and view of the nature of the *jīva*—as having a nature which is eternal and unchanging, but as also passing through various forms to which it is really and truly, and not only apparently, bound—asserted that the Buddhists and Hindus were both correct and both incorrect in the way they described reality. Buddhists, on the Jain understanding, rightly described the ephemeral nature of the phenomena the *jīva* experiences, and Hindu traditions such as Vedānta rightly described the eternal nature of the *jīva*'s essence. Each was false inasmuch as it denied the truth of the

other view.

Reality, according to this Jain understanding, is complex. It possesses many sides or aspects, which is the literal meaning of *anekānta*. An Indian story often used to describe this view is the famous parable of the Blind Men and the Elephant (a story told by the Buddha to a monk confused by the many views he had heard debated among the followers of different sects).

The elephant has many parts—its legs, tail, ears, tusks, and so on. A blind man, grasping one of these and taking it to be the whole elephant, will argue with those who grasp other parts and describe the elephant in terms different from the first blind man's experience. In this parable, the arguing blind men are the world's religions—or even, we could say, all worldviews, religious and non-religious. Each religion can be compared to a conceptual matrix for grasping reality. A Christian has a positive experience and sees the grace of God. A Jain has a similar experience and sees the working of karma. A non-religious person has a similar experience and sees a lucky random chance. If we apply the Jain philosophy of relativity to these three seemingly incompatible views, we can see each as capturing a different part of the reality of the situation. Jain logic allows us to see differences not as conflicting, but as complementary.

Anekāntavāda is a metaphysical—what philosophers call an ontological—view. It is a view, that is, about the nature of reality. Corresponding to anekāntavāda is a teaching called *navavāda*, the doctrine of perspectives. This extends anekāntavāda into the realm of what philosophers call epistemology—the study of knowledge. We know the nature of an entity based on which of its aspects we perceive. Each aspect corresponds to a point of view from which the entity may be approached. A worldview is a matrix for grasping reality, and grasps those aspects of reality for which it is designed. Each worldview is a gateway to insight about a particular piece of the

totality of being.

Corresponding to both anekāntavāda and nayavāda is a doctrine about how best to make assertions about reality on the basis of the pluralistic understanding of truth these two doctrines provide. This is called *syādvāda*, or the doctrine of conditional predication. Literally, *syādvāda*, means ‘the doctrine of *syāt*.’ *Syāt* is a word which, in Jain technical usage, means, ‘in some sense,’ or ‘from a certain perspective it is the case that...’ Recall Mahāvīra’s account of the eternality and non-eternality of the world and the soul. A claim about reality—its permanence or impermanence, its having one nature or another—are true or false depending on which aspect of reality it describes.

According to *syādvāda*, truth claims have seven possible values:

1. In one sense, a claim is true.
2. In another sense, a claim is false.
3. In another sense, a claim is both true and false.
4. In another sense, the truth of a claim is indescribable.
5. In another sense, a claim is true and its truth is indescribable.
6. In another sense, a claim is false and its truth is indescribable.
7. In another sense, a claim is true and false and its truth is indescribable.

These seven statements exhaust the possible non-redundant truth-values of a given claim.

Questions

The Jain philosophy of relativity raises a number of important questions which need to be addressed if it is to be utilized as a way

of navigating diverse worldviews in a way conducive to peaceful co-existence.

The first of these is the question of radical relativism, which I define as the view either that there is ultimately no truth, or that the truth can never be known, or that the truth is whatever one wants it to be. This, in fact, was the chief objection raised against this philosophy by Buddhist and Hindu thinkers in ancient India: that saying the same claim can be both true and false is incoherent. If everything is true, then nothing is true, and one ends up finally unable to say anything.

It is especially important, I believe, in this era of 'alternative facts,' to clarify that the Jain philosophy of relativity is not, in fact, a radical relativism of this kind. Jainism operates from what philosophers call a *realist* ontology, affirming that there is an ultimate fact of the matter, or a way things are. What the Jain philosophy of relativity does is to disambiguate or clarify metaphysical claims of the kind typically made in religious and philosophical traditions: claims about the way things ultimately are. The substance of the Jain claim is that the way things are is complex and not reducible to any single concept. The ultimate fact of the matter is complexity. And even the concept of complexity does not fully grasp the nature of being, which is why, from one perspective, the nature of reality is said in the Jain tradition to be inexpressible: beyond what limited words and concepts can encompass. Ultimate reality can thus be viewed as both process and substance, as both personal and impersonal, as neither, and so on, depending upon the perspective one takes.

This is not the same as saying reality is whatever one wants it to be. The elephant really does have a trunk. The person perceiving it as a snake is partially correct, in having apprehended that particular dimension of the nature of reality. If a person who

grasped the leg or the ear or the tusk of the elephant said it was like a snake, that person would be incorrect. Their concepts would not cohere with the experience they were attempting to describe.

Jain philosophy can be seen as an attempt to systematize and render coherent what the late John Hick calls the 'religious ambiguity of the universe.' By this term, Hick means the fact that no particular worldview has been able to command the unanimous assent of every thinking human being. Certainly, science has been able to produce a measure of consensus regarding the nature of the physical reality which can be apprehended by the senses, a reality constantly expanding due to the increasingly refined ways in which those senses can be extended into the macroscopic and the microscopic realms. But it has not produced a consensus, even among the scientifically literate, about the deeper meaning of existence, or whether there are dimensions of reality beyond those which are amenable to scientific investigation, or what the nature of those dimensions might be. This remains the realm of religion and, of course, philosophy. One response to this situation is, as with the question of religiously motivated violence, simply to dismiss religion—to say that, if there were any truth to the teachings of the religions, they would have come to an agreement by now as to the ultimate nature and meaning of existence. This response, however, raises as many questions as it might ostensibly answer. If the religious accounts of reality are completely false, then this is, as Hick says, 'bad news for the many.' It means we are in a cold universe in which most people have lived lives that have been, in the words of Thomas Hobbes, "nasty, brutish, and short," who have suffered tremendous sorrows and injustices with no hope of experiencing a better state. Now, the fact that a worldview is depressing and demotivating does not mean it is necessarily false. It is often the case that the universe does not give us what we want, at least not

immediately. This conclusion, though, does lead to a particularly difficult version of the question, 'Why bother with anything at all?' This is not an unanswerable question. My point is simply that it is not obvious that dispensing with religion altogether addresses our concerns in an adequate way.

Another response to the religious ambiguity of the universe is to cling tenaciously to one particular picture of reality and deny the rest. In fact, the rejection of religious accounts of reality in favor of a materialist view is itself, arguably, a species of this response: one view is correct and the others are false.

This approach, however, also raises more questions and concerns than it addresses. First, there is the question of how to decide which model of reality is the true one, out of all of the many options available. Accompanying this is the epistemic question of how one would recognize the true view in the first place. Whatever criteria one would use would inevitably be shaped by the particular cultural location in which one would find oneself. As Hick, again, puts it very well, had I been born in Saudi Arabia, I would likely believe that Sunni Islam presented the true picture of reality; but had I been born in Thailand, I would likely feel as strongly that Theravāda Buddhism was the truth.

This leaves us, then, with pluralism: the view that all these traditions capture some aspects of reality and failure to capture others. The world's belief systems are not the same. They differ in many important ways. They also overlap in some respects (such as the aforementioned Golden Rule). Might we respond to the religious ambiguity of the universe by delving into what all these traditions have to say and see how they might be integrated to form a more complete picture of the nature of reality? This approach is well described by Pravrajika Vrajaprana, of the Ramakrishna tradition:

The world's spiritual traditions are like different pieces in a giant jigsaw puzzle: each piece is different and each piece is essential to complete the whole picture. Each piece is to be honored and respected while holding firm to our own particular piece of the puzzle. We can deepen our own spirituality and learn about our own tradition by studying other faiths. Just as importantly, by studying our own tradition well, we are better able to appreciate the truth in other traditions.⁷

The Jain philosophy of relativity can be seen as a methodology for this process of exploring and integrating the religions and philosophies of the world into a more comprehensive picture. It is possible this process will be never-ending. To claim one has completed it fully would be to fall into the dogmatic error of asserting the truth of one worldview alone. But it can be progressive.

In other words, one can advance closer to truth in what Alfred North Whitehead calls an "asymptotic approach," mindful that reality is always more than what our words and concepts can comprehend fully, but also avoiding the nihilistic skepticism involved in claiming they are unable to express the nature of reality at all. This could be seen as a 'middle path' between the extremes of absolutism or dogmatism and radical relativism.

Does one need to be a Jain to apply the Jain philosophy of relativity in the way in which I have described? Certainly, this approach to the diversity of worldviews has emerged from out of a specific worldview, a specific picture of reality. Also, historically, this philosophy was often not utilized in the way that I am proposing, but as a polemical tool for demonstrating that the Jain view was more

⁷ Pravrajika Vrajaprana, *Vedanta: A Simple Introduction* (Hollywood, CA: Vedanta Press, 1999), 56-57.

comprehensive than its competitors (although there were also thinkers who did utilize it in very much this way).

I would suggest that anyone, beginning with any worldview as a starting point, might begin to approach the claims of other worldviews using the Jain method, assuming that each view is, in one sense true, in another sense false, in another sense both true and false, in another sense neither, or inexpressible, and so on. It would also be a good introspective exercise to apply this method to one's own views as well, seeing where one might have insight and where one's vision might be incomplete. In the words of Sri Ramakrishna, all religious beliefs systems are "a mix of sand and sugar." One must utilize one's critical capacities, in conjunction with what one already knows and understands, in order to sift out the truth from that which is a misinterpretation, or whose truth is only a function of a particular time and place and may no longer be applicable.

Mahātmā Gandhi, a Hindu, found the Jain approach to difference enabled him to approach those with views different from his own with greater empathy. In an editorial in his journal, *Young India*, he once responded to a question from a reader who had observed that sometimes Gandhi appeared to be speaking from the point of view of the non-dualistic Advaita Vedānta tradition and others times from a more dualistic Vaiṣṇava point of view. Asking which of these philosophies Gandhi actually observed, he replied:

I am an *advaitist* and yet I can support *Dvaitism* (dualism). The world is changing every moment, and is therefore unreal, it has no permanent existence. But though it is constantly changing, it has a something about it which persists and it is therefore to that extent real. I have therefore no objection to calling it real and unreal, and thus being called an *Anekanta-vadi* or a *Syadvadi*. But my *Syadvada* is not the *syadvada* of the

learned, it is peculiarly my own...It has been my experience that I am always true from my point of view, and am often wrong from the point of view of my honest critics. I know that we are both right from our respective points of view. And this knowledge saves me from attributing motives to my opponents or critics. The seven blind men who gave seven different descriptions of the elephant were all right from their respective points of view, and wrong from the point of view of one another, and right and wrong from the point of view of the man who knew the elephant. I very much like this doctrine of the manyness of reality. It is this doctrine that has taught me to judge a Musalman [Muslim] from his own standpoint and a Christian from his. Formerly I used to resent the ignorance of my opponents. Today I can love them because I am gifted with the eye to see myself as others see me *and vice versa*. I want to take the whole world in the embrace of my love. My *anekantavad* is the result of the twin doctrine of *Satya* and *Ahimsa* [truth and nonviolence].⁸

The Jain philosophy of infinite diversity can be of great assistance in cultivating empathy, nonviolence, and recognition of the common, fundamentally spiritual nature of every being whom we encounter, as well as a deeper appreciation for each being's distinctive uniqueness, because it invites us to perceive a universe in which we are all participating, and yet which we each perceive in our own unique way that is appropriate to each of us at our current stage in our journey. It is a method for addressing difference which enables us to navigate the fact that our neighbors have beliefs and values different from ours (whatever those beliefs may be). We do not need to agree fully with others in order for there to be peace. But if we can value the perspective of the other as a potential source

⁸ Mohandas K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 89.

of insight into the true nature of reality, even if it is not immediately obvious how it might fit with our own understanding, our sense that the other is so radically different from us as to render communication impossible is mitigated. It enables us to value difference without compromising on our own most deeply held beliefs: to hold firmly to our own piece of the puzzle even as we realize that what we hold is only a piece, and not the whole picture.

Are there certain beliefs which are incompatible with peaceful co-existence? It seems the real difficulty of my proposal is that it requires anyone who might take it up first to accept the ever unfolding, incomplete, non-absolute nature of their own worldview. This is precisely what many religions reject, and this rejection is what many take to define religious adherence, and so prompts them to reject religion.

Many find dogmatic absolutism comforting. Even those who may not be comfortable with it may believe that to question it is to be unfaithful to their tradition. It seems to me, though, that the logic of at least some forms of religious absolutism—those which are coupled with a mandate to spread their beliefs to others—are a recipe for inter-religious conflict. Such beliefs have certainly played a massive role in religious conflict historically.

My exhortation to those who adhere to religious absolutism is to be attentive to the reality that even the strictest of religions have rich histories of interpretation, of humanistic intellectual inquiry into the teachings of the tradition, of ‘faith seeking understanding’—that is, theology. Even if one holds, as a central tenet of one’s religious faith, that a particular text is the word of God, it remains an open question what, precisely, that text means, and how it applies to the contemporary situation. Divine revelation is always filtered through the medium of a language, and languages require interpretation, which lends itself to a variety of possibilities. Diversity is not only

inter-religious, but intra-religious. A Jain-style approach to the diversity of views can be applied first to one's own tradition, and then perhaps extended to include other traditions as well. Similarly, the ecumenical movement of Christianity begins among Christian denominations. But it creates the conditions for, in the words of Raimon Panikkar, a "wider ecumenism" that extends, potentially, to all religions, as well as to non-religious worldviews and modern science.

Conclusion

That people holding diverse worldviews ought to strive to co-exist, and that it is important to approach different beliefs in a spirit of respectful and open-minded inquiry, is not controversial, though it appears to be becoming increasingly radical in the current political climate. What Jainism lends to this conversation, in my opinion, is a particular precision and a powerful logic which demonstrates that pluralism need not be simply a platitude—a nice, politically correct sentiment—but can in fact be major contributor to understanding on a global scale; for here we have a model of knowledge unfolding through an ongoing dialogue among worldviews, each integrating the best of the others into itself, perhaps all one day converging in a shared, multifaceted vision of truth.

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A Critique of Comparative Theology

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ABSTRACT. Utilizing a postcolonial lens, I critically examine the method in Francis X. Clooney’s *New Comparative Theology* and argue that it is identical to Max Müller’s *Old Comparative Theology*, which is Eurocentric, hegemonic, and homogenous in nature, as well as guilty of relativizing and universalizing tendencies. The method of juxtaposing texts, images, practices, or doctrines of different traditions lends itself to conflation, the flattening of differences, and the denying of particularity to religions, which does not take into consideration their incommensurability and irreconcilability. Although the various distinguishable elements of religions appear to have a semblance of unity, they are non-translatable especially through the method utilized in Clooney’s comparative theology.

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Introduction

The future of comparative theology, as a discipline or as a method, rests in its ability to reconstruct itself so as to not reduce, essentialize, or collapse categories between religions but, rather, build on the foundation that religions are incommensurable and irreducible. That is to say, what really needs to be uncovered and unpacked is its uniqueness, its “religious footprint.”¹ I argue that the

¹Religious footprint is a term that I have coined to indicate the major pathways in

existing methods being used in comparative theology denies particularity to religions, by conflating elements of various traditions, or by juxtaposing texts, images, practices, or doctrines, causing disservice to the “Other” as well as to the home tradition. I argue, that religions have ontological, epistemological, metaphysical, and teleological differences that do not immediately lend themselves to comparison and are irreconcilable. Although the various distinguishable elements have a semblance of unity, they may be further discerned as non-translatable especially through the method utilized in Francis X. Clooney’s comparative theology. In this paper, I will critically evaluate Clooney’s method in comparative theology using a postcolonial lens and argue that his method parallels that of Max Müller and, unfortunately, replicates problems of Eurocentricity, essentialization, and universalizing tendencies.

Clooney’s Comparative Theology Through a Postcolonial Lens

To proceed, I first examine the method used by Max Müller in what Paul Hedges calls old comparative theology and, second, I critically evaluate Clooney’s method to find, if at all, it matches the old comparative theology and lastly, I argue that the method itself does not account for the radical differences in the religious footprints by relativizing them, essentializing them, or smashing categorical differences between them.

Francis X. Clooney’s method in comparative theology incorporates a “confessional, interreligious, comparative, and dialectical” approach that juxtaposes “texts, images, practices, doctrines, persons,” of two or more traditions, with the goal of

history that have shaped religions to be what they are today. These specific major patterns and pathways create a unique composite made of particular histories, socio-cultural, political, and philosophical engagements that have created a unique footprint to each religion, and within that religion to each sect, thus determining its current shape, which again is liable to change. By this term I do not mean variations at the level of praxis, but the skeletal structure of a religion that acquires shape due to engagements.

helping the interlocutor's "faith seek understanding" of its relationship within diverse religious traditions.² The fruits, or insights of such a comparison are "indebted to the newly encountered tradition/s as well as the home tradition."³ Although Clooney contends that his intellectual, spiritual method is not primarily a matter of evaluation or argumentation for religious superiority but an "intuitive, reflective method that maintains practical, theoretical, and rational engagement of religions, through its texts and commentaries," I find that the method itself as it is being perpetuated maybe interpreted as biased, Eurocentric, and hegemonic in nature.⁴

This hegemonic structure rests in between the nexus of power and knowledge, whereby someone from the dominant culture, through sheer concatenation seeks to assert dominance by placing two disjunctive concepts side by side, claiming intellectual and scientific means, to construct structures that assume homogeneity between religions. By denying particularity to the "religious footprint" that each tradition holds, Clooney's method in comparative theology reflects a colonial mentality that appropriates the religions of the subaltern, and unintentionally does cultural violence by distorting certain realities.

Clooney outlines the history of comparative theology and admittedly identifies Max Müller as its first representative of the nineteenth century.⁵ Perhaps Clooney is unaware of Müller's non-altruistic translations of the *Rig Veda* or the *Sacred Books of the East* that were funded by the East India Company in London and backed by royal patronage, with the hidden agenda of justifying the

² Francis X. Clooney, S.J., *Hindu God, Christian God: How Reason Helps Break Down the Boundaries Between Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 7-12.

³ Francis X. Clooney, S.J., *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 10-11.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 11-14.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

colonizers political and economic rule. Müller spoke of “the conquest of the world by means of commerce, colonization, education, and conversion”⁶ He encouraged British civil servants to study Sanskrit for intellectual conquest since material conquest would not suffice! Müller’s translations display the “trope of the child” in that the colonizers held tendencies that perceive their colonies as both subjects and objects; objects to be exploited, dominated, debased, and controlled, and subjects to be nurtured, enlightened, educated, and affirmed.⁷ As such Müller’s comparative theology presented Hindus as being in need of their European colonial parent to guide them out of their state of barbarism that they had devolved into.

In addition to its colonial patronage and the trope of a child, Müller’s translations exhibit yet another characteristic feature of the colonizer: the tendency to classify everything, whether texts, trees, groups, or boundaries, by using its own worldview as a framework for classification. David Spurr labels this an “ideological charged rhetorical strategy,” that triumphs in discrediting native knowledge over against the colonizers, thus causing alienation from the native worldview and damaging the native’s self-esteem or psyche.⁸ Müller’s fascination for classification is detected in the way he creates a hierarchy of religions that obviously favored Christian revelation, placing the New Testament on the top while placing the Vedas at the second lowest position and the Zoroastrian Avesta as the lowest.⁹ Müller along with, Farquhar, and T. E. Slater used Darwin’s *Origin of Species* and unwittingly applied it to religions by creating a linear progression in which religions moved from a lower to higher truth, from natural revelation to moral perfection, finding

⁶ As quoted in Sharada Sugirtharajah, “Max Müller and Textual Management: A Postcolonial Perspective,” in *Hermeneutics and Hindu Thought: Toward a Fusion of Horizons*, eds. Rita Sherma and Arvind Sharma (New York: Springer Science & Business Media, 2008), 32.

⁷ Ibid., 33-35.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ As quoted in S. Sugirtharajah, “Max Müller and Textual Management,” 36.

ultimate fulfillment in Christianity.¹⁰ This method of referring the religions of the natives back to Christianity resulted in coining terms like *henotheism* or *kathenotheism* in comparison to Biblical monotheism. Arvind Sharma argues that if the Vedas were read on their own, the reader would delight to find within it a range of perspectives including pluralism, skepticism, monotheism, and monism.¹¹

There's no doubt that the Christian lens made the natives look like savages of a "retrogressive" kind, the kind that had degraded from a higher state but who still had potential to ascend higher.¹² Although Müller used cutting edge methods like comparative and historical criticism, his Hinduism looks like a "non-ecclesiastical Protestant form of Hinduism."¹³ Müller's interpretive stance of the Vedas reflect a 19th century Protestant approach that is overly concerned with finding origins, the "Ur text," like the "true Gospel."¹⁴

Müller inadvertently projects his Protestant understanding by valuing the written text as a mark of a superior civilization, while the oral text as inferior. His blinkers prevent him from understanding the Hindu position that values the "oral-aural" dimension of the word over the written text, so much so that the word loses its sacredness and gets polluted upon writing!¹⁵ Reflecting the trope of a child, we find in Müller's works a language that is both affirmative and negative. As he confesses, "much that is elevated and elevating, and much that is beautiful and sublime is found in the Vedas, but also utter rubbish, utter meaningless and irrational things are found in it."¹⁶ He privileges the Vedas, thus disregarding other textual and

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Arvind Sharma, *Decolonizing* (New Delhi: DK Printworld, 2015), 19.

¹² Sugirtharajah, "Max Müller and Textual Management," 34.

¹³ Ibid., 36-37.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ As quoted in S. Sugirtharajah, "Max Müller and Textual Management," 36-37.

oral forms of knowledge such as the Gita, the *Mahabharath*, which is also called the fifth Veda.

Even the reification of the concept of the word “religion” reflects a Western understanding of construction that does not reflect realities at the ground level. Arvind Sharma notes Wilfred Cantwell Smith’s conclusive observations in *The Meaning and End of Religion* by demonstrating that terms such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and Confucianism were the product of Western scholars and can be assigned the following earliest dates: “1801 for Boudhism, 1829 for Hinduism, 1839 for Taouism, 1854 for Zoroasterianism, and 1862 for Confucianism.”¹⁷ In the medieval times some of these religions were called “sect of” or the “heresy of” or the “philosophy of the Hindus” or “Chinese wisdom,” later however, the suffix “-ism” was added to a word to designate members of that religious community.¹⁸

Sharma argues that Western hermeneutics have uncritically applied the word ‘religion’ to the Indic context.¹⁹ He critiques the central hermeneutical assumption of the field of the study of religion, that of the definition of “religion” itself. The term “religion” itself is a foreign construct and represents a particular Western worldview that does not apply to the South Asian context. Sharma skillfully argues as follows:

- (a) The hermeneutics of the term religion as developed in the West and in Islam, are alien to the Indic context:
- (b) it is alien due to its insistence on singular or exclusive religious observance, and its assertion of the idea that religion and culture are wholly distinct;
- (c) that this alien concept of religion was institutionalized in India during

¹⁷ Arvind Sharma, “The Hermeneutics of the Word ‘Religion’ and Its Implications for the World of Indian Religions,” in *Hermeneutics and Hindu Thought: Toward a Fusion of Horizons*, ed. Rita Sherma and Arvind Sharma (Springer: Springer Science & Business Media, 2008), 19.

¹⁸ Sharma, “Hermeneutics of the Word Religion,” 20.

the colonial era and met both acceptance and resistance; (d) that the category of religion is largely responsible for the emergence of Hindu nationalism particularly in its form as “Hindutva” which arose as a cultural response to the divisiveness engendered by the systematic institutionalization of the category of religion.²⁰

Sharma contends that the misapplication of the term ‘religion’ has not only damaged the relationships between indigenous Indian traditions but also created a distorted image of the religions of South Asia. He quotes Willard G. Oxtoby’s observation: “when the Christian world of the West viewed the other traditions, it sought to define them in terms parallel to the way it understood its own Christianity. The Christian historical self-understanding imposed three of its own predilections on what is described.”²¹ He further quotes Oxtoby’s observations in the following three predilections of the Christian self-understanding:

1. Its emphasis on creedal formulation of a religion
2. The secular-sacred dichotomy
3. The notion of exclusive membership²²

Sharma notes that the first predilection is to emphasize creedal formulations of a religion. He reflects that Christianity expresses itself through creedal formulas, affirmations of faith, or dogmas, which are expressed in and about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. However, not all religions in South Asia have such a systematic understanding of faith. As he writes,

Some of Asia’s great traditions, such as Buddhism, do present substantial, sophisticated, and challenging

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 21-22.

²¹ Ibid.

doctrines, but in the case of Shinto, for instance, statements of doctrine are more of a collector's item. So religion defined as "belief" is not a descriptive definition of the spectrum of phenomena but a prescriptive restriction to the narrower band within the spectrum that will fit the observer's stipulations.²³

The second predilection, Sharma notes, is the secular-sacred dichotomy. Although Christianity started off as a minority group even in its rise as a state religion, it clearly maintained the distinction between sacred and secular and that some things belong to God and some things to Caesar. However, not all religions have this dichotomy. For example, Islam fuses not just religion and politics, but also commerce, law, and all of life. Mohammad was not just a religious prophet but also a military leader that consolidated the warring tribes of Arabia.²⁴

And finally, Sharma observes that the third predilection consists of the notion of exclusive membership. The idea of an exclusive community, he adds, was part of Judaism and later transferred on to Christianity, and Islam. That God demands loyalty and does not tolerate rivalry is deeply embedded in Judaism but not in South Asian religions where the religious boundaries are fluid and not clearly defined.²⁵ Sharma notes how God is viewed in the Sikh tradition as transcending all forms and boundaries and the presence of a 35,000 strong Hindu-Muslim community that had mixed religious identities that defies the Western understanding of religion.

Old Comparative Theology (OCT), New Comparative Theology (NCT), and Theology of Religions (TOR)

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

Paul Hedges argues that there is no distinction between the OCT of Muller, and the NCT of Clooney. He argues that one can see a lineage of progression and that continuity exists between the OCT and NCT.²⁶ He summarizes this progression by using Hugh Nicholson's argument, and states four points in which the NCT *has* progressed beyond the OCT:

1. The NCT *does not make meta-statements* or generalize about other religions rather it deals with the local and particular.
2. One finds in it a particular *resistance to supremacy by relativizing the truth*. Drawing on Kiblinger, Hedges comments that although Clooney distinguishes between NCT and TOR, that any form of comparative theology would necessarily mean engaging a TOR.
3. The NCT *combines interreligious reflection and practice of dialogue* into one principle with correlating poles.
4. Finally, the OCT was *unaware of its own prejudices*, in contrast to the NCT that openly declares its normative commitments and interests.²⁷

Reflecting on the differences between the OCT and NCT, Hedges distinguishes the OCT from the NCT by degree rather than kind.²⁸ He argues that we can see this distinction clearly through the lens of TOR that was used by the OCT and the NCT. The OCT used an exclusivist model while the NCT uses an inclusive model. He notes that in the NCT truth is deferred, and religions are not in tension or competition, with one another, rather there is fair play, and an open bias. Although some proponents of the NCT are convinced that the

²⁶ Paul Hedges, "The Old and New Comparative Theologies: Discourses on Religion, the Theology of Religions, Orientalism and the Boundaries of Traditions," *Religions* 3(2012): 1120–1137, accessed on Dec. 8, 2016, doi:10.3390/rel3041120.

²⁷ Paul Hedges, "The Old and New Comparative Theologies," 1124–1125. Emphasis mine.

²⁸ Ibid.

OCT is antithetical from NCT, I argue, that it continues to remain an Orientalist approach because:

1. It does make meta-statements
2. It relativizes the truth of its own tradition as well as others
3. It combines interreligious reflection and practice of dialogue into one principle with correlating poles in an unhealthy fashion
4. It remains unaware of its own prejudices

Clooney's NCT makes metastatements that essentialize and generalize religions. In *Hindu God, Christian God* Clooney distinguishes his work from Keith Ward, in that he seeks to maintain the categories of confessional, interreligious, comparative, and dialogical throughout his work instead of collapsing all of these into two categories, confessional and comparative. However, we see that he ends up doing exactly the same:

By focused comparisons, I intend to bring the Hindu and Christian views on these topics into dialogue and even argument and thus promote a new, more *integral* theological conversation wherein traditions can remain distinct although their *theologies are no longer separable*. A religion may be unique, but its *theology is not*.²⁹

Clooney operates under the assumption that there is a distinction between religion and theology and that a religion maybe unique but not its theology. I think that religion and theology are not mutually exclusive nor do religion and theology exist in watertight compartments without interacting with one another. Constructive theology informs religions and vice versa so that they are

²⁹ Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God*, 8. Emphasis mine.

interdependent, cohesive, and conjunctive in nature. Moreover, a theology of a particular religion is part of that religion and, thus, essential to that religion and inseparable from it. The separation of a theology from its religion constitutes deracination. What is necessary is a truly interreligious conversation that resists such conflation and erasure of origins.

There is no doubt that Clooney has taken interreligious engagement to a whole new level. However, he does so at the expense of discouraging unique theological claims. Not only does Clooney generalize that Christian theology is not *entirely separate* from Hindu theology, he advocates a minimization of particular theological claims in order to promote interreligious dialogue and debate.

The four chapters thus offer examples in support of the thesis that there is *no good reason today to keep theological traditions separate from one another as if Christian theology is something entirely separate from Hindu theology or vice versa*. While there may be some beliefs, practices, and creedal formulations justly recognized as unique to particular traditions, *almost all of what counts as theological thinking is shared across religious boundaries*. It makes sense therefore to *minimize the number of theological claims possible unique to traditions by a Comparativist's Razor*: theological ways of understanding faith, reading, conceptualizing, and arguing are *presumed not to be tradition-specific unless a case for this specificity* is put forward and argued plausibly in the broader interreligious context. While we can and should respect the tendency of theologians to distinguish themselves from others and to discover special and attractive qualities in their own theology, there is *no value in respecting this tendency* to the point where it blocks thinking across religious boundaries.³⁰

Commenting on such monolithic interpretations, John Thatamanil, utilizing the work of Paulo Gonçalves, suggests that generating homogeneity “serves the interests of those who aspire to gain control over a tradition.”³¹ In no way am I suggesting that Clooney seeks to gain control over Hinduism, however, Clooney presupposes homogeneity to the point that he makes some broad universal meta claims on behalf of various religions traditions, if not all. As he writes:

First, a comparative theologian can have solid theological grounds for thinking that comparative work will be fruitful. Here, for example, are several rather *general* (theistic) insights that many comparative theologians in many (though not all) traditions might well *presuppose*, and find vindicated in their research:

1. *God chooses to be known*, encountered, and accessible through religious traditions as complex religious wholes, in fragile human ideas and words, images and actions.
2. *That God is present, even fully, in one tradition does not preclude God's presence in other traditions*; robust commitment to one tradition is compatible with still recognizing God at work outside that tradition's language, imagination, and doctrine.
3. *God can speak to us in and through a tradition other than our own*, even if we do not, cannot, embrace as our own the whole of that tradition. We are not compelled to affirm every aspect of

³⁰ Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God*, 165. Emphasis mine.

³¹ As quoted in Paul Hedges, “*The Old and New Comparative Theologies*,” 1132.

other traditions, but neither does faith compel us to presume that what we know is always superior to what they know.

4. *The intellectual and affective dimensions of a relationship to God are accessible through words, in language.* Coming to know God in this richer way proceeds valuably through the study of our own tradition, but also in the study of other traditions.
5. *How we learn from traditions other than our own cannot be predicted on the basis of our own tradition.* There is no substitute for actually studying another tradition, and the trial-and-error progress that is made by trying to learn.³²

The collapsing of categories by creating non-separable theologies, the claim that Hindu theology is somehow similar to Christian theology, the discouraging of particular theological claims in favor of interreligious engagements serve as examples of Clooney's generalizing and essentializing tendencies in comparative theology. As I will note later, even the category "God" is not to be considered normative for interreligious engagements.

Clooney's method of NCT relativizes the truth claims of the Other as well as those of the home tradition. This assumed homogeneity or "pretend pluralism," as Stephen Prothero likes to call it, destroys the religious fabric of each tradition by denying uniqueness.³³ Even the word "God" becomes problematic because some religions do not have the notion of God like Jainism or Buddhism. Rita Gross argues that the term theology is an, "oxymoron" when applied to Buddhism which is a non-theistic religion!³⁴ Not only is the word "God" problematic to some religions,

³² Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 115. Emphasis mine.

³³ Stephen Prothero, *God is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions that Run the World – and Why their Differences Matter* (New York: Harper Collins, 2010), 19.

but also the theological, historical-cultural baggage that is associated with the term becomes problematic. When we use the word “God,” whose idea of God is being invoked: the Christian God with its Trinitarian concept, or the Islamic concept of *tawhid* which stresses on the indivisible oneness of God, or the Hindu concept of God which indicates both form and formlessness, matter, spirit, and phenomenon? Prothero paradoxically notes:

No one argues that different economic systems or political regimes are one and the same. Capitalism and socialism are so obviously at odds that their differences hardly bear mentioning. The same goes for democracy and monarchy. Yet scholars continue to claim that religious rivals such as Hinduism and Islam, Judaism and Christianity are, by some miracle of the imagination, essentially the same, and this view resounds in the echo chamber of popular culture, not least in Dan Brown’s multi-million-dollar *Da Vinci Code* franchise.³⁵

Theologians have long moved on from locating a common essence in religions to the recognition that religions although belonging to the same family, possess traits of such varying degrees, so that just on the basis of the presence of these traits one may not assume similarity. Prothero argues that, “there are tall people in short families (none of the men in Michael Jordan’s family was over six feet tall)”³⁶ and that “the world’s religious rivals are clearly related, but they are more like second cousins than identical twins. They do not teach the same doctrines. They do not perform the same rituals. And they do not share the same goals.”³⁷

³⁴ Rita M. Gross, “Buddhist Theology,” in *Buddhist Theology: Critical Reflections by Contemporary Buddhist Scholars*, ed. Roger R. Jackson and John J. Makransky (Richmond: Curzon, 2000), 57-59.

³⁵ Prothero, *God is Not One*, 12.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Aaron W. Hughes critiques the “omnibus” term “Abrahamic religions” and its usage that suggests a common denominator, or a shared ground, between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.³⁸ He traces the origin of this term to a post September 11, 2001 context, to a book *Abraham: A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths* by journalist and editor Bruce Feiler. Feiler sought to create peace, and ecumenism between these religions by creating a foundation in Abraham that would embody monotheistic ideals and ethical behavior.³⁹ This category, “Abrahamic religions,” soon found its way into the academy forging its way through interreligious dialogue to break barriers. Hughes argues that the category does not account for the differences in the way Abraham is understood in these traditions, and finds its presence in the academy problematic. Hughes contends that his “*problem is not with the data, but with the category that functions as the guiding and organizing principle of data*.” It is not simply the case that we must replace “Abrahamic religions” with another, less ideologically loaded term. *Nor is it just a matter of words or semantics*. Rather, I suggest that this critique gets to the *very heart of how we organize data*.⁴⁰

Hughes further argues that,

Abrahamic religions” here functions as an *exemplum of a larger issue* in the academic study of religion: *how do we create and use terms and categories? What do these terms and categories contribute to disciplinary formation?* Unless we are cautious of whence our categories derive, *if we simply import interfaith vocabulary and assume that it then performs analytical work, our attempts then to understand religion as a social and cultural practice become highly problematic*. Within this context, “Abrahamic religions,” like so many

³⁸ Aaron W. Hughes, *Abrahamic Religions: On the Uses and Abuses of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2.

³⁹ Hughes, *Abrahamic Religions*, 14.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

other categories we employ in the academic study of religion is both, grounded and invested in *quasi-theological and ecumenical desires*.⁴¹

Hughes makes a strong point in terms of awareness about the categories that we deploy in theological studies. Why do we use what we use, our intentionality in using particular categories, their historical origin, and how they function in our theological endeavor are all important questions that the new comparative theology needs to reflect on.

Purushottama Bilimoria makes a “general claim that comparative philosophy of religion is mistakenly built on two dogmas: (1) comparative religion and (2) natural (or philosophical) theology *per se*.”⁴² He argues that,

There is an *inexorable imperative to compare*, simply because things present themselves as similar, or different, or both. But this enterprise is fraught with difficulties: just *what does one compare, how does one choose* what to compare, or *why*, and through what *methodological and epistemic tools*, and *who* is it that carries out the tasks, arranges the comparative material, and *sets the terms for the judgments to follow*? There are *epistemological question of details, descriptions, analysis, and explanation*, and the *approach or disciplines that inform the processes of religious investigation*. Furthermore, how or *what does one compare if the categories in the typology of beliefs, crucial to understand one side of the symbolic system juxtaposed, are decisively absent in or irrelevant to the other tradition or system*.⁴³

⁴¹ Ibid., 6.

⁴² Purushottama Bilimoria, “What is the “Subaltern” of the Philosophy of Religion,” in *Postcolonial Philosophy of Religion*, eds. Purushottama Bilimoria and Andrew Irvine (Dordrecht: Springer. 2009), 10.

⁴³ Ibid. Emphasis mine.

Bilimoria raises some relevant questions that are related to methodology and the project of comparison itself. We need to consider not just the “why” and the “how” of the comparative project, but also the fact that sometimes no comparison is possible at all. For example, what happens when one compares the idea of a savior in Christianity to something similar in Hindu theology, and finds that no such concept exists? Or what happens if one tries to compare the concept of sin to a Hindu concept and finds that such a notion does not exist in Hindu theology? Conversely, what if one tries to compare the understanding of karma to that of Christianity? Not only do we need to consider the absence of certain concepts, but we also need to consider the fact that images, texts, or certain doctrines have a semblance of unity but that outward unity is discerned to be irreducible upon further study.

Bilimoria argues that religions are “organic wholes,” and that isolation or removal of parts in the process of comparisons damages and distorts reality. He argues if it would make sense to compare say, “the ritual consuming of animal blood in Australian Aboriginal religion and compare it with the consumption of wine as the ‘blood of Christ’ in the Christian Eucharist, or with the alleged blood thirsty tendencies of the Hindu Goddess Kali. Again, would it make sense to compare the Aboriginal Serpent rainbow with Vishnu on the serpent in the Hindu pantheon?”⁴⁴ I think that each religion is structurally and essentially different and that the parts that make up the whole supplement each other. Plucking out a particular part whether it is text, image, or a doctrine from the ‘whole’ results in isolation and alienation. Religions are ‘organic wholes’ that are ontologically, epistemologically, metaphysically, and teleologically different, so much so that they are irreconcilable with other religions. Prothero argues that religions have different problems and therefore different goals. In his book *God is Not One* he uses a “four-part approach to

⁴⁴ Bilimoria, “What is the “Subaltern,” 19.

religions: a problem, a solution to the problem (goal), technique/techniques to move away from the problem, and exemplars who chart this path.”⁴⁵ In this pattern we discern an ontology, epistemology, and certain metaphysical claims that support the telos.

Clooney’s method in comparative theology relativizes the truth of the religious Other as well as that of the home tradition. The flattening of identities is a form of relativizing in which particular truth claims are always viewed in conjunction with someone else’s religion and never on their own. In this kind of method, Christianity can never claim Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world, nor can Muhammad be the last prophet. Religions are non-comparable, unless they are denominations within a religion, or have had a clear source of influence with each other. Each religion has its own starting point that does not necessarily equate, or measure up with other religions. By constant comparisons and assumptions of similarities, particular truth claims are reduced to the minimum degree so that they are made palatable and universalized. Clooney argues that comparativists have much to learn from each other and from other traditions by engaging theology on common topics like “the nature of the world, existence of God, etc.” He argues that:

the common features of human reasoning make it possible for believers in many different traditions at least to understand one another *and possibly to agree on topics such as the nature of the world as a dependent reality, the existence of God, the qualities and activities of God, the possibility that God might become embodied, and the idea that God speaks to humans in particular words*. Such points remain liable to argument, but *arguability indicates some common ground*. If faith is articulated in reasonable terms and defended reasonably,

⁴⁵ Prothero, *God is Not One*, 63.

then that *reasoning provides a shared theological ground*, and intelligent disagreements become possible in an interreligious context. Hindu God, Christian God highlights this *shared ground* by demonstrating how much Christian and Hindu theologians share on several important theological issues.⁴⁶

Clooney's methodological approach has created a supranatural, mythopoeic place where people agree with one another and concur with him, "that Jesus is Lord, but I cannot now assert that Siva is not Lord nor that Narayana did not graciously undergo embodiment in order to enable humans to encounter their God."⁴⁷

Clooney's NCT combines interreligious reflection and practice of dialogue into one principle with correlating poles in an unhealthy fashion. Philosopher of religion Ninian Smart has referred to the seven "dimensions" of religion: the ritual, narrative, experiential, institutional, ethical, doctrinal, and material dimensions.⁴⁸ These dimensions may make up a tradition in varying degrees so that each of these supplement one another to make up the religious whole. To engage in interreligious dialogue then, would mean to engage the entire religion in its whole and not just its intellectual dimension. It seems to me that Clooney does not really engage in the practice of dialogue but in some kind of quasi-interreligious engagement that exists in its own silo without the presence of the religious Other.

Lastly, Clooney's NCT is unaware of its own prejudice. Clooney's choice of texts over and above rituals, narrative, experience, institution, ethics, and material dimensions, reflect his Christian prejudice.

While dialogical accountability *may be* primarily

⁴⁶ Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God*, 8-9. Emphasis mine.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁴⁸ Prothero, *God is Not One*, 33.

actualized in shared experience, social interaction, and actual theological conversation, it also proceeds fruitfully as a *textual dialogue* in which one reads and ponders the great ideas of other traditions. Dialogue does not end with texts and ideas, but it can begin and flourish by reliance on the written word. As opportunities allow, one can also engage in a living dialogue with believers who belong to those traditions, but for *most of us, most of the time*, our theological dialogue will be *primarily textual*.⁴⁹

We have already observed Müller's approach of privileging the written text over the other oral-aural dimensions of the Hindu tradition, Clooney's approach reflects a similar mentality. We also observe Clooney's preferential choice of a theistic tradition over non-theistic, or trans-theistic traditions that exist in India. As Clooney states,

In a theistic tradition, the goals of theology may in the end also be reduced to the simpler aim of knowing a loving God more completely and intelligently. As an intellectual discipline, though, *theology occurs when religious people scrutinize their own faith traditions* with an eye toward understanding (and then living) that faith more adequately. By theological scrutiny, the faith becomes clearer to the community's insiders and, often enough, to outsiders too.⁵⁰

Again, the notion that theology occurs upon scrutiny reflects a Western bias of faith seeking understanding, where theories, concepts, and intellectual reasoning is preferred over the experiential dimension of a religion. In another place Clooney argues,

⁴⁹ Clooney, *Hindu God, Christian God*, 10. Emphasis mine.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

More broadly, Hindu God, Christian God is meant to support the possibility that positions such as these four can be *normative, provided they are tested and reconceived* in an interreligious, comparative, and dialogical context. This book is therefore more than simply a comparative study or set of theories about how a Christian might go about learning from non-Christians. As I will show in the following chapters, these themes are acceptable to most (though not all) Christian theologians and to many Hindu theologians as well.⁵¹

Clooney, unaware of the prejudices of comparative theology, seeks to create a framework that makes Christianity the normative lens from which all other religions must be viewed. Although he talks about testing and reconceiving these normative claims, these are not necessary because each religion has already tested and conceived its claims for its particular historical cultural setting. As a side note, I would like to add that we have not even begun to unpack the western bias of Christianity that maybe summarized perfectly in Grace Jantzen's words,

The philosophy of religion in the West has largely assumed a male, "omni-everything" God. As a Bishop wrote in Church time a few years ago, "God is a relatively genderless deity." We need only add that he is also white, and that he favors democracy, the free market economy, and the USA/UK. It is of course always immediately added that God does not have a body, and therefore has neither color and gender; and that God loves all people equally. But lurking behind the denial is the imaginary: the body that God does not have is male and white. And probably he speaks English.⁵²

⁵¹ Ibid., 13.

⁵² Bilimoria, "What is the "Subaltern," 3.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have critically examined the method in Clooney's NCT and argued that it parallels Max Müller's OCT in that it is Eurocentric, hegemonic, and homogenous in nature, guilty of relativizing and universalizing tendencies. Categories like "Abrahamic religions" and "comparative theology" flatten differences and do not account for particular religious footprints and are quasi-theological categories. I further argued that Clooney's NCT make meta-statements that relativizes the truth of its own tradition as well as of the Other, while remaining unaware of its own prejudices. I argued that religions as organic wholes have ontological, epistemological, metaphysical, and teleological differences that do not immediately lend themselves to comparisons that are irreconcilable and incommensurable. Taking into consideration all of the aforementioned critiques, I believe that that the assumptions of the discipline ought to be revised and a new methodology be constructed.

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The Concealed Theological Remnants of the Violence of Work in America

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ABSTRACT. This paper explores the violence of work in America, a system which wages war on American bodies forcing them to work when they are sick, robbing them of sleep, adequate nutrition, and time with their families and friends. Drawing from Max Weber, Michel Foucault, and Hannah Arendt, I expose the ways in which work has become an insidious byproduct of a theological and political falsity meant to control, suppress, and create creatures who will follow rules and regulations almost always to their own detriment. Using Foucault, I show how the American work place, having internalized the Protestant Work Ethic, has become a space where the Arendtian *homo faber* thrives at the expense of its physical and spiritual well-being. Further, I posit that because the Foucauldian subject is always in creation via discursive means, *homo faber* is both the creator and prisoner of the system which enslaves them. In this paradigm, the Foucauldian subject persists and resists by way of the Arendtian relational activity of Action, exercising what little power it can against the tyranny of work.

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Americans must often choose between care of the self and their jobs. The myth of work-life balance is a carrot dangling before the American bound to the cultural treadmill of ceaseless work. In this paper, I will explore the violence of work¹ in America which

¹ As a point of clarification, the definition of “work” employed herein is the activity

wages war on American bodies, forcing them to work when they are sick, robbing them of sleep and adequate nutrition, and of time with their families and friends. This inescapable intrusion of work on the American is even reflected in their speech. Stephen Kalberg, Associate Professor of Sociology at Boston University, explains in his introduction to Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, "Expressions that reflect the centrality of work in our lives are pervasive: we arrange 'working lunches,' we 'work out' daily, we 'work' on our love, our relationships, our personalities, and our tans. We praise the work ethic of our peers and 'hard workers' are generally assumed to be people of good character."² Indeed, it is often joked about that when Americans meet one another for the first time, the first question they ask is "What do you do?" meaning not, what does one do to feed their soul or spirit, not what does one do to enjoy one's time, but what one does for work.

By looking to Max Weber, Michel Foucault, and Hannah Arendt, I will expose the ways in which work has become an insidious byproduct of a theological and political history meant to control, to suppress, and to create creatures who will follow rules and regulations almost always to the detriment of their own well-being. The conversation I hope to ignite is not why do Americans dislike their jobs, this is but a cultural symptom of a much greater dis-ease, but rather, I endeavor to examine the deep roots of a system that not only makes work of paramount importance in the life of the average American, it perpetuates an abandonment of leisure, of family, and of identity outside that of vocation, and it does this in exchange for the illusion of agency in an open-market economy. To

a person engages in to earn monetary compensation. Further, the definition relied upon in this paper hinges on productivity as a primary measure of success. It is this productivity which in turn confines this activity to a more rigorous and less playful definition of "work."

² Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism: With Other Writings On the Rise of the West*, 4th ed., trans. Stephen Kalberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7.

have work in America is to be counted on as fortunate – unemployment rates are counted and announced with great excitement when they are low, and with great distress when they are high. But how fortunate can Americans be when they feel tethered to a capitalist system which itself acts as a thief, robbing them of said necessities and pleasures during working hours and of their hard-earned dollars afterward in exchange for material goods which prove inadequate at fulfilling the spiritual lacuna left by unsatisfying work.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), Americans work more hours per week than workers in the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, France, and Sweden.³ A recent article in the Wall Street Journal states that worker satisfaction is at a ten-year high with 49.6% of Americans reporting that they are “satisfied” with their jobs. Citing a survey by The Conference Board, the newspaper reports that “nearly half of employees surveyed are unsatisfied, and internal policies help explain why. Among the 23 components of job satisfaction the Conference Board asked about, the 1,565 respondents were least content with their company’s promotion policy, followed by bonus plan, performance-review process, educational and job training programs, and recognition for their work.”⁴ We work more hours but we are not recognized for it, we give up time with our families but opportunities for advancement are slim. We live in a culture where mere “satisfaction” is the best we can do to describe how we feel about our work, and we live in a culture where a meager 49.6% of its workers can say that they feel acquiescent towards their jobs. What of the other 50.4%? Writing at the turn of the twentieth century, American social activist Emma

³ Country Profiles, in the ILOSTAT Database, accessed October 25, 2016, http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/home/statisticaldata/ContryProfileId?_afLoop=460044076937073#!%40%40%3F_afLoop%3D460044076937073%26_adf.ctrl-state%3D9a972hjct_307

⁴ Lauren Weber, “Job Satisfaction Hits a 10-Year High—but It’s Still Below 50%,” Wall Street Journal, July 19, 2016, accessed October 25, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/job-satisfaction-hits-a-10-year-highbut-its-still-below-50-1468940401>.

Goldman commented on what she called the “destruction of social relationship”: “So long as every institution of today, economic, political, social, and moral, conspires to misdirect human energy into wrong channels; so long as most people are out of place doing the things they hate to do, living a life they loathe to live, crime will be inevitable.”⁵ But how have we as Americans come to be so “misdirected,” manipulated, and deceived into feeling lucky to have jobs, while being so oppressed by them? Further, how does this misdirection Goldman writes of bring about the destruction of social relationship and relationality? To begin I propose we look to Max Weber and his proposal for the theological underpinning of this phenomena.

The Protestant Work Ethic

Published in 1907 Max Weber’s seminal work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* sought to do more than simply describe the economic character of capitalism (that had already been done by Marx). According to Weber, outlining the features of a capitalist society as one that engages in a free market of goods was simply insufficient as it did not describe the undergirding spiritual precepts and values that organize the life of the capitalist. “Weber insists that this definition of modern capitalism is incomplete; modern capitalism involves also the organization of economic activity in terms of an “economic ethic.” This ethos legitimates and provides the motivation for the rigorous organization of work, the methodical approach to labor, and the systematic pursuit of profit typical of modern capitalism.”⁶ Anathema to Marxian theory about the role of religion in the life of the capitalist, Weber posited that soteriological beliefs drove one’s fervor to work and that work, profit, and

⁵ Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays* (publication place unknown: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013), 14.

⁶ M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 9.

salvation were inextricably linked in the mind of the modern capitalist. The Puritans defined by Weber as the ascetic Protestant of England and North America, believed that if one was to be a good Christian worthy of God's salvation, one needed to work, idleness was antithetical to God's command. The "spiritual" nature of this ethos was paramount to the Puritans who "placed systematic work and striving for profit in the middle of their lives. Little else appeared to matter greatly to them, not even family, friendship, leisure, or hobbies."⁷ Frivolity of any sort including socializing and even sleep all counted against the precious minutes in the day that one could use towards securing one's salvation.

One might wonder however, how this fervor for work could be reconciled with the Calvinist notion of predestination. While Calvin proposed that it was presumptuous for humans to impact God's decisions, it was the duty of the faithful to simply live with certainty of his salvation through God's grace. Weber cites in response to this the inability of Protestant Christians to sit comfortably with the uncertainty of their salvation. If salvation came by grace and not works believers were forced to live precariously balanced between hopeful eagerness of having been chosen by God to spend eternal life in heaven, and under the fatalistic ax of anxious despair that no matter what they would do, they were doomed. This simply would not stand, the doubt was too powerful, the stakes too high. Claimed that this lack of self-assurance was due to insufficient faith, Weber explains that, "*Work without rest in a vocational calling* was recommended as the best possible means to *acquire* the self-confidence that one belonged among the elect. Work, and work alone, banishes religious doubt and gives certainty of one's status among the saved."⁸ Work became the antidote to soteriological uncertainty and doubt.

⁷ M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, vii.

⁸ M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 111. Emphasis in the original.

The draw to work above all other forms of keeping oneself occupied can be traced back to the ascetic lifestyle of the Christian monk. In his article “From Vigilance to Busyness: A Neo-Weberian Approach to Clock Time,” sociologist Benjamin H. Snyder explains that the daily routine of the Benedictine “consisted of a system of eight “divine offices” – discrete spans of time with precise sequences of prayer to be carried out each day... All other activities – chores, meditation, reading, sleeping, and eating – were to be arranged with regularity in the “time remaining” around these offices. The system was called the *horarium*”⁹ and its purpose first and foremost was to prevent the weakness of the body and psyche from distracting the individual from the one thing that could put them on the road to salvation – work. Base desires, idleness, and sloth would be overrun by methodical routine, lest the soul give way to sinful pleasures. This rigid and rational ordering of time would reorient one away from leisure and towards God’s will. Translated by the Puritans, the result of being a good and hard worker ever glorifying God through systematic and virtuous methodical work, would be clues and signs of God’s pleasure and approval in the form of wealth and profit. Weber explains that Puritans “viewed the acquisition of wealth, when it was the *fruit* of work in a vocational calling, as God’s blessing. Even more important for this investigation, the religious value set on tireless, continuous, and systematic work in a vocational calling was defined as absolutely the highest of all ascetic means for believers to testify to their elect status.”¹⁰ The harder you worked, the more wealth you acquired. Salvation by way of work and wealth justified the enduring of pain, sleeplessness, and hunger.

America was inducted into this Protestant ethic early on and Weber makes this point by citing the quintessential American

⁹ Benjamin H. Snyder, “From Vigilance to Busyness: A Neo-Weberian Approach to Clock Time,” *Sociological Theory* 31, no. 3 (September 2013): 253.

¹⁰ M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 151-152. Emphasis in the original.

capitalist, Benjamin Franklin, whose pithy aphorisms made their way into the American vernacular. Simply search the internet for the words “productivity” and “motivational quotes” and you will encounter over 670,000 sites most of which will feature one of several popular Franklin quotes. On one page titled “15 Wake Up Early Quotes To Get You Inspired,” two of the 15 quotes come from Franklin (one comes from his contemporary Thomas Jefferson), among them the infamous “Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.”¹¹ Looking to Franklin as a perfect example of this ethos, we can see this “spirit” of capitalism internalized and synthesized. Now apart from its soteriological roots the Protestant Work Ethic was free to imbue the American with a right and proper way to engage with work. “Free of all presuppositions,” explains Weber, Franklin’s writing “contains the spirit of concern to us in near classical purity, and simultaneously offers the advantage of being detached from *all* direct connections to religious belief.”¹² Weber quotes Franklin at length, but given the limitations of this paper I will simply include a few sentences which exemplify the primary lesson to be learned by all Americans—laziness, spontaneity, and frivolity will only lead to ruin, work is the mark of a good and savvy individual:

Remember that *time is money*. He that can earn ten shillings a day by his labour, and goes abroad, or sits idle on half of that day, though he spend but sixpence during his diversion or idleness, ought not to reckon that the only expense; he has really spent or rather thrown away five shillings besides... The most trifling actions that affect a man’s *credit* are to be regarded. The sound of your hammer at five in the morning, or at nine at night, heard

¹¹ Kosio Angelov, “15 Wake up Early Quotes to Get You Inspired,” High Performance Lifestyle, accessed October 27, 2016, <http://blog.highperformancelifestyle.net/inspirational-wake-up-quotes/>.

¹² M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 70. Emphasis in the original.

by a creditor makes him easy six months longer; but if he sees you at a billiard-table or hears your voice at a tavern, when you should be at work, he sends for his money the next day.¹³

This ethos regarding work can be seen in the lives of modern-day Americans, with the tensions between work and family being examined extensively by sociologists. As reported by Suzanne Bianchi and Melissa Milkie in their article “Work and Family Research in the First Decade of the 21st Century,” over 800 articles had been written between 1999 and mid-2009 on the issues of work and family.¹⁴ Among the commonly examined themes found in this literature are the nature of work-family conflict and the correlations between work, family, stress, and health. Bianchi and Milkie report that work-family conflict “demonstrated the strong link to strain, depression, somatic symptoms, and burnout” in parents.¹⁵ The impact of work on family life is elucidated in Milkie’s 2004 article, “The Time Squeeze: Parental Statuses and Feelings about Time with Children.” In it she states that work impacted the number of hours parents spent with children but also in the quality of the time spent. While this may strike some as an obvious claim to make, Milkie explains that the psychological effects of this are great, stating, “The more hours of paid work, the more likely parents are to feel time strain with children. The intriguing aspect of work hours is that they are not explained away in models controlling for the amount of time parents report spending with their children, nor do activities such as eating together as a family or the number of focused one-on-one hours.

¹³ M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 70. Emphasis in the original

¹⁴ Suzanne M. Bianchi and Melissa A. Milkie, “Work and Family Research in the First Decade of the 21st Century,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72, no. 3 (June 2010): 706.

¹⁵ Suzanne M. Bianchi and Melissa A. Milkie, “Work and Family Research in the First Decade of the 21st Century,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72, no. 3 (June 2010): 716.

Something other than a simple loss of parent-child hours or activities related to longer work hours must influence parents' time strain."¹⁶ She cites a study by K.J. Daly which states that perhaps this effect is caused by the inability of parents "to spontaneously respond to children's needs, as the demands from employment are not easily escaped."¹⁷ But if this in some small way begins to explain how the American has come to be tied to the Protestant Work Ethic and how it currently impacts our relationships and families, we must ask the question of how it is that America itself maintains workers in such a state.

The Body as Object

Over and above its soteriological roots, what is the psychological hold that work has on the American individual? What keeps someone playing this game of self-sacrifice once they've begun? To maintain the masses constantly focused on work which places such strain on one's well-being, there must be something much bigger and more systematized at play. Michel Foucault proposed an answer by way of his book *Discipline and Punish* in 1975: the creation of the docile body. The insidious nature of the control of the body and suppression of the spirit has roots, Foucault claims, not only in religion, but in the creation of the prison system. Bodies which can be easily monitored and examined become a political tool by which a system exerts control over the individual. And so filling one's time with work begins as an individual endeavor toward salvific ends, but in the Foucauldian paradigm becomes itself the very tool used to enslave the populace into being a homogenous organism of efficiency, productivity, and conformity. Anything which deviates from the prescribed power-relation is considered delinquent and

¹⁶ Melissa A. Milkie and Marybeth J. Mattingly, "The Time Squeeze: Parental Statuses and Feelings About Time with Children," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66, no. 3 (August 2004): 757. Emphasis mine.

¹⁷ M. Milkie and M. Mattingly, "The Time Squeeze," 757.

must be corrected, this delinquency from work will be addressed in America by way of 19th century vagrancy laws, but first we turn to 17th and 18th century Europe.

Foucault shuttles one back to 1757 and the public quartering and execution of Damiens as he opens *Discipline and Punish*. The details are gory no doubt and are intended to be so, they function to alarm the modern-day reader. Harvard theologian Mark Jordan describes his experience of the shocking details: “I am meant to find them revolting, barbaric, and (above all) old-fashioned. I am expected to feel relief when I pass from such gruesome testimonies to something tidier, like a list of aseptic penal prescriptions. In *Discipline and Punish*, the description of the tortured body is half of a pair. The other half consists of excerpts from rules, published in 1838, for a Parisian house of young prisoners.”¹⁸ The reason that Foucault places these two halves of the story together is purposeful because in a not so subtle way he wants us to understand that these two halves are far more similar than we would like to imagine. The destruction of Damien’s body is an external and visible representation of the same kind of destruction later found in the regimented structure of time imposed upon the body, it is a destruction meant to attack the soul.

The rules mentioned by Jordan are those of Leon Faucher who created a time-table which structured the prisoner’s day down to the minute much like that of the Benedictine monks to which Weber referred. This time-table is indicative of the greater restructuring of punishment from public spectacle to orderly and cloistered discipline. Foucault explains, “The body now serves as an instrument or intermediary: if one intervenes upon it to imprison it, or to make it work, it is in order to deprive the individual of a liberty that is regarded both as a right and as property.”¹⁹ The individual as such

¹⁸ Mark D. Jordan, *Convulsing Bodies: Religion and Resistance in Foucault* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2015), 41-42.

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York:

becomes a vehicle, an object, upon which physical or psychological force can be enacted. Again, we turn to Jordan who explains that “The body is a network of tense relations, a field for perpetual battle. This micro-physics is a series of battlefield reports from a war that is not officially taking place.”²⁰ And so it is that this battle for control of the body begins with torture and execution, moves forward to organization and separation and in this isolation, the body becomes one which is “manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds.”²¹ Foucault lays out the battleground for the creation of the docile body as one which requires enclosure of the body, partitioning within the enclosure, the creation of said partitions as “functional sites,” the implementation of rank or hierarchy within the enclosure, and the control of activity by way of “temporal imperatives.”

To derive as much as possible out of the body, first it must be quartered off. Foucault calls this “enclosure” and describes it as “a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself.”²² Examples of this are prisons, yes, but Foucault extends this idea of enclosure to the military barracks, to schools, and to factories. I propose that we extend this definition to the modern-day workplace, for just as Foucault describes the guardian of the factory as monitoring the ins and outs of the individual through a gate delineating said enclosure from the outside world, we can imagine today’s reception desk where workers are identified and signed in and out. The receptionist/guard lets no one in to the workplace without clearance. Foucault explains the purpose of the enclosure by saying, “Its aim was to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful communications, to interrupt others, to be able at each moment to

Vintage Books, 1995), 11.

²⁰ Mark D. Jordan, *Convulsing Bodies: Religion and Resistance in Foucault* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2015), 45.

²¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 136.

²² M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 141.

supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits. It was a procedure therefore, aimed at knowing, mastering and using. Discipline organizes an analytical space.”²³ Lest we be fooled, today’s reception area and employee identification cards are meant to control the body of the individual, to know its location, and to keep certain bodies in and others out. We may believe and yes, we have been conditioned to believe that the receptionist is a warm and pleasant body there to offer guests tea or water, but she is a guard, a gatekeeper. She is the rook keeping the pawns in place. But she too unknowingly Foucault might say, is a body much like the bodies she polices, she is part of a system of control that is so embedded into our collective psyches that we don’t think twice when she offers us herbal tea.

The body now enclosed, the enclosure must be made functional. This Foucault explains, facilitates analysis and observation of the body. The architecture of the enclosure must be manipulated to create a system by which individuals can be easily scrutinized. He states:

In factories that appeared at the end of the eighteenth century, the principle of individualizing partitioning became more complicated. It was a question of distributing individuals in a space in which one might isolate them and map them; but also of articulating this distribution on a production machinery that had its own requirements... By walking up and down the central aisle of the workshop, it was possible to carry out a supervision that was both general and individual; to observe the worker’s presence and application, and the quality of his work; to compare workers with one another, to classify them according to skill and speed; to follow the successive stages of the production process. All these serializations formed a permanent grid: confusion was eliminated...²⁴

²³ M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 143.

Foucault's description of the functional workplace overlaid onto today's world evokes an image of cubicles lined up in orderly rows creating a grid of easily placed bodies. A place for everyone and everyone in their place, and in much the same way, the cubicle becomes the prison cell of the business class. A 2014 Wall Street Journal article titled, "A Brief History of the Dreaded Office Cubicle" states that at the time of its conception in the mid-1960's U.S. offices were "largely open, of the type we now see on "Mad Men": row after orthogonal row of serried desks, where accountants or typists clacked away from 9 to 5, often surrounded by a corridor of closed-door offices for managers and executives."²⁵ This landscape meant however that office workers were bombarded by visual and aural noise, and so in 1968 Robert Propst introduced the cubicle and by "1998... around 40 million Americans were working in what he estimated were 42 different versions"²⁶ of his original design. The article continues describing the frustration on behalf of the U.S. business class towards this functional enclosure stating that by the 1980s the "flimsy walls of the cubicle began to symbolize... transience, precariousness and the disposability of the American worker."²⁷ In a backlash against the cubicle, companies today are offering workers proposed freedom from the restrictions of this grey-felt walled existence via the same kinds of open-floor plans once used pre-cubicle. But the article remains clear that "the real problem isn't the furniture; it is how the furniture represents the arbitrariness of power in the workplace."²⁸ While Foucault's description is reminiscent of the cubicle existence we've become so

²⁴ M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 144-145.

²⁵ Nikil Saval, "A Brief History of the Dreaded Office Cubicle," *Wall Street Journal*, May 9, 2014, accessed October 29, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304885404579549800874319342>.

²⁶ N. Saval, "A Brief History of the Dreaded Office Cubicle."

²⁷ N. Saval, "A Brief History of the Dreaded Office Cubicle"

²⁸ N. Saval, "A Brief History of the Dreaded Office Cubicle"

accustomed to, Mark Jordan explains that “It is modern control over the spatially indexed information about bodies. It is imposed not by ritual horror but by geometric cognition... (the enclosure) requires a whole system of lines in order to capture everyone, each one, within a little square.”²⁹ Cubicle or no cubicle the “punitive mechanism” designed to control the body of the American is the enclosure, monitoring, and analysis of said body.

The bodies, now placed into functional gridded systems, need an incentive to stay, a reward system defined by Foucault as “rank.”³⁰ In this system bodies are conditioned to desire a higher status, in this hierarchized structure individuals would no longer think of themselves as interchangeable, rather, they would have a goal to strive for, something which if achieved would set them apart from the others. Giving the example of the classroom, Foucault explains, “In the eighteenth century, ‘rank’ begins to define the great form of distribution of individuals in the educational order: rows or ranks of pupils in the class... rank attributed to each pupil at the end of each task and each examination; the rank he obtains from week to week, month to month, year to year; a succession of subjects taught and questions treated, according to an order of increasing difficulty.”³¹ Required assignments rewarded certain kinds of behavior. We see similarities to the soteriological roots of the Protestant Work Ethic – work hard and you will be given an affirming sign from God, in the case of the Puritans, in the case of the American worker here, by the boss. It is an organization of the body without a doubt, a control over behavior that moves one from the cubicle to the prized corner office. The reward can be architectural, a private office, a bigger office, an assigned parking spot closer to the entrance; it can be psychological, an email from the boss letting you know you did a great job at the

²⁹ Mark D. Jordan, *Convulsing Bodies: Religion and Resistance in Foucault* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2015), 48.

³⁰ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 146-147.

³¹ M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 147.

presentation today; it can be monetary, a company credit card, a Christmas bonus. Rank ameliorates the feeling of one being a small fish in an endless ocean of fish, for a moment the small fish assigned a new higher rank is a big fish in the small pond that is the office.

Finally, within enclosures, functional spaces, and rank, there is the control of activity by way of the time-table. Here we see the return of the regulation of time. Returning to Benjamin H. Snyder's piece "From Vigilance to Busyness" published in 2013, we learn that "by some estimates, a third to nearly half of the U.S. population regularly experiences time in the form of intensely scheduled days that leave them feeling rushed and overworked."³² The regulating of time however is not so simple, it is not just about regulating when people come in and out and when they take lunch and for how long, it is now also about the efficiency of movement, the controlling of the body to make it as productive as possible within the time it is inside the enclosure. Foucault calls this the "correlation of the body and the gesture."³³ The work day is structured and segmented as before, but it is also viewed as good or bad based on an expectation of productivity, think of the worker struggling to meet quotas or deadlines. Here things begin to get messy because now workers are more attuned to the pressures of time and the unsustainable demands of the workplace begin to encroach on home life, leisure time, quality time with children, sleep, and nutrition. The American worker is now a good employee or a bad employee, gains or loses rank based on whether they can live up to the ever-growing demands of productivity within non-idle time.

Working against this system, taking a break from it, seeking solace or respite now becomes the calling card of the lazy and the delinquent. In America during the industrial era "dislocated and

³² Benjamin H. Snyder, "From Vigilance to Busyness: A Neo-Weberian Approach to Clock Time," *Sociological Theory* 31, no. 3 (September 2013): 243.

³³ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 152.

itinerant men in search of work were labeled a “tramp menace,” and their presence in cities and on thoroughfares ignited a host of legal, economic, and moral condemnations.”³⁴ The reasons for displacement and lack of work mattered not, the body of the itinerant (often that of the migrant worker) or unemployed male was a body that was defying enclosure, regulation, observation, and manipulation. These men were viewed as shirking the imperative to be good, hard-working, upstanding Americans, antithetical to the ethos proposed by Franklin. “Alarmist descriptions of the “tramp menace,” which took shape in the 1870s as part of this discussion, defined faulty and deficient workers as social and economic outliers. The authorities responded to this perceived threat with vagrancy laws, which were designed to punish those types of workers but also, by contrast, defined the qualities expected of an ideal worker – punctual, sober, productive, and from the employer’s perspective, cheap.”³⁵ Chief Justice Harry Olson of the Chicago Municipal Court “advocated that “persons found guilty of vagrancy shall serve a term on the ‘rock pile.’” With the goal of “cleaning the scum of the earth from Chicago,” Olson proposed to confront the “crooks and loafers” with two options: “work at honest labor” or “get out of Chicago.”³⁶ Emerging from its early roots of American independence, we begin to see in a very short span of time the ever-increasing level of allegiance required from the American worker to the Protestant Work Ethic.

Most recently the issue of Americans missing work became a source of international attention. During the 2016 American presidential election Hilary Clinton attended a public event while

³⁴ Joel E. Black, “A Crime to Live Without Work: Free Labor and Marginal Workers in Industrial Chicago, 1870 to 1920,” *Michigan Historical Review* 36, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 63.

³⁵ Joel E. Black, “A Crime to Live Without Work: Free Labor and Marginal Workers in Industrial Chicago, 1870 to 1920,” *Michigan Historical Review* 36, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 65.

³⁶ J. E. Black, “A Crime to Live Without Work”: 88.

suffering from pneumonia. The BBC News reported that “the Democratic presidential hopeful was doing what millions of Americans do every day – ignoring her symptoms and attempting to “power through” a day’s work.”³⁷ An expert in social work is quoted as saying, “At the very core of being American is the idea of being a hard worker.” The article further explains that “nearly a quarter of US adults have been fired or threatened with the sack for taking time off to recover from illness or to care for a sick loved one.”³⁸ According to the United States Department of Labor there are currently “no federal legal requirements for paid sick leave.”³⁹ In 2009 The Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) published *Contagion Nation: A Comparison of Paid Sick Leave in 22 Countries*. The study found that “the United States is the only 1 of 22 rich countries that fails to guarantee workers some form of paid sick leave.”⁴⁰ Further, the report found that the U.S. is “the only country that does not provide paid sick leave for a worker undergoing a 50-day cancer treatment.”⁴¹ But this issue is not relegated to hours of sick leave, the pressure of the American worker to be dedicated to work is also seen in American’s relationship to vacation days. GfK, a market research organization, in conjunction with Project Time Off, conducted a survey of over 5,000 American workers and found that 55% failed to take advantage of vacation days they had earned in 2015 indicating that Americans had left “a total of 658 million vacation days unused.”⁴²

³⁷ Brian Wheeler, “Why Americans Don’t Take Sick Days,” BBC News, September 14, 2016, accessed October 24, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-37353742>.

³⁸ B. Wheeler, “Why Americans Don’t Take Sick Days”

³⁹ United States Department of Labor, “Work Hours: Sick Leave,” accessed October 29, 2016. <http://www.dol.gov/general/topic/workhours/sickleave>.

⁴⁰ United States Lags World in Paid Sick Days for Workers and Families (Washington, DC: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2012), accessed October 29, 2016, <http://cepr.net/documents/publications/psd-summary.pdf>.

⁴¹ United States Lags World in Paid Sick Days for Workers and Families (Washington, DC: Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2012).

⁴² Project Time Off, “The State of American Vacation: How Vacation Became a Casualty of our Work Culture,” accessed October 29, 2016,

The Protestant Work Ethic internalized by Americans feeds off Foucault's formula of enclosure, function, rank, and time-table and vice versa. A self-perpetuating cycle keeping Americans bound in a violent act which voids them of the opportunity to care for their most basic needs. Conditioned to believe that the more they work the stronger their character, the better they are as people and as citizens, they are bodies ready for enclosure – they sit at computers, in cubicles, wear i.d. tags, clock in and out and are observed and monitored as part of the function of their employment. They are rewarded for their ceaseless hours of committed service with rank, time off (which they apparently never take out of paralyzing fear of being perceived as delinquent or lazy), and they are dominated by the time-table of the workday and the unremitting demands of quotas, deadlines, meetings, and conferences that eat away at their bodies, families, and spirits.

Work vs. Action

What of the 49.6% of Americans mentioned in that Wall Street Journal article who felt “satisfied” by their work? The argument here is much more nuanced than at first glance. To untangle this, we must define what it is exactly is meant when we use the word “work.” To do this, I propose we look to 20th century political theorist, Hannah Arendt. In *The Human Condition* Arendt outlines three proposed understandings of human activity: Labor, Work, and Action. Piecing them apart she states:

Labor is the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body... Work is the activity which corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence, which is not imbedded in, and whose mortality is not compensated by, the species' ever-recurring life cycle. Work provides an “artificial” world of things, distinctly

different from all natural surroundings... Action, the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world.⁴³

Without getting hung up on the gendered language used in the text, this Arendtian paradigm proposes that the three levels of activity can be used to define how individuals relate to the land, to material, and to one another. It is a paradigm which also proposes a certain level of freedom inherent within each activity. Labor characteristically bound to the biological necessities of human beings, such as hunger, is an activity in which there is no freedom. The human grows food to eat, eats the food, then needs to grow some more. It is a cycle in which there is no end, it is a slave existence, explains Arendt. Work is the concern of *homo faber*, a creature which seeks to dominate nature and all that is natural and is also not equal to a free existence as it roots itself in the manufacturing and fabrication of the material world “whose sum total constitutes the human artifice.”⁴⁴ Arendt explains:

Material is already a product of human hands which have removed it from its natural location, either killing a life process, as in the case of the tree which must be destroyed in order to provide wood, or interrupting one of nature’s slower processes, as in the case of iron, stone, or marble torn out of the womb of the earth. This element of violation and violence is present in all fabrication, and *homo faber*, the creator of the human artifice, has always been a destroyer of nature.⁴⁵

⁴³ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pbk. ed., Charles R. Walgreen Foundation Lectures (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 7.

⁴⁴ H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 136.

⁴⁵ H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 139.

We begin here to see that the violence of work I have outlined encased in a system which seeks to organize and manipulate the body is also a violence perpetuated by those very bodies upon the earth. Work is violent Arendt reminds us, and whether it is something that is enforced and acted upon us, or a product of our bodies acting upon the earth or one another, it is violence nonetheless. Plainly stated, while the place of work in the life of the American may have theological and soteriological roots, it was not created as a tool by God as the Puritans may have believed. Instead it was created as a tool by humans to shape the world and all those within it. *Homo faber* therefore is a creator in a theological sense because far beyond the material manufacturing and fabrication of buildings, cars, and clothing, *homo faber* created a system which alters nature and all that is natural within it. Further, it creates a system which controls the body, manipulates it, and robs it of its freedom. Foucault picks up on this violence against nature in a statement which I believe eloquently describes *homo faber's* creation of the American worker:

Historians of ideas usually attribute the dream of a perfect society to the philosophers and jurists of the eighteenth century; but there was also a military dream of society; its fundamental reference was not to the state of nature, but to the meticulously subordinated cogs of a machine, not to the primal social contract, but to permanent coercions, not to fundamental rights, but to indefinitely progressive forms of training, not to the general will but to automatic docility.⁴⁶

As described in Snyder's piece "From Vigilance to Busyness," time is manipulated and standardized by individuals conditioned to make their schedules the same as one another's, this is exemplified

⁴⁶ M. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 169.

by the tracking of workers' identical schedules (i.e. the 9 to 5 workday). Time is then coordinated and synchronized to connect into a seamless flow of activity, this exemplified by the factory worker whose cog needs to be produced in a certain amount of time in order to move onto the next stage of development at a set interval. Another example being the coordinating of schedules in the home where mom drops off Suzy at school and dad picks up Suzy after soccer practice. Lastly regularity is the action by which individuals move through space and time in predictable movements with little variation. In this way *homo faber* took natural daylight and imposed upon it the construct of seconds, minutes, and hours, it then took the natural body and set it to manufacture and produce all the "human artifice" of the world within the confines of standardized, coordinated, and regulated time.

Moving now to Arendt's view of Action, she places this activity at the highest point of her ontological scale and attributes to it the highest degree of freedom because it is an end unto itself. She describes action as outside of necessity or predictability, it is what happens between humans. Action is rooted in imagination, in play, in the capacity to create something completely new without the desire for the material. She states, "The new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability, which for all practical, everyday purposes amount to certainty; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle."⁴⁷ What makes action different than work or labor is the possibility of freedom found *within* this activity. "Action to be free must be free from "motives and intentions on the one hand and aims and consequences on the other."⁴⁸ Action is the event brought about by the agent inviting the other to be in relationship, it is when the agent

⁴⁷ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pbk. ed., Charles R. Walgreen Foundation Lectures (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 178.

⁴⁸ Dana Richard Villa, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hannah Arendt* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 100.

seeks nothing in return, seeks to produce nothing at all but to satisfy fellowship. Action is the ephemeral transcendence of human relationality brought to life.

Considering this, I propose that the 49.6% cited earlier are agents attempting to imbue the activity of action within the activity of work, those who perceive *action* as a possibility within the workplace. They are the communications associate who makes homemade pickles using their grandmother's trusty pickle recipe and gives them out as Christmas gifts to co-workers. They are the administrative assistant who found so much joy in throwing birthday parties and baby showers for her friends, that she decorates the offices of those in the company who are celebrating birthdays and anniversaries. They are the marketing director who coordinates lunch-hour knitting group meet ups, or who plays "lunch roulette" picking co-workers she doesn't know well and inviting them to eat with her in the lunchroom. Action within Work is an effort to break free from the tyranny of regimentation and its reification. It is an act of fraternity and care.

Action, the avenue for connection and relation when commodified becomes Work. To illustrate this let us consider the advent of the internet. Individuals took the personal computer and made it a venue through which humans could speak to one other facilitating the integral question Arendt posits is at the heart of action: "Who are you?" An unprecedented invention connecting individuals to one another by way of zeros and ones. The perversion of this invention was in its use for the purposes of making a profit. This is the American way of taking a beginning, a new and unique idea and converting it into dollars, and further taking the people involved and making them into bodies and objects. Taking the example of the ephemeral internet, we now have the material result of its commodification by way of the Googleplex, a 3.5 million square foot⁴⁹ super structure in Mountain View, California. Populated by

over 16,000 employees, the Googleplex houses 30 cafes, a volleyball court, bowling alley and 7 fitness centers.⁵⁰ Visitors are not allowed in, but instead are encouraged to visit the Googleplex gift shop where they can purchase Google branded t-shirts, mugs, and other assorted merchandise. Where once there was an idea, now there is a revenue of \$74.98 billion dollars and total assets worth upwards of \$147 billion dollars as of 2015.⁵¹ Where the human sees the ability to be in relationship with another human across the miles by way of the personal computer, *homo faber* takes that idea and twists it into a way to enclose the body and to make it produce.

Conclusion

To conclude I would like to echo back to the very beginning of this paper, to Stephen Kalberg's astute observation of how work is reflected in the language of Americans for this is a much more serious issue than we might like to think. In 2012 Jeremy Schulz published "Talk of Work" an article which contrasts how Americans and Europeans (specifically French and Norwegians) talk about work. He states, "The hard work commentaries of the French and Norwegian respondents feature script repertoires that focus exclusively on the stimulating and enriching character of their work activities. By contrast, the commentaries of the American respondents incorporate overachievement scripts addressing both the extrinsic rewards of work and the personality traits that make hard work a natural expression of personality... But they also invoke personality traits such as drive and the innate aversion to leisure."⁵²

⁴⁹ "Googleplex," Wikipedia, accessed October 30, 2016, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Googleplex>.

⁵⁰ Julie Balise, "Office Space: Google's Campus Feels as Big as the Internet Itself," SF Gate, January 5, 2015, accessed October 29, 2016, <http://www.sfgate.com/business/article/Office-Space-Google-s-campus-feels-as-big-as-5992389.php>.

⁵¹ "Alphabet, Inc." Wikipedia, accessed October 30, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alphabet_Inc.

⁵² Jeremy Schulz, "Talk of work: transatlantic divergences in justifications for

This “hard work talk” reifies the subject’s convincing script which justifies the perpetual nature of sacrifice of well-being in exchange for the acclaim of being a good citizen. Schulz continues explaining, “While the European repertoire turns a blind eye to the motivational possibilities of career success and drive, the American repertoire is alive to them... both Western European professional men and their American counterparts approach their engagement with hard work in profoundly different ways. This transatlantic divergence in justificatory talk bespeaks a transatlantic divergence in work ethics.”⁵³

In our speech we reflect and reify our connection to the power which exerts itself upon our bodies and we can see through the work of sociologists that this manipulation has been internalized to such an extent that we have become pieces of the system itself. Foucault reminds us that techniques of power centered on the body employ a type of discipline which is “applied not to man-as-body but to the living man, to man-as-living-being.”⁵⁴ The deep roots of connection between the Foucauldian paradigm of control of the body by way of enclosure, partitioning, and rank and that of the theological undergirding of the Protestant Work Ethic weave together to create a system of complex and convoluted ties between theology and economics. Theologian Marion Grau writes in her book *Divine Economy*, “it can seem as if theology and economics have long since traded places in the cultural discourse of power, with economics having taken on the proclamation of the terms and conditions of salvation and damnation in contemporary society.”⁵⁵ Certainly this is the case in the history of America as we have seen and it continues to dominate the work ethic of contemporary

hard work among French, Norwegian, and American professionals,” *Theory and Society*, Vol. 41, No. 6 (November 2012), 603.

⁵³ J. Schulz, “Talk of work”: 629.

⁵⁴ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana (New York: Picador, 2003), 242.

⁵⁵ Marion Grau, *Of Divine Economy: Refinancing Redemption* (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 13.

Americans, our salvation is tied to our work and our economics. Theology is used as a bolster to reinforce the techniques of power within the capitalist system, and vice versa. By way of this paper I hope to have uncovered the ways the theological and the political are intertwined into the very fabric of our lives, our homes, our bodies, our families, and our relationships therein. Perhaps there is no easy cure to what ails us other than to notice and question how it is that we have come so far down this road. Critical Theorist Judith Butler reminds us in her book *Precarious Life* that “the foreclosure of critique empties the public domain of debate and democratic contestation itself, so that debate becomes the exchange of views among the like-minded, and criticism which ought to be central to any democracy, becomes a fugitive and suspect activity.”⁵⁶

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⁵⁶ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), xx.

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Trauma and Holy Saturday:

Remembering and Mourning with WWII Comfort Women

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ABSTRACT. The phenomenon of trauma is not new. However, the study of trauma is relatively new, spanning a little over a century, and has recently begun receiving attention from contemporary theologians. This paper will be concerned with trauma and its ongoing effects on WWII comfort women to take issue with a linear (or triumphalistic) narrative of redemption in which life is victorious over-and-against death. In addition, this paper will explore a theology of Holy Saturday as a way to forge an appropriate theological response to trauma, and, further, demonstrate its potential to engage in the work of trauma healing.

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Seeing helplessly the loved one who dies, watching powerlessly one's country destroyed or one's people slaughtered in the gas chambers, or witnessing fearfully one's close friends or neighbors who get abused or re-experience the abusive events through anxiety attacks, flashbacks, repeated nightmares, or intrusive memories — such events can result in a variety of traumatic reactions. Trauma is inescapable. Inevitable. It is not rare, but common. And, most of all, it is a complicated issue. It really requires our careful treatments.

Given the reality of trauma, it is fair to say that the theologian who asserts theological claims to a meta-narrative of the linear progression from death to life, may seem to those who survive war, torture, rape, or domestic violence as inappropriate at best, or naïve and unsympathetic, at worst. Thus, I argue that theology must 1) slow down its movement from Good Friday's crucifixion to Easter Sunday's resurrection, often read in a linear narrative in which life is victorious over-and-against death, 2) take time to dwell in Holy Saturday — the puzzling *hours* of transition between Good Friday and Easter Sunday — and 3) learn to bear witness to “what remains” within the context where the reality of death persists and the promise of life remains unseen.

In order to take trauma and its aftermath seriously, my paper will first seek to describe the depth of comfort women's traumatic experience. By exploring this depth and re-exploring it through the lens of trauma study, I hope to demonstrate that a better theology for trauma, in general, and comfort women, in particular, is to bear witness to what does not go away, to what remains, to what exceeds death yet cannot be interpreted as new life. At the heart of this better theology is Holy Saturday and its twofold picture: suffering remains, but love remains more — even at the place at which the channels of graceful future and hopeful healing are most threatened.

The Depths of Comfort Women's Traumatic Experience

The Japanese military's sex slaves, called *jeongsindae* or comfort women, refer to the victims of the planned and organized crime committed by the Japanese government, army, and private enterprises during World War II. In *The Comfort Women*, George Hicks describes the comfort women's sufferings of Japanese regimental and military field brothels. During the 1930s and 1940s, women from Japanese-occupied territories were involuntarily shipped all over the Japanese Empire, which stretched from the

Siberian border in the north to Burma in Southeast Asia. While it is difficult to estimate the objective number of comfort women, especially given the lack of statistical data, Hicks says that there would have been about 139,000 comfort women at most.⁵⁷ These women were forced to have sex with 10 to 40 men a day and suffered from unbearable insults and humiliation. If they tried to fight their attackers, they were beaten so savagely that their somatic functions were permanently impaired.⁵⁸ They were also stabbed with bayonets that left inexpugnable wounds on their innocent bodies and internal organs as well as the inviolability of their human rights.

As a result, many of those comfort women committed suicide or were left with wounded souls—lives marked by acute anxieties, dissociative states, obsessive thoughts, and mental/physical illnesses, such as nervous breakdowns and sterility. This cluster of emotional, psychological, and somatic collapse led to shame and even helplessness. This all developed in response to multifaceted loss. This loss manifested in the erasure of geographical connection to their country, the mystery and sacredness of their life, the dignity and wonder of their liberty, and the meaning and purpose of their existence.

At the end of the war, these women were either shot to death, committed suicide after being bullied, humiliated, and disenfranchised, or simply were abandoned. Those who survived and returned home have henceforth lived with much suffering from their failing health, poverty, shame, and social alienation. In “The End of a Nightmare, The Beginning of Another,” Hicks describes that the comfort station survivors’ long, traumatic journey to home and rehabilitation in community have left physical, psychological, and spiritual wounds on their innocent bodies and minds. These wounds

⁵⁷ George Hicks, *The Comfort Women: Japan’s Brutal Regime of Enforced Prostitution in the Second World War* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 19.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

become the source of triggers that result in traumatization and re-traumatization.⁵⁹

It is also important to note that many survivors in Asia are confronted with another form of suffering. In countries such as Korea and China, the communities have been shaped by a Confucian taboo that attaches the high moral value to the ideal of chastity.⁶⁰ According to a professor of anthropology at San Francisco State University and the author of *The Comfort Women* C. Sarah Soh, the scope of Asian women's education in the twentieth century was largely limited to the cultivation of "wifely virtues," including chastity and obedience.⁶¹

Kim Ok-Sil, who labored as a comfort woman in China for three years from 1942 and returned home, said in her oral interview with Soh that her father often shouted at her with rage, "This girl [Ok-Sil] is brining *shame* to the ancestors and the neighborhood [emphasis added]."⁶² Another Korean survivor whose name is Yi Tuk-Nam said to Soh in a similar vein: "I hated being at home more than dying."⁶³ Confronted with such Confucian taboo, many survivors in Asia are unable to disclose the infringement on their human rights, nor can they accuse their abusers. Instead, they cover their traumatic experiences so as not to face ostracism from their families and communities. The need to be silent about evil and injustice is obviously the ongoing reality of a suffering that does not go away, but for them it is essential for the process of survival and rehabilitation. In turn, a majority of comfort women in Asia fall silent out of terror.

Silence makes one a stranger to something, not to others but to one's own self. Georges Perec, a Jewish Holocaust survivor who

⁵⁹ Ibid., 152–67.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 21.

⁶¹ C. Sarah Soh, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 5.

⁶² Ibid., 89.

⁶³ Ibid., 88.

inevitably migrated to France during World War II writes of what it means to be a stranger to oneself in his memoir:

I am a stranger in relation to something of me... I am different, but not different from others, different rather from what is mine, from my people. I do not speak the language my parents spoke, I do not share the memories they might have had, something which was theirs, which made them who they were, their history, their culture, their hope was not transmitted to me.⁶⁴

His memoirs describe that, woven into the traumatic event that dispossess him of his identity, language, community, and memory, his relationship to his own life and story borders on the outsider's perspective, as if it were someone else's story being narrated.

In my view, Perec's memoir encapsulates the reality that many of these survivors in Asia faced. A Confucian taboo empowered their silence. Many of these survivors in Asia are still unable to speak up and claim what is missing and forgotten in their lives and stories. They are strangers or bystanders to their own lives and stories. In a broad sense, silence makes these survivors fall into an abyss of being forgotten, leaving them to suffer alone in fearing ostracism from their families and communities. It is nothing more than an unfinished war waged against one's identity, language, community, and memory.

The survivors' real stories stand against a social code of chastity that renders their modes of living, remembering, truth-telling, and witnessing to their past as social taboo. Consequently, many of those survivors in Asia: 1) committed suicide, 2) suffered and died within unresolved grief or unbearable complications such as depression, intense anxiety, substance abuse, and health problems; or 3) remain

⁶⁴ W. James Booth, *Communities of Memory: On Witness, Identity, and Justice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 81–2.

unknown or unwilling to stand up and claim the justice that is their due. Yes, their suffering *is not over* yet.

Herstory of Trauma in the Lives of Comfort Women

The suffering that remains is at the heart of trauma. In *Walking the Tiger: Healing Trauma*, a trauma therapist Peter Levine, whose somatic experiencing approach provides effective treatments to traumatized people, describes trauma as the ongoingness of certain forms of suffering. According to Levine, when people face “intense fear, helplessness, loss of control, and the threat of annihilation,” and when these sufferings *remain* and *last* longer than four weeks, or worse, *become chronic*, trauma is nothing but the chosen diagnosis.⁶⁵

The phenomenon of trauma is not new. People have been vulnerable to trauma since violence is everywhere at every time — world wars, local wars, civil wars, ideological wars, ethnic wars, genocides, famines, epidemics, and lesser tumults of all kinds — and human civilization from the beginning has therefore always been vulnerable to its delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance in the form of anxiety attacks, flashbacks, nightmares, or intrusive memories: Trauma. This trauma, in a nutshell, is not new.⁶⁶ Yet, the

⁶⁵ Peter Levine, *Walking the Tiger: Healing Trauma* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1997), 28.

⁶⁶ Considering the physical impacts of the Black Death/Plague, the French Revolution, Evolutionary theory, and the Holocaust, and their psychological and emotional manifestations on the victims in the form of something spectral, which signifies, but not represents directly, that something, having occurred, has left its mark, a peculiar and uncanny inscription of sorts, it becomes apparent to us that the origin of trauma is not limited to our modern century but dates back to the Middle Ages and to the Ancient Ages given the Herodotus’ historical witness of the Greco-Persian Wars of the 5th century BCE (and perhaps to the 8th century BCE according to the analysis of the biblical scholar David Carr who saw the biblical texts as historical manuscripts of war, suffering, and trauma — in his *Holy Resilience: The Bible’s Traumatic Origins*, Carr seeks to find the origin of trauma in the biblical texts, which record the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the 8th century BCE and the fall of the Southern Kingdom of Judah in the 6th century BCE). See David M. Carr, *Holy Resilience: The Bible’s Traumatic Origins* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

study of trauma is relatively new, spanning a little over a century. Associate Director for the Master of Theological Studies at St. Norbert College Lynn Bridgers traces this history in “The Resurrected Life: Roman Catholic Resources in Posttraumatic Pastoral Care.” According to Bridgers, the twentieth century provided numerous opportunities for studying trauma, but it was only after the 1970s that a constellation of three political movements, comprised of Vietnam veterans, rape victims, and the Holocaust and torture survivors, offered the political impetus for the larger study of psychological trauma.⁶⁷

The first of these political movements was comprised of disaffected veterans returning from Vietnam. These Vietnam veterans organized hundreds of small groups, gathered where they could speak honestly about the horror of war, and revealed in public their dissatisfaction with the level of treatment available to them in the aftermath of their service.⁶⁸ The second was the women’s movement, which gave voice to those working in shelters for victims of domestic violence or in rape and sexual abuse crisis centers.⁶⁹ No longer willing to allow “denial, secrecy, and shame” to render those victims of sexual violence silent, the women’s movement put a lot of effort into transforming what had previously been private suffering into public action for social and political change.⁷⁰ What was at stake in their effort was to address the similar patterns found in those female victims and Vietnam veterans. The third movement

⁶⁷ Lynn Bridgers, “The Resurrected Life: Roman Catholic Resources in Posttraumatic Pastoral Care,” *International Journal of Practical Theology* 15, no. 1 (2011): 39–40. There is no firm definition for trauma, which has been given various descriptions at various times and under different contexts. For a good discussion of trauma and recent attempts to define it, see Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable: Trauma, Gospel, and Pastoral Care* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 57–62; Judith L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence--From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 7–32; Bessel van der Kolk M.D., *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015), 7–50.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁷⁰ Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable*, 57.

comprised the human rights movement centering on Holocaust survivors; researchers saw parallels between the psychological responses of both female and veteran groups as well as Holocaust survivors and the tortured survivors they supported.⁷¹

Studies of the parallels between the psychological responses of rape victims and Vietnam veterans and the Holocaust and torture survivors made significant contributions to the psychological assessments of loss, violence, suffering, and ways of coping. These psychological assessments spurred the American Psychological Association (APA) to research psychological trauma. Consequently, in 1980, the APA included a new, legitimate diagnosis in their Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for 1980 called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The field of traumatic studies finally commenced in earnest. In their first attempt to capture its essence, physicians and psychiatrists described trauma as “wound” or as “an injury inflicted upon the body by an act of violence,” “a loss of a sense of self,” “a breakdown in normal knowing and feeling,” “a paralyzing lack of agency in the threat of the harm suffered,” and an inability to structure thoughts, organize stories, or re-engage in life.⁷² To be traumatized meant to be haunted by an inimical external force that threatens to destroy one’s body, mind, and emotion. In this stage of initial research, trauma studies primarily focused on somatic or emotional damage.

However, trauma studies have gradually extended its scope to the peculiar and uncanny temporality of trauma.⁷³ The leading

⁷¹ Bridgers, “The Resurrected Life,” 40.

⁷² Serene Jones, *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 12-5.

⁷³ Contemporary trauma studies have also sought to develop critical theories that extend its application beyond the clinical context (i.e. trauma as pure pathology) to a wide range of socio-cultural and historical dimensions, allowing trauma research to facilitate new interdisciplinary encounters with cultural studies (Jeffrey Alexander and Manfred Weinberg), historical studies (Dominick LaCapra), and literary studies (Shoshana Felman and Cathy Caruth). It is not so surprising to see why contemporary trauma theorists have turned to concepts of trauma as tools of literary or cultural analysis inasmuch as we can look at a popular culture, music and mass

exponent of contemporary trauma studies Cathy Caruth describes that trauma is experienced only belatedly in its repeated possession of the one who experience it: “The story of trauma... as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality — the escape from a death, or from its referential force — rather attests to its endless impact on a life.”⁷⁴ “The tales of trauma,” Caruth further notes, oscillate “between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival.”⁷⁵ Trauma has no clear end but returns as if it were “what is not integrated in time.”⁷⁶ This return in Caruth’s estimation is what distinguishes trauma from suffering.

In Shelly Rambo’s seminal work on trauma studies, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*, she also writes in a similar sense: While “suffering is integrated in time,” trauma is “not solely located in the actual event but, instead, encompasses the return of that event, and the ways in which the event is not concluded.”⁷⁷ Trauma in this view (and Caruth’s) is not simply a wound that bears witness to the past suffering. It is, rather, a nagging cry that speaks beyond that past suffering.

In my stay in the House of Sharing,⁷⁸ I witnessed this “nagging” cry concretely manifested in comfort women’s bodies, minds, and

media obsessed by repetitions of violent wars and disasters: “at the successions of *Die Hards*, *Terminators*, and *Robocops*, as well as *Nightmares on Elm Street*, disease and epidemic films, and now the return of the “classic” disaster films of twisters and turbulence and the repeated sequences of mini apocalypses within each film; at “real life” cop shows; and at the news itself, that never exhausted source of pure horror.” See James Berger, “Trauma and Literary Theory,” *Contemporary Literature* 38, no. 3 (1997): 571–74.

⁷⁴ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4, 7.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷⁶ Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 7.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ The House of Sharing in Korea is a place located in Gyeonggi Province. Built in 1995, the house is home to the *halmonis* (i.e., the comfort women). In addition to living quarters for the *halmonis*, the house includes a lecture hall, an outdoor

emotions. Kun-Ja Kim, for example, cries: “I try not to think of it. I really do. But it is useless because it comes alive. Time does not heal. And there is no way I can escape from this hell. It is terrible... terribly hurt... Until the day I die, I cannot forget what I have been through. Even after I die, I won’t be able to forget. [After giving a fragmentary account of what had happened to her at the Japanese military brothel, she continues:] Living a life with this haunting memory has nothing to do with a life living in a fairy tale. It is not simply life; nor is it literally death. But it is something that has to do with a form of life surviving death.”⁷⁹ Based on her four years as a comfort woman, Johana also cries: “Even though these horrible things happened to me many years ago, I still have deep sorrow and grief inside me. Time does not heal. No money, no matter how much, can ever compensate us for what we went through.”⁸⁰

Both Kun-Ja and Johana attend to suffering that remains long after the event is over. Kun-Ja does not *really* escape from her hellish past. In a similar vein, Johana is *still* tied up with her horrible past. Their cries in this sense speak to what is beyond the past in such a way that the past does not stay in the past; nor does it come to an end but, instead, invades the present and offers an antithesis to a familiar saying: time heals all wounds.⁸¹

Trauma exists. It is *real*.⁸² It *really* constitutes and subsumes life around it. Its *realness* manifests in both Kun-Ja and Johana. Many

entertainment stage, and the Museum of Sexual Slavery by the Japanese Military. The museum, which was built in 1998, includes wartime photographs, art by the halmonis, and a life-size, so-called “comfort station” cubicle.

⁷⁹ Kun-Ja Kim’s story and oral witness have been written in this paper based on the interview I had at the House of Sharing on Wednesday, August 20, 2014. Kun-Ja is a former comfort woman who lives in the House of Sharing.

⁸⁰ Hicks, *The Comfort Women*, 166.

⁸¹ Trauma is “a break in the order of experience that blasts apart... the binding of past, present, and future.” Through this break, the interpenetration of past and present occurs. See Gregg Horowitz, *Sustaining Loss: Art and Mournful Life* (Stanford University Press, 2001), 124.

⁸² Some psychiatrists point out that the nature of the traumatic event in and of itself does not guarantee a traumatic reaction. Thus, Hunsinger acknowledges that “[o]ne person may experience the event as traumatic while her neighbor, friend, or

other women in the House of Sharing whose lives and dignity were forcefully violated by the Japanese soldiers' genital organs are also not free from this *real* trauma.

Whenever I visit the House of Sharing, I witness these women crying which indicates they are not going to forget the Japanese government; that they are suffering from their traumatic experiences; and that insofar as they live in/with their (mnemonic) bodies that hold the wounds of sex slavery, they will never escape from the haunting memories to experience healing, transformation, and reconciliation. Obviously, trauma is pervasive in the life of these women; it shatters their faith in justice, their hope in peace, and their vision of redemption. If this is the case, should not trauma be acknowledged by theologians as a worthy topic of theological discourse?

However, most theological discourse to date has not been about trauma. That is to say, theological discourse has gone without addressing the question of trauma that has no clear end. As Rambo rightly points out, "Easter comes too early, before its time."⁸³ Thus, theology fails to take account of testifying to what remains after the traumatic event. Trauma is completely eclipsed in theological discourse and becomes merely a forerunner to the final epiphany of God's glorious salvation for us.

Given the impact of trauma, especially its peculiar and uncanny temporality, no victorious theological discourse can easily emerge. Theologians should admit that their theological witnesses to trauma and its aftermath should not be a straightforward march into Easter Sunday. It should rather be, as Serene Jones implies in her text *Trauma and Grace*,⁸⁴ a vision of hope or peace without a prior

daughter, having the exact same experience, may find it stressful but not traumatic." This fact remains inexplicable and provides room for doubt to the existence of psychological trauma. See Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable*, 59.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁸⁴ Jones describes her struggle with the question: "How do people, whose hearts and minds have been wounded by violence, come to feel and know the

assumption that the Easter vision will be necessarily realized in the near future. Finding a theological discourse of redemption amid trauma in this sense is not providing a satisfactory denouement of Easter Sunday. Rather, it should testify to a strait gate of hope through Holy Saturday — the day in which Jesus' death is completed, the dead Christ descends into hell, and the hopeful promise of "all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well"⁸⁵ is muddled, interrupted, and shattered. Holy Saturday is the day in which death feels so final.

Holy Saturday

The rise of trauma studies calls attention to new aspects of the conversation about suffering and redemption. First, trauma survivors would likely resist a "redemptive" or "triumphalistic" description of their traumatic sufferings. Second, their sufferings are seen as irredeemable. Third, theology would likely trivialize the nature and magnitude of the traumatic event as well as its aftermath insofar as it reads traumas in a linear fashion in which life is always victorious over-and-against death, insofar as it fails to bear witness to what does not go away, to what remains, to what exceeds death yet cannot be interpreted as new. So while the efforts to theodiceize or maintain the theology of resurrection are noteworthy, even required for theologians, one must concede this theoretical perspective is inappropriate at best, and simply untrue at worst, for trauma survivors.

Why are theologians at times quick to turn to resurrection⁸⁶ to overlay triumphalistic narratives on persons who experience trauma,

redeeming power of God's grace?" And she cites a Vietnam veteran's account as a way of responding to this question, reflecting: "The way forward is never straight, and there is no going back. Having lived in the land of the bizarre, all one can do is step forward into a future where that bizarre world continues to haunt you, but perhaps in a new way. A space is opened up for other kinds of knowing as well. But two worlds continue to haunt one another." See Jones, *Trauma and Grace*, viii, 156.

⁸⁵ Flora A. Keshgegian, *Time for Hope: Practices for Living in Today's World* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2006), 43.

instead of witnessing, mourning or patiently waiting until the traumatized are ready to experience victory over their trauma? What is a “more appropriate theological response” to those who lack the benefit of hindsight, to those who are reliving traumatic experiences, whether in the form of intrusive memories, dreams, or actions?

Maybe we need Holy Saturday.⁸⁷ Maybe there is a reason that the dead Son came back from the dead on Easter Sunday rather than Holy Saturday. Maybe there needs to be a *prolonged* time of hopelessness built into our theologies to provide some sort of solidarity with all those who struggle to see a time of hopeful tomorrow. To forge a more appropriate theological response to the fundamental questions of trauma and its aftermath, I suggest that theology must begin to learn how to see the world through the lens of Holy Saturday and its twofold picture, manifested in Hans Urs von Balthasar’s classic texts *Mysterium Paschale, Explorations in Theology* volume 4, and *Theo-Drama* volume 4 and 5, instead of holding a source of hope born from foreknowing how the story ends.

At the heart of Rambo’s text *Spirit and Trauma* is von Balthasar’s theology of Holy Saturday and its potential to engage in the work of trauma healing. Following von Balthasar’s and Adrienne von Speyr’s joint reflections on Holy Saturday, Rambo describes Holy Saturday as an “archive of gap” that bears witness to a radical closing (the tragedy of Good Friday) with no certainty of mysterious reopening (the alleluias of Easter Sunday).⁸⁸ This “archive of gap” is

⁸⁶ We must also ask ourselves that to whom does the resurrection happen? It happens to Jesus of Nazareth. No one other than this Son of Man can traverse the abyss of death that sin has opened up. Obviously, we do not yet have any experience of it that we have heard of except this one. Moreover, Mary the woman who bore God incarnate to the world did not think “everything is all right in the end” as she held her dead son; nor could the disciples ever have imagined the morning of Easter resurrection. The rush to Easter Sunday can belie that reality.

⁸⁷ Holy Saturday is one in which trauma survivors may discover a traumatic Christian narrative that appeals to them: The chaos and horror of Good Friday are over; Jesus is buried in a borrowed tomb and the grief and mourning now begin; those who had gathered around the cross return to their homes without knowing how the story ends; for them death feels so final, and hope feels far away.

⁸⁸ Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 54–68.

one of the most traumatic times in the Christian liturgical cycle, for on that day there really is “no hint of light, no hint of life, no hint of words.”⁸⁹ Rambo sets forth that Holy Saturday is the interval between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. This interval is “a period of chaos, misrecognition, and strange reversals.”⁹⁰ In this interval there is no life and no words but only the “second death,” the experience of the Son as a dead man.⁹¹ Christ, as von Balthasar states, “does not descend into hell as one victorious over death.”⁹² Christ does not go down to the interval and collect all the sinners and unbelievers; nor does he break the chains of the captives. There is, in Rambo’s words, “no victory there and no activity. Instead, the Son is a dead man in hell.”⁹³ The interval shows no stunning picture of victory. The Son is dead. In exploring Holy Saturday through Rambo’s Balthasarian paths, one may find no “triumphalistic” narrative, but less of a pause and more of an end that triggers a time of grief and sorrow for the dead Son who enters the very state of deadness—sinking, not striding, to the place of the dead. This view is contrary to a common traditional stance on hell in which there is either the glorious march of a victorious king or the triumphant proclamation of Christ’s final power over-and-against sin and death.⁹⁴

It is important to note, however, that while von Balthasar views a “non-triumphalistic” Holy Saturday as a central theme figuring prominently in most of his subsequent theological endeavors, he does not fail to interpret this non-triumphalistic Holy Saturday within the broader contexts of the triune life of God and the divine drama

⁸⁹ Ibid., 63.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 56–57.

⁹¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 172–73.

⁹² Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 63.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ The common traditional view of hell, as Alyssa Lyra Pitstick argues, affirms that Christ’s descent is “more the beginning of the glory of Easter Day than the continuation of the suffering of Good Friday.” See Alyssa Lyra Pitstick, *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ’s Descent into Hell* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 84.

that narrates the redemption of all of humanity in God's absolute, everlasting love.⁹⁵ In *Explorations in Theology*, volume IV, *Spirit and Institution*, von Balthasar maintains that a proper understanding of the descent into hell is based on the triune life of God. Von Balthasar writes:

The depths of God's abandonment of the Son on the Cross can be understood only through the unique and lasting relationship of the Son of God, even and precisely in his abandonment ['The hour is coming and is already here when you will leave me all alone. But I am not alone, for the Father is with me' (John 16:32)]. In the whole 'economy' of the Incarnation, the divine intimacy of the Father and Son in the Holy Spirit assumes only another modality, occasioned by the absorption of human, sinful alienation in this intimacy, as a new expression of their selfless, surrendering love. The return of the Son to the Father who has raised him from the dead is nothing other than the transparency of this modality of alienation in what it already is in truth: the eternal intimacy of divine love.⁹⁶

Von Balthasar speaks of the abandonment of the cross, which reaches its pinnacle in the isolation and desolation of the descent into hell, as another 'modality' of the divine unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Von Balthasar also claims that Jesus Christ's experiences of the cross and the descent into hell reveal the absolute character of God's love, and, further, demonstrate that this love is rightly understood only if it is interpreted as God's absolute, everlasting love.⁹⁷ In von

⁹⁵ Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma*, 64.

⁹⁶ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology, Vol. 4: Spirit and Institution* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 436, quoted in David Lauber, *Barth on the Descent into Hell: God, Atonement, and the Christian Life* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 122.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.

Balthasar's view, the full extent of God's absolute, everlasting love is revealed in the complete solidarity of the Son of God with what is not God (a man, a dead man, a lost soul). And this complete solidarity, which enacts the redemption of all of humanity and the reconciliation of the world with God, carries the Son of God to death, and, further, into the isolation and desolation of hell. It is precisely in his complete solidarity with all of humanity that the Son of God reveals that God is absolute, everlasting love. To borrow von Balthasar's words, the Son of God, by accompanying all of humanity even to their traumatic realities of abandonment, isolation, and desolation, manifests "that God, as all-powerful, is [absolute, everlasting] love, and as [this absolute, everlasting] love is all-powerful."⁹⁸

Von Balthasar draws the further presupposition that God's absolute, everlasting love is whole within the very life of God. Von Balthasar understands this limitless divine love within the very life of God as the *kenosis* of the divine persons in relation to one another.⁹⁹ The Son by virtue of his divine kenosis exists wholly in the Father, the Father wholly in the Son, the Spirit wholly in the Son and the Father. In von Balthasar's view, the inner life of the Trinity is deeply self-emptying in nature, and is therefore the form of all God's economic works "outward" (the creation, reconciliation, and redemption of all things).¹⁰⁰ It is in this point of view that the interval — liturgically named as Holy Saturday in this case — is not merely a forerunner to Easter, nor is it separated from the broader contexts of the triune life of God and the divine drama that narrates the redemption of all of humanity. It is, in von Balthasar's estimation, the focal event of the Triduum, that is to say an outstandingly distinguished event in which one may see not merely Christ's deepest entry into darkness, but the

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 133–326. See also John Polkinghorne, ed., *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 137–51.

¹⁰⁰ Polkinghorne, *The Work of Love*, 140.

mystery of God's Trinitarian life, which allows for great distance within the very life of God so as to fully embrace authentic elements of human physical and spiritual death, and the radical character of God's love and kenosis, which is fully revealed in God's complete *togetherness* with what is not God (man, creation, suffering, hell).¹⁰¹ Von Balthasar describes, God is this as all-powerful is love, and as love is all powerful intrinsically in the mystery of His Trinity, which can be explicated only by the total opposition — between being with God and being abandoned by God — within God himself. This divine mystery can disclose itself only in its full reality “as accompanying the sinner only *sub contrario*, in secret, because otherwise it would not have revealed itself as reality. But because in this God (and God is God only as eternal and living) reveals himself as love, he cannot have become love merely by virtue of the emancipation of the creature; he has no need of the world and its ways in order to become himself; but manifests himself, precisely in the cross of Christ, in his abandonment by God and descent into hell, as the one he always was: everlasting love.”¹⁰² “As the three in one, God is,” in von Balthasar's account, “so intensely everlasting love, that within his life temporal death and the hellish desolation of the creature, accepted out of love, can become transmuted into an expression of kenotic love.”¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Emphasizing the distinctiveness and profound meaning of the Descent into Hell on Holy Saturday, von Balthasar also writes that the mystery of Holy Saturday must be known to us as “one single total truth, one single dogma, which at its centre is christological, but in its immediate implications is trinitarian as well as soteriological, and, indeed, soteriological (*descensus* and Resurrection) as trinitarian.” Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Convergences: To the Source of Christian Mystery* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 93–94.

¹⁰² Lauber, *Barth on the Descent into Hell*, 123. Anne Hunt also expresses the importance of Holy Saturday in Christian narratives of salvation by using the three “participatory” verbs—sharing, bearing, and experiencing: “The paschal mystery [revealed in Holy Saturday] means that God, in love, has entered into the hiatus of death—physical and spiritual—and has taken the full measure of our situation not from the outside, as it were, but from the inside, *sharing* our desolation, *bearing* our sin, as Son *experiencing* God-forsakenness [emphasis added].” See Anne Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery: A Development in Recent Catholic Theology* (Collegeville: Michael Glazier, 1997), 80.

Von Balthasar in his theology of Holy Saturday has accomplished something very meaningful to contemporary theologians. His theology of Holy Saturday opens up a way through which we can interpret that God's love survives the "non-triumphalistic" Holy Saturday and mysteriously persists on the razed terrain between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, between death and life-after/through/with-death. Moreover, it shows that if God is God in hell; if God identifies Godself as what is other than God; if God allows that otherness in the "kenotic" modality of the divine unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to accompany us even to the isolation of hell, there is no place God's love will not interrupt and persist. So while the Balthasarian "non-triumphalistic" narrative of Holy Saturday may look bleak and uncomfortable, and even idiosyncratic to many of those traditionally conservative Catholic or Protestant theologians, one may find in his work within the interval a useful picture for understanding what persists between Good Friday and Easter Sunday: A picture of God's love traveling to the place where there is no hint of life while enabling the dead to have communion with the one who is *intrinsically* love.¹⁰⁴

When viewed from von Balthasar's point of view, a twofold picture of Holy Saturday becomes clear enough to read. On the one

¹⁰³ Lauber, *Barth on the Descent into Hell*, 123.

¹⁰⁴ In the first volume of *Explorations in Theology, The Word Made Flesh*, one may further find a helpful description for understanding the significance of a non-triumphalistic Holy Saturday in Christian narratives of salvation. Von Balthasar writes, "The descent into hell between Christ's death and resurrection is a necessary expression of the event of redemption... The mystery of [a non-triumphalistic] Holy Saturday is two things simultaneously: the utmost extremity of the *exinanitio* [self-emptying] and the beginning of the *gloria* even before the resurrection." Here von Balthasar views: (1) the death and resurrection of Jesus are not understood as mere bipolarity, for Holy Saturday as the "necessary expression of the event of redemption" stands between the first and the third day of the Paschal Triduum, Good Friday and Easter Sunday; and that (2) insofar as the *gloria* begins even before the resurrection, the mystery of a non-triumphalistic Holy Saturday gives us a cue for understanding and coping with the presence of the radical nature of divine love in the pure silence and isolation of Holy Saturday: Jesus Christ's journey to the extreme limit of human suffering and death. See Edward T. Oakes and David Moss, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 116–17.

hand, Holy Saturday is a component of the incomprehensible nature of a somber, non-triumphalistic event that triggers a time of grief and sorrow. New Testament scholar Gail O'Day also notes the interval is nothing but a time of pain and hardship for those who remain as witnesses to the extreme loss that has occurred on the Cross.¹⁰⁵ In fact, there's no one in the group of first disciples who could really be told of having the benefit of hindsight for understanding Holy Saturday. Thus, they wept and mourned as Jesus said in the book of John 16:20: "You will weep and mourn... You will grieve." But Holy Saturday is, on the other hand, a razed yet paradoxically sparkling terrain where one may find the following realities: (1) the Son experiences the same timelessness and utter incomprehensibility of isolation and desolation as does the dead in hell; (2) the Son creates out of his self-emptying life a complete solidarity with them, which, in trauma therapists' perspectives, can become transmuted into a provisional, yet timely means for making and re-making a "fragile" bridge that leads the traumatized of all sorts to life, recovery, and justice.

A Better Theology for Trauma

The importance of examining the twofold picture of Holy Saturday is not merely in the von Balthasar's remarkable theological defense against the challenges of traditional theologies, but more in its potential that helps contemporary theologians in understanding and coping with the issue of ongoing and very real trauma that marks so many survivors. In my view, the twofold picture of Holy Saturday contains two valuable resources that might contribute to the healing process of trauma. In connection with Judith L. Herman's classic models for trauma treatment, these resources can show up in two practical activities: (1) remembering and mourning the non-

¹⁰⁵ Leander E. Keck, *The New Interpreter's Bible: Luke - John* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 841.

triumphalistic narrative of the survivor's Holy Saturday experience; (2) eventualizing the complete solidarity of God with the dead, the forsaken, and the hopeless through God's love.

First, as a factor contributing to the healing of a trauma survivor, trauma theorists assert that giving voice through remembering and mourning to all that the traumatized have experienced — the terror and hopelessness, the isolation and desolation, the sorrow and grief — is the first step for reclaiming their lives after trauma. In "Recovery from Psychological Trauma," Herman describes the value of remembering and mourning based on her clinical experience of trauma care and support. She writes:

[The healing process of trauma] requires immersion in a past experience of frozen time; the descent into [remembering and] mourning feels like a surrender to endless tears. Patients often ask how long this painful process will last. There is no fixed answer to the question, only the assurance that the process cannot be bypassed or hurried. It will almost surely take longer than the patient wishes, but that it will not go on forever. After many repetitions, the moment comes when the telling of the trauma story no longer arouses quite such intense feeling. It has become a part of the survivor's experience, but only one part of it. It is a memory like other memories, and it begins to fade as other memories do. Her grief, too, begins to lose its vividness.¹⁰⁶

Herman shows that, while "new conflicts and challenges at each new stage of the life cycle will inevitably reawaken the trauma and bring some new aspect of the [traumatic] experience to light," the activity of remembering and mourning is necessary to create a

¹⁰⁶ Judith L. Herman, "Recovery from Psychological Trauma," *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences* 52, no. S1 (September 1, 1998): 148.

space where the traumatized can begin to see the trauma as “only one part, and perhaps not even the most important part,” of their life stories and regain the power of interpretation over it.¹⁰⁷

When viewed from the perspectives of Herman and many other psychologists who follow her approach, one thing becomes clear. Without the activity of remembering and mourning, traumatized people are unable to overcome the anxiety of their traumatic experiences. They remain overwhelmed by the traumatic event, defeated and terrified continuously. In turn, they are imprisoned by the suffering that remains and fail to re-engage in life and recovery. To put it in another way, the traumatized cannot escape from the “archive of gap” that bears witness to a radical closing with no certainty of mysterious reopening without remembering and mourning their “non-triumphalistic” Holy Saturday experiences. The activity of remembering and mourning is vital to the trauma therapy.¹⁰⁸

A proper example that reveals the connection between the first activity of remembering and mourning and the trauma healing of comfort women is a documentary called *One Last Cry*. This film highlights the issue of comfort women, forced into sex slavery by the Japanese Army during the years 1939-1945, as a “grave violation of human rights that affected and continues to affect women all across Asia and Europe.”¹⁰⁹ Thus it records the unintentional, intrusive repetition of the traumatic event in the bodies, minds, and emotions of those comfort station survivors in South Korea, Wuhan, China,

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ It is also important to note that an act of remembering is an important theoretical construct that has the potential to become the mechanism through which theology can accomplish three ethical goals: 1) recalling the pain and loss a social group experienced that is threatened by forgetting, 2) identifying resilience and resistance in the midst of a social group’s suffering, and 3) recognizing life experiences that are beyond and between suffering, resistance and resilience. Flora A. Keshgegian, *Redeeming Memories: A Theology of Healing and Transformation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 86.

¹⁰⁹ The entire documentary *One Last Cry* is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yHHfYOGumI>

Shanghai, the Philippines and Australia. But it also shows how these survivors come to the positive dimension of trauma healing by remembering or mourning their past in dance, song, or verbal format.

Of course, remembering itself is not a universal principle of healing. Mourning does not bring the same level of healing to all survivors. *One Last Cry* does not filter away the agonized faces, painful gestures, and violent tremors that the comfort station survivors express in the process of remembering and mourning their traumatic past. But one thing that is clear to me in the documentary is that this process of remembering and mourning helps these survivors emerge from the shadow of silence and solitude. This escaping may seem less important at first, but it is actually significant in trauma healing. A representative example is Jan Ruff, a former comfort woman and Australian human rights activist known for her vocal campaigns and speeches against war rape. She testifies in the documentary that a Japanese soldier *deflowered* her and gave her a new name, Flower. Her new name resulted in removing all types of flowers away from her life. But as she came closer to peace through the process of remembering and mourning, she regained the power of interpretation over the layers of negative meaning imposed on flowers to the extent that she can enjoy making flower arrangements. Again, not all survivors experience the same level of healing. And many of those survivors in the documentary do not experience the same level of progress as for Jan Ruff. However, we clearly see through this film that there is a link between trauma healing and the activity of remembering and mourning.

Yet, none of this activity can occur apart from the presence of a trusting relationship. Talking about the unbearable or the unspeakable can, in actual fact, make matters worse. Any kind of direct processing of the traumatic experience needs to be well balanced at all times with a sense of safety and stabilization that

trauma survivors can only receive within the context of trusting relationships. Here we need to consider the second activity for the healing process of trauma¹¹⁰: eventualizing the complete solidarity of God with the dead, the forsakenness, the hopelessness.

According to psychologist Ronnie Janoff-Bulman's theory of basic assumptions, we all live with our basic assumptions about the world.¹¹¹ These basic assumptions serve as a basis of our well-being, give meaning to our existence, and, most importantly, provide a sense of safety and stabilization. The first is that the world is benevolent. This first basic assumption involves the belief that the world around us is good and does no harm to us. The second is that the world is a meaningful and coherent whole and not a basket of uncertainties. The third is that the self is worthy. This third assumption evaluates one's self as an autonomous and moral individual. These basic assumptions are the foundations for our social connections to others: safety and stabilization.

In the case of traumatization, however, all these basic assumptions are completely shattered. We lose the foundations for our social connections to others.¹¹² Thus, we can commonly find a sense of isolation and desolation in traumatized people. Trauma damages their sense of safety and stabilization. Intensive anxieties such as feelings of shame, fear of judgment, and extreme vulnerability continue to haunt their lives and spirits. Trusting relationships cannot easily be established. That is understandable because they often fail to engage in the first practical activity for the process of trauma recovery: remembering and mourning.

¹¹⁰ About which Herman would refer to as her first model for trauma treatment: Safety and Stabilization.

¹¹¹ Ronnie writes, "[T]raumatic events do not produce the psychological equivalent of superficial scratches that heal readily, but deep bodily wounds that require far more in the way of restorative efforts. The injury is to the victim's inner world. *Core assumptions are shattered by the traumatic experience* [emphasis added]." Ronnie Janoff-Bulman, *Shattered Assumptions* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 3–26.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 52.

Time and patience are necessary. Given the profound losses and the ongoing effects of trauma that the traumatized have suffered, it is obvious that one must be patient and wait until the traumatized are ready to be healed. The rush to move forward does nothing to bring safety or stabilization. Rebuilding the basic assumptions that serve as the basis of the trusting relationship is a slow and repetitive task. In this sense, trauma specialists are always told of deliberately slowing down the process, patiently enduring its slowness, and always waiting the survivor's autonomous or voluntary participation, while remembering the maxim that "the slower you go, the faster you get there."¹¹³

Where can we find such an "enduring" or "waiting" community, instead of one that is "demanding" or "pushing" for immediate healing? In the twofold picture of Holy Saturday that I have described in the previous section, one may see the "enduring" or "waiting" community is eventualized through the Son who patiently endures what persists between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Instead of ignoring the profound mystery of Holy Saturday and rushing to the hopeful promise of all shall be well,¹¹⁴ the Son of God empties himself to fully embrace authentic elements of human physical and spiritual death and enables the dead, the forsaken, the hopeless to have communion with the one who is *intrinsically* love. While this "enduring" or "waiting" relationship needs further development, the scholarship and cooperation of contemporary

¹¹³ Hunsinger, *Bearing the Unbearable*, 65.

¹¹⁴ Recognizing this impetuous approach to Easter and to its claim of new life and resurrection, von Balthasar writes, "We must, in the first place, guard against that theological busyness and religious impatience which insist on anticipating the moment of fruiting of the eternal redemption through the temporal passion — on dragging forward that moment from Easter to Holy Saturday." Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 179. Such a busy and impatient understanding of *Karsamstagzauber* (the magic of Holy Saturday) in von Balthasar's view only makes it impossible for Christian theology to attend reverently the central narrative of cross and resurrection that God, in love, has entered into the realm of death—physical and spiritual—and has taken the full extent of our sin not from the outside, as it were, but from the inside, "*sharing* our desolation, *bearing* out sin, as Son *experiencing* God-forsakenness." Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery*, 80.

theologians and trauma theorists demonstrates its theoretical feasibility and practical usefulness.

A helpful example supporting its value but needs further study and development is the Comfort Station Survivor's Wednesday Protests in South Korea. The Wednesday Protest is led by The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan. This weekly protest has continued in front of the Japanese embassy in downtown Seoul for 25 years and 11 months since January 8, 1992. Being listed in March 2002 in the Guinness Book of Records as the world's oldest rally on a single theme, the Wednesday Protest is still ongoing, actively demanding apology and justice from the Japanese government regarding the large-scale sexual slavery system established by them in all parts of Asia during World War II. But the official stance of the Japanese government is that there is not enough evidence to prove the formal involvement of the Japanese government on this matter. In other words, without clear evidence to justify the involvement from the Japanese government's perspective, there will neither be an official apology, nor any acknowledgement of their war crimes against the human rights and dignity of comfort women. The problem is that these women cannot wait for their apologies. In fact, the vast majority of survivors have passed away without regaining their rights and dignity, and the remaining survivors, who are old and sick, can no longer take an active role in the weekly rally. Yet, hope does not fade away but lingers (though wearily) through citizens who are in solidarity with them.

On July 16, 23, and 30, 2014, I also attended the Wednesday Protest to share in love and solidarity the endless suffering of these powerless women and lament for justice that has not yet come to them. Covering myself with signs and banners, I stood in solidarity with the remaining comfort station survivors and many others from diverse social groups to occupy a specific area of the street to

commence the protests. In that area, the survivors shared old stories and testified to what remains in their lives today—poverty, loneliness, doubt, and brokenheartedness. They strongly protested against the Japanese government’s persistent inaction to commit to its responsibility in the atrocity that occurred against these women.

During the protests, the occupied area also turned into an academic sphere for educating protesters about war, justice, peace, history, and trauma. But more than that, protesters became the “enduring” and “waiting” community empowering the comfort station survivors to make a way to attain hope out of no way. According to the chief manager of the House of Sharing Shin-Kweon Ahn, Kun-Ja and others, comfort women in the House of Sharing wait for the Wednesday Protests.¹¹⁵ For them, the 25-year-old protest is their reason to live. They receive love, consolation, and encouragement from the people attending the protests. Through the people who stand in solidarity with them they remember and mourn what does not go away, what remains, what exceeds death and cannot be interpreted as new life. By remembering and mourning, they build resistance, resiliency and hope in the midst of the ongoing and very real trauma that continues to haunt them.

Conclusion

Holy Saturday is the reality of trauma survivors. Given the nature of this middle day, an awful transition wherein no one can easily find an exit to go out, theologians must resist rushing to the narrative of a triumphant resurrection. The field of theology must begin to learn how to see the world through the lens of trauma survivors whose lives are lived in the middle day between death and life. If not, moving from Good Friday to Resurrection Sunday will force trauma survivors to get over, to forget, to wipe away the past that has no

¹¹⁵ Ahn’s remark was based on the interview I had at the House of Sharing on Wednesday, August 20, 2014. On November 30, 2014.

clear end but overflows with negative cultural and social consequences. Such pressure is a type of epistemological violence that pushes trauma survivors like Kun-Ja, Johana, and many other comfort women to imagine a victory they truly cannot imagine.

In a broader sense, it is also a type of political violence that compromises social consensus and as such renders our discourses and practices apathetic towards demanding justice for survivors of traumatic events and demonstrating our unwillingness to challenge the ways in which the larger society shirks its responsibility for fair trial. Thus, the field of theology must take time to dwell in Holy Saturday and begin to learn how to shape its discourse and practices around a theology of Holy Saturday. That is to say, theologians must forge an appropriate response to trauma and its aftermath; theology must begin to assign value to remembering and mourning and *patiently* stand in solidarity with trauma victims, not attempting to mute their voices.

The theological lens of Holy Saturday as informed by Rambo and von Balthasar guards against the theological busyness (or religious impatience) of reconfiguring trauma into narratives of “get over it” or “put it behind us and move on” and adjusts the gaze of theologians into the central narrative of cross and resurrection that God, in love and solidarity, has entered into the realm of death — death not merely as the end of earthly life but also as reality plagued by terror and hopelessness — and has taken the full extent of our suffering not from outside, as it were, but from the inside. Insofar as Christian theology puts its gaze on God’s loving solidarity with the traumatized, it will not discount or minimize their 1) indelible imprint of the traumatic moment, 2) numbing or emotional detachment from details of the traumatic event, and 3) persistent re-experience of the traumatic event through recurring dreams, flashbacks, repeated nightmares, or intrusive memories. But instead it will offer them a Christ-form of solidarity that will let their resistance,

resiliency, and hope be animated, even in the midst of their ongoing suffering, and help them embark on the journey of trauma healing as revealed in the Wednesday Protest and the documentary *One Last Cry*.

Then the question is: Will theology bear witness to Holy Saturday for the sake of healing trauma survivors?

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Book Reviews

Wisdom from Africa: Theological Reflections on the Confessions of St. Augustine

Ronald D. Burris

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Scholars wishing to write a book on St. Augustine of Hippo are confronted with the reality that the Doctor of Grace has been a subject of intense theological and scholarly interest for at least the past several centuries. Indeed, much has been written about St. Augustine of Hippo and his theology. In his book, Burris does not forward a new interpretation of the *Confessions*, and scholars already familiar with Augustine's works would likely find that *Wisdom from Africa* does not blaze a new trail. But, as Burris intimated in his introduction, the book arose from an introductory course on Augustine he teaches regularly at the American Baptist Seminary of the West in Berkeley, California. Thus, the book aims not only to introduce the Bishop of Hippo to the modern student of theology, but also unearth the wisdom that could be resourced for ministry today. It is with this aim in mind that the efficacy of the book must be evaluated.

Wisdom from Africa contains 13 chapters, each corresponding to the 13 books in the *Confessions*. The introduction suggests that the book provides analysis and theological reflections, but it would be more accurate to describe the book as providing a

walkthrough with some analysis, while providing some resources for students to do some theological reflections on their own. In each chapter, the author covers the major points that Augustine raises, often raising questions that illuminate the Bishop of Hippo's mindsets and dispositions as he wrestled through his memories, or supplying the historical context that situates the Bishop in the places he sojourned through during his life. The book is a suitable and accessible reading companion for the *Confessions*, particularly in an M.Div. introductory course on theology or Augustine.

Nonetheless, I offer two small critiques that in no way detract from the value of the book for students. These critiques do not identify parts of the book which detract from its intended purpose, but rather suggest "missed opportunities" which may have made the book more useful for students in other ways.

First, this reviewer feels that much more can be done to bring what Augustine wrestled with into conversation with the pressing questions of today. Consider Burris's discussion of Manichaeism in Chapter 3. As a brief aside, titling the chapter "College Days at Carthage" indicates how Burris tries to make the *Confessions* understandable to the modern audience. He introduces the reader basically to Manichaeism, and walks through Augustine's wrestling with it. But much more can certainly be said about Manichaeism and the influence of its ideological tendrils in Augustine's other works. Consider how a low theological anthropology continues to pervade in some Christian traditions today, or how various forms of Gnostic thinking is alluded to in the form of conspiracy theories or "fake news." The practical applications for present challenges are profound. Perhaps, instead of putting these reflections and analyses forward, Burris aims to allow the students to do the analyzing and applying. Hence, one of his questions at the end of Chapter 3 concerns precisely how Manichaeism is manifested today. Such a pedagogical approach may work for some, but others may need to

know Augustine and his historical context deeper before being able to make suitable connections between ancient wisdom and contemporary context.

Another (minor) missed opportunity is how the book sticks almost exclusively to Augustine's *Confessions*. This is understandable considering that the focus of the book was the *Confessions*. However, if the book is likely to be used in a master's-level course, it can be helpful for Burris to cross-reference some of Augustine's sermons and letters. Augustine was no mere academic theologian, as much as he may have wished to be one; he took his pastoral and bishopric duties seriously, and students will benefit from reading the work that he did as part of those duties. For students preparing for parish ministry, referencing Augustine's sermons may open future pastors to a treasure trove of preaching resources. Additionally, Augustine's history with the Manichaeans is recorded in the *Confessions* beginning in Book III, but even before his pastoral ministry, he had already composed anti-Manichean writings such as *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*, *De Genesi adversus Manichaeos*, and other works since the beginning of his ministry. Cross-referencing some of those texts in chapters three to six would enable the book to serve as a gateway to the wider body of Augustine's works. Another way to enhance the usefulness of this book may be to reference subsequent theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, etc., to see how Augustine's thought has been reimagined in light of different historical contexts. This would demonstrate the pervasive influence the bishop of Hippo has on Western theology.

Again, those are but minor critiques of the book. There will no doubt be students who will find *Wisdom from Africa* helpful for their sojourns through Augustine's text. The question is which students would benefit most from the book. Augustine's *Confessions* is among his most famous texts, and there is certainly no shortage of

commentaries written about it. Doctoral students and advanced masters students beginning their sojourn into Augustine's *Confessions* will find more detailed engagements and other resources in works such as James O'Donnell's 3-volume commentary¹¹⁶ or William Mann's edited volume on the *Confessions*.¹¹⁷ But for M.Div. and undergraduate students who may not have read Augustine before, this book serves as a useful guide although, given the readability of the *Confessions*, *Wisdom from Africa* should be read alongside the actual text as a reading companion. The format of the book facilitates such a reading strategy; students can read *Confessions* Book 1, and then follow that up with Burris's chapter one, using the discussion questions at the end of each chapter as helpful tools for reflecting theologically on the chapter that was just read.

Given how virtually every Christian pastor and theologian of many traditions stands in the shadow of the Doctor of Grace, Augustine should be required reading for every aspiring minister and theological scholar. But the reality is that many students leave seminary without having read much of Augustine, if at all. Some M.Div. students I have encountered who are strongly persuaded by more progressive theological strands often recoil at the thought of having to read yet another "dead, male theologian." Yet, the tapestries of liberal theology, liberation theology, virtue ethics, process theology, political theology, and many other theological subdisciplines have strands of Augustine in them. The same could be said of more traditional theologies. Here, *Wisdom from Africa* can be a great asset towards introducing people to this towering theological figure, as well as disabusing students of their preconceptions.

¹¹⁶ James J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions, Vols. I-III* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)

¹¹⁷ William E. Mann, ed., *Augustine's Confessions: Critical Essays* (Boston: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006)

Augustine's many writings, after all, do not merely contain abstract theology from another dead man. They contain wisdom from Africa.

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Peculiar Faith: Queer Theology for Christian Witness

Jay Emerson Johnson

New York: Seabury Books, 2014. 248 pages.

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\$24.00

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In recent years, as more and more Christian communities and individuals have become receptive to LGBTQ people and causes, we have been gifted with a variety of resources that offer guidance on how to think and live Christianity and queerness together. Jay Emerson Johnson's *Peculiar Faith* is a most welcome resource in this expanding and evolving genre. A foundational claim of this book is that Christianity and queerness are not merely compatible, but that

Christianity today needs queerness. According to Johnson, queer people of faith have “a divine vocation, a way to think and a way to live in the Household of God that calls all Christian people back to the radical roots of the Gospel” (4). These roots, Johnson suggests, are not primarily dogmatic, but ethical: their fruit is social and ecological transformation (22).

The first chapter of *Peculiar Faith* beautifully interweaves spiritual autobiography, queer devotional writing, and explanation of theological method. Each of the six remaining chapters is based on an italicized phrase in the following quote: “God’s own *naturally odd* people follow the *unspeakably divine* Jesus in *perversely Pentecostal* communities, those rich locations where the *erotically social* character of divine life is *ritually aroused* with visions of an *eternally queer* horizon” (27). Packed into this statement are previews of Johnson’s claims regarding humanity, Christ, ecclesiology, social ethics, sacraments, eschatology, and more. His claims are not novel, but they are not intended to be: they are colloquial translations and applications of queer theological concepts that have heretofore been less accessible outside of the academy. Johnson covers an impressive amount of theological ground, and he does so in dialogue with an impressive array of theological sources, including historic figures (e.g., Augustine and H. Richard Niebuhr), contemporary theologians (e.g., Kelly Brown Douglas and Joerg Rieger), biblical scholars (e.g., Dale B. Martin and Stephen D. Moore), and queer theologians (e.g., Marcella Althaus-Reid and Elizabeth Stuart). Moreover, Johnson writes in dialogue with queer theory, queer history, and queer cultural analysis. One of the book’s greatest strengths, I think, is that it exposes its readers not just to Gerard Loughlin, but also to George Chauncey; not just to Mark Jordan, but also to Michael Warner.

Peculiar Faith fares well in comparison to similar introductory resources, such as Patrick S. Cheng’s *Radical Love: Introduction to Queer Theology* (Seabury Books, 2011), Andy Buechel’s *That We*

Might Become God: The Queerness of Creedal Christianity (Cascade Books, 2015), and Elizabeth M. Edman's *Queer Virtue* (Beacon Press, 2016). Cheng's and Buechel's books are shorter in length and thus narrower in scope. In general, they focus on the theological over the ethical, on thinking Christianity and queerness together over living Christianity and queerness together (although, to be sure, many of their theological claims entail ethical commitments). Cheng writes in clear accordance with norms of systematic theology, and thus *Radical Love* holds a distinct appeal for beginning theology students. While it offers a helpful introduction to queer theory, it does not venture far into queer history and cultural analysis. *That We Might Become God* focuses on the specific theological topics of incarnation, sacrament, and eschatology, whereas the doctrinal reach in *Peculiar Faith* is somewhat wider. In contrast, *Queer Virtue*, like *Peculiar Faith*, covers plenty of theological and ethical ground, and Edman includes at least as much spiritual autobiography and devotional writing as does Johnson. *Queer Virtue* is shorter in length than *Peculiar Faith*, though longer than *Radical Love* and *That We Might Become God*.

While the appeal of *Peculiar Faith* is in many ways broad, certain features of the book may register most effectively with a slightly older demographic. Beginning in the introduction and continuing throughout his book, Johnson analogizes Christian faith with reference to home economics classes, The Wizard of Oz, and additional cultural phenomena that may resonate with an older audience more than they might engage LGBTQ people under 30. I do not intend this as a critique; certainly, LGBTQ demographics of all sorts need to be reached. For me, though, the observation of these cultural references in books like *Peculiar Faith* illuminates the need for queer theological and ethical resources which will continue to resonate with emerging audiences, namely those who are carrying the queer Christian banner into the future. In this ongoing

conversation, Jay Emerson Johnson's *Peculiar Faith* is a welcome and valuable resource.

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***The Heart of Centering Prayer:
Nondual Christianity in Theory and Practice***

Cynthia Bourgeault

Boulder: Shambhala, 2016. 239 pages.

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Drawing on an eclectic collection of sources, *The Heart of Centering Prayer* (hereafter *The Heart*) by Cynthia Bourgeault offers a radical new perspective on the purpose of contemplation and the unique role Centering Prayer has to play in Christian contemplative practice.

An explication of Bourgeault's primary thesis and its corollaries serves as the introduction to the volume. Bourgeault argues that the goal of contemplation is not a greater level of knowledge or a sense of enhanced relationship with God; rather, contemplation literally reformulates one's perception of reality, and, indeed, the way in which one perceives reality. In a metaphor to which Bourgeault

repeatedly returns, contemplation is a “rewiring of the ‘operating system,’” changing not “*what* one sees but *how* one sees” (Bourgeault, 48; italics original). As a way of talking about this change in perception, Bourgeault introduces the term “nondual,” a word included in the book’s subtitle and a key element of the book’s argument. More familiar to students of some Eastern traditions or of popular inter-spiritual systems such as those of Ken Wilber or Spiral Dynamics, “nondual” suggests an advanced level of spiritual development. Nonetheless, Bourgeault argues, it is a mistake to equate this term with the unitive way (following the purgative and illuminative ways) of the Christian contemplative tradition (3). Nonduality is not about union with God as such, because it is not a new awareness of some object. Rather, nonduality is a new mode of cognition, which changes the “*mechanics* of perception” (5, italics original). Whereas ordinary awareness perceives the world by distinguishing between objects, nonduality provides the capacity to perceive through “holographic resonance” (another favorite term of Bourgeault’s), which is the “capacity to sense the whole pattern as a single unified field” (5).

Bourgeault offers two corollary theses. First, while it does not use the term nondual, the Christian tradition nevertheless has a latent understanding of this mode of perception. Bourgeault points to the concept of “putting the mind in the heart” (5) in use throughout the literature of the Orthodox stream of Christianity. For Bourgeault, this is suggestive of the cognitive reformulation that is nonduality.

Second, Bourgeault argues that Centering Prayer, uniquely among contemplative practices, supports this change in perception by directing the practitioner repeatedly to let go of the faculty of attention, leading eventually to a radically altered way of being (5). Bourgeault observes that across religious traditions, most prayer and meditation systems (including *lectio divina*, the Rosary, mindfulness,

Vipassana, and the like) are concentrative practices, designed to focus the attention. By contrast, Centering Prayer is designed to cultivate a different kind of perception, in which focused attention gives way to a diffuse openness; Bourgeault likens this to *Dzogchen*, the Tibetan Buddhist practice of “objectless awareness” (2, cf. 107).

With this three-strand foundation of nonduality as change in perception, the significance of putting the mind in the heart, and the uniqueness of Centering Prayer, *The Heart* then unfolds its multifaceted argument in three major sections. The first (and smallest), “A Short Course in Centering Prayer” (11-39) is a condensed version of Bourgeault's month-long online course in Centering Prayer as originally presented on the Spirituality and Practice website in 2011. For practitioners of Centering Prayer, this is familiar territory. Bourgeault, however, makes a critical adjustment by emphasizing the nature of Centering Prayer as a kenotic practice (12); by letting go of any point of focus for the attention, the one praying imitates the self-emptying surrender of Christ. While this element has always been a part of the understanding of Centering Prayer, Bourgeault underscores it here as one strand in the argument she is weaving together.

The central section, “The Way of the Heart” (43-114), is by far the most wide-ranging; apropos for its title, it also serves in many ways as the heart of the book. Here Bourgeault draws together the various elements of her argument. Following an expanded discussion of nonduality, Bourgeault argues that the heart is “an organ of spiritual perception” (54), and thus, the seat of nonduality. As evidence for this, Bourgeault draws deeply on the work of Simeon the New Theologian (72-76; 94-101), the Gurdjieff Work (81, 89), and the fields of contemplative studies and new science (58-61; 102-114). Bourgeault also references Evagrius’s teaching on *apatheia*, suggesting that the heart must be purified of the passions (which Bourgeault defines as anything that entangles and divides the

attention), so that it no longer reacts to every passing fancy (62-63). Finally, Bourgeault argues that Centering Prayer, through the repeated letting go of attachments, purifies the heart, drawing the mind down into the heart and creating a new center and field of perception (66ff). In essence, Bourgeault is making the claim that Centering Prayer actually contributes to a neurological change, centering perception on the heart rather than the usual mode of knowing by distinguishing, which leads to a sense of wholeness and unity—nonduality.

The final section of the book, “*The Cloud of Unknowing Revisited*” (119-200) examines the fourteenth-century mystical classic—which is credited as the basis of what became Centering Prayer—in light of the previous lines of argument. Through a close reading of approximately one-third of *The Cloud*, Bourgeault suggests that the *Cloud*-author was years ahead of his time in understanding the role of contemplation to alter one’s mode of perception—even if he did not have the exact language to express this idea.

The Heart concludes with advice for both practitioners and non-practitioners of Centering Prayer on responding to and furthering its insights.

Bourgeault’s genius rests in combining widely disparate sources to develop radical new perspectives while often shedding new light on familiar material. In *The Heart*, for example Bourgeault clarifies the role of the sacred word in Centering Prayer, which has been the source of considerable confusion for practitioners (128). By holding up kenosis and eventual nonduality as its ultimate purpose, Bourgeault makes sense of the Centering Prayer guidelines that insist the sacred word is not a mantra. Rather, it is a symbol of one’s intention to let go of attachments, empty one’s self as the reference point for attention and thought, and sink into a new type of awareness.

Bourgeault also helps clarify apparent contradictions in *The Cloud* that have long puzzled its readers. Throughout *The Cloud*, the author suggests that thoughts cannot apprehend God; only love can. Nevertheless, the *Cloud*-author at times also states that, just like the intellect, emotion and affectivity are not adequate to see God. Bourgeault breaks this apparent impasse by arguing that *The Cloud* is not a treatise of affective mysticism, as most scholars identify it (144ff); rather, the *Cloud*-author uses “love” as the only word available to him to describe nondual perception. Indeed, using the lens of nonduality, Bourgeault unites the *Cloud*’s terminology and concepts into a coherent system.

Moreover, by suggesting nondual perception as the goal of contemplation, Bourgeault offers the possibility of a more measurable and stable objective for charting spiritual formation. For scholars, furthermore, the idea of nondual perception can provide a new perspective for analyzing contemplative literature, a project Bourgeault herself suggests (206-207).

Nonetheless, *The Heart* is not an academic work. Like much of Bourgeault’s oeuvre, it is written for an educated lay audience, whom Bourgeault identifies as “spiritually adventurous non-specialists” (60). Unfortunately, this often allows broad generalizations and a “flattening” of sources to creep into *The Heart*. Indeed, the lay reader could be forgiven for thinking that Evagrius, Simeon the New Theologian, Sufism, the *Cloud*-author, Gurdjieff, Ken Wilber, and the HearthMath Institute all say the same things and are equally valid sources. Moreover, Bourgeault refers broadly to the “wisdom traditions” (54) or “inner tradition” of Christianity (64, 81) without ever defining them, which allows *The Heart* to fold any number of ideas together without regard for historical or theological context; Bourgeault’s frequent use of the Gurdjieff Work (with which she had a long association) as part of this inner tradition is a case in point. Tracing this “inner tradition” in *The Heart* is also difficult;

Bourgeault refers to a “long line of Christian mystical masters” (168), but the endnote cites only Jacob Boehme (224), who is hardly a mainstream representative of Christian mysticism.

Despite these shortcomings, *The Heart* is a worthwhile book. Not only does it raise intriguing questions and perspectives for both further research and spiritual practice, it also serves as a culmination of all Bourgeault’s diverse work to date. There are mentions, for example, not only of her previous work on Centering Prayer, but also her volumes on the “Wisdom Jesus” and Mary Magdalene, as well as many of the other themes Bourgeault has engaged for the previous two decades. *The Heart*, therefore, provides a comprehensive look into the mind of its creative and expansive author. Like the practice from which *The Heart of Centering Prayer* takes its title, such a look can be enlightening and transformative.

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Call for Papers

2017-2018 Call for Papers

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