

Foundations
and Facets

F O R U M

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God Seminar: The Displacement of Theology

	<i>Preface</i>	111
JEFFREY ROBBINS	<i>The Meaning of Heresy for Today</i> On Theo-Political Resistance from Spinoza to Prince	115
DAVID GALSTON	<i>Surveying Heidegger for Theology's Future</i>	129
CLAYTON CROCKETT	<i>Paul Tillich and the Discourse of Political Theology</i>	143
DAVID GALSTON	<i>Archive Theology and the God of Paul</i>	157

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Preface

The articles included in this issue of *Forum* are among the first to come from Westar's academic seminar on "God and the Human Future." The seminar began its work in 2013, and in what should be clear by what follows, represents something of a departure for Westar. Whereas previous academic seminars were concerned primarily with the ancient world and rooted in historical scholarship (though always with the mission of communicating to the public very much in mind), the God Seminar is much more philosophical, but no less technical. This means that just as the initiation into the historical-critical study of the bible requires a familiarity with the historical timeline of the ancient Near East and a primer on such things as form, source, and redaction criticism, so too might the language and internal deliberations of the God Seminar seem foreboding at first.

Each of the following articles all have in common, in some fashion or another, a concern primarily with the *displacement of theology*. Even more, by concerning themselves with the displacement of theology they also reveal something important about the work of the seminar as a whole. By gathering a group of many of North America's leading theologians and philosophers of religion to engage in a prolonged collaborative research project that aims to probe and communicate the most compelling ways to think and talk about God today, there is no claim to special authority or special access. On the contrary, there is the acceptance and tacit acknowledgement that theology no longer operates as the "queen of the sciences" as it once did at the height of the European middle ages. Theology has become a marginal and marginalized discourse. Even within the world of religion, and among some of the most fervent religious believers and practitioners, theology has no place. To the degree the evangelical priority of religion as a matter of the heart over the head has become the global norm, theology has come to be seen as irrelevant, if not as an outright obstacle, to faith.

Displaced, and perhaps deformed as well, the articles that follow introduce us to what might be for many a surprising cast of characters. From Robbins, we begin with Baruch de Spinoza, a materialist philosopher from the seventeenth century famed for his naturalistic critique of the bible and defense of free inquiry and an open and democratic society, who was excommunicated as a heretic at age twenty-four from his Jewish community. From there, Robbins considers the popular musical artist Prince and the controversial Italian filmmaker and cultural critic Pier Paolo Pasolini in order to make the case that the charge of

heresy and the figure of the heretic no longer carries the same dangerous overtones as it once did. Is this a sign that we no longer take religious beliefs—let alone theology—seriously any longer? Or is it because our religious beliefs—let alone our theology—no longer get at our fundamental values, and so no longer challenge or call us into question in a serious and dangerous way? By invoking figures outside the church who do not do theology as traditionally understood, Robbins is not only establishing an alternative theological archive but is *de facto* making a case for an alternative theological thinking—one that is less invested in preserving and commenting on established, traditional, or authorized ways of talking about God and more interested in religion as a matter of “ultimate concern” that manifests itself in both religious and secular registers.

The postmodern theologian Mark C. Taylor once observed that religion is most interesting where it is least obvious. This observation is an outgrowth of a theology of culture begun by Paul Tillich. It is here where Robbins’ article resonates with those by both Crockett and Galston. Crockett engages Tillich directly. He articulates the connections between Tillich’s pioneering work with the origins of the radical death of God theological movement of the 1960s and beyond. Specifically, Crockett identifies Tillich’s “abiding interest in existentialism,” his “acknowledgement that theological concepts function primarily as symbols,” and his “non-imperialist theology of culture” that matter the most in radical theology’s radical rethinking of what it means to think theologically. Tillich’s theology of culture operates by a method of correlation wherein contemporary culture raises the questions and the Christian faith supplies the answers—culture is the form and faith is the substance. What we have seen over time, however, is that the more theology has allowed contemporary culture to set the agenda by framing the questions, the more the hard-fast distinction between form and substance that Tillich tried to maintain breaks down—or put otherwise, the more extensive and serious the questions raised by contemporary culture, the more the ready-made, faith-based answers seem wanting. It is here where the example of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is instructive. It is Bonhoeffer who proclaimed it was time for us to “replace our rusty swords with sharp ones.” This was from his unfinished manuscript on ethics from his time in prison before being executed for his involvement in the plot to assassinate Hitler. It was also at this time when considering the apparent increasing autonomy of humanity in a “world come of age” that Bonhoeffer suggested we must probe the questions of science, art, ethics, politics, and even religion without the “‘working hypothesis’ called ‘God.’” Crockett takes on these challenges from Bonhoeffer directly as he explores the continuing relevance of Tillich’s political theology.

From Galston, we have not one but two contributions, with each further displaying the displacement of theology. If Tillich cedes the form of theology to contemporary culture, Heidegger thrusts us into the world of the everyday. If Heidegger famously defines the human in terms of *Dasein* (“being-there”)

and characterizes human existence in terms of our “thrownness,” then Galston seems to be suggesting the same for theology. We can say with Galston that theology is thrown-out of the sanctuary provided by a ready-made faith and thrown-into the messy world of everyday reality. So too with his reflections on the archive theology of Paul—as the new paradigm of Pauline studies tries to get at the “real Paul” beyond or before the mythologized Paul of the Christian imagination. Just as theology suffers a kind of displacement, so too is the standard reading of Paul upon whom the myth of Christian origins rests displaced. Drawing from the work of Lloyd Gaston, Brandon Scott, and others, Galston asks what it means if Paul was Jewish to the end, that his critique was not against the Jewish law but Roman imperial rule? Paul then becomes a deeply “transgressive” figure—or, as Galston’s rhetorical analysis shows, Paul is improperly depicted as “the dogmatic theologian and fervent creator of Christianity,” and instead should be seen as the “satirist and counter-strategic genius” that he was.

Together these articles contribute to the building and mining of a new archive of theology. By virtue of its displacement, theology now finds itself free to think God anew.

—Jeffrey W. Robbins

The Meaning of Heresy for Today

On Theo-Political Resistance from Spinoza to Prince

Jeffrey Robbins

By the decree of the angels, and by the command of the holy men, we excommunicate, expel, curse and damn Baruch de Espinoza, with the consent of God, Blessed be He, and with the consent of all the Holy Congregation, in front of these holy Scrolls with the six-hundred-and-thirteen precepts which are written therein, with the excommunication with which Joshua banned Jericho, with the curse with which Elisha cursed the boys, and with all the curses which are written in the Book of the Law. Cursed be he by day and cursed be he by night; cursed be he when he lies down, and cursed be he when he rises up; cursed be he when he goes out, and cursed be he when he comes in. The Lord will not spare him; the anger and wrath of the Lord will rage against this man, and bring upon him all the curses which are written in this book, and the Lord will blot out his name from under heaven, and the Lord will separate him to his injury from all the tribes of Israel with all the curses of the covenant, which are written in the Book of the Law.

—July 27, 1656

I want to say a small word about this, our newest burden of the unassimilable.

I want to say that Prince is hard to grieve because he is, in an only barely not literal sense, divine.

I want to say that the categories that most attend him, and that the light of his person illuminates, are not those made by the hands of men.

I want to say that for nearly 40 years Prince has served as perhaps our greatest conceptualist of *religion*, the one most devoted not only to God but to heterodoxy, heresy, blasphemy: to all that, in these latter days of privatized belief and well-bred “spirituality,” lends to the realm of the religious whatever ongoing vitality and incisiveness it has.

I want to say that Prince is the least secular rockstar we have ever known.

—Peter Coviello, “Is There God After Prince?”¹

1. Coviello, “Is There God After Prince?”

In the seventeenth century, when heresy was still a live and dreaded category, the famed European theologian Antoine Arnauld labeled Baruch de Spinoza “the most impious and most dangerous man of the century.” What was it that made Spinoza’s heresy so dangerous to Arnauld? Not only that, but which heresy in particular? And even more, how might we restore or reactivate that sense of danger that Spinoza’s impiety contained?

This set of questions raises another—namely, what are the conditions of possibility for heresy today? Or better, what are the conditions of impossibility? In the age of the heretical imperative, does heresy even have any meaning or impact any longer? The question is not only whether it is possible to be a heretic when it is now accepted as commonplace that we are all and each entitled to believe whatever we want, but what precisely beyond unaccepted or unacceptable beliefs marks the figure of the heretic today? Can one even choose to be a heretic? Or does the element and ubiquity of choice, which in itself defines the heretical imperative, also simultaneously render the figure of the heretic as obsolete?

Put otherwise, how far do we accept the conceit not only that Prince was our greatest conceptualist of religion, but also the contemporary figure of the heretic?

I

First, consider the case of Spinoza: His *Theological-Political Tractatus* from 1670 functions as a political propaedeutic inaugurating an immanent political theology that corresponds to a burgeoning democratic age defined in terms of the modern, liberal order and the sovereign nation state. At the same time, Spinoza was almost the prototypical iconoclast, leaving him an “outcast twice removed”—to the Jewish community a heretic who was excommunicated at age twenty four, and to the Christians, still an “atheist Jew” regarded by his contemporaries as “the most impious and most dangerous man of the century.”² The *Tractatus*, in particular, was regarded by his contemporaries as “subversive,” “blasphemous,” and “diabolical,” but since has been called “pioneering” and a “neglected masterpiece.” It is credited not only for beginning the tradition of higher criticism of the Bible but also for laying out the frame for the modern secular state.

Concerning the former, the religion scholar Ivan Strenski credits Spinoza for his thoroughgoing naturalistic critique of the Bible, claiming Spinoza as the forerunner to the scientific study of religion in general. On one level, Spinoza’s efforts at constructing a “religiously *neutral* approach to biblical interpretation for the purposes of overcoming religious conflict” was no different from deists

2. A charge made by the theologian Antoine Arnauld. See Nadler, *Spinoza*, 337.

such as Jean Bodin and Lord Herbert of Cherbury who came before him.³ But while the bulk of the *Tractatus* is more concerned with religious interpretation than political analysis, its primary intent and what distinguishes Spinoza from other biblical critics from this period, as Spinoza makes clear in the preface, is his passionate and unequivocal defense of the liberal freedoms a modern democratic society affords its citizens as persons of free conscience:

Now since we have the rare good fortune to live in a commonwealth where freedom of judgment is fully granted to the individual citizen and he may worship God as he pleases, and where nothing is esteemed dearer and more precious than freedom, I think I am undertaking no ungrateful or unprofitable task in demonstrating that not only can this freedom be granted without endangering piety and the peace of the commonwealth, but also the peace of the commonwealth and piety depend on this freedom.⁴

Freedom of conscience, which Spinoza sees is a prerequisite for a free society, is not only good for the state, but good for religion as well. For superstition is incompatible with a free society.

The task of his religious analysis, therefore (which in many ways was anti-theological or at least secular in its theological orientation), is to deliver humankind from its ill-founded superstitions and to expose the mystery of despotism to the light of reason. In this way, he divests the sovereign of divine authorization and makes the case for a popular sovereignty wherein authority "is vested in all the citizens, and laws are sanctioned by common consent."⁵ As one scholar puts it, "[Spinoza's] fundamental aim is to replace the reigning theocratic conception of the state with one founded on secular principles."⁶ It is for this reason that those such as Jonathan Israel most prominently praise Spinoza as the most philosophical force of secular modernity and the embodiment of the radical enlightenment. As Israel writes in *Enlightenment Contested*, Spinoza is the intellectual progenitor of "the only kind of philosophy which could (and can) coherently integrate and hold together such a far-reaching value condominium in the social, moral, and political spheres, as well as in 'philosophy.'"⁷ And as one other scholar puts it, "It is Spinoza and Spinozism which promotes the adoption of secular reason and government, universal toleration and shared equity among all men, personal liberty, freedom of expression, and democratic republicanism." And by this account, Spinoza is the quintessential Enlightenment man of reason.

So whence the danger and why the charge of impiety? While his philosophical naturalism rightly is seen to undermine theological supernaturalism, "There

3. Strenski, *Thinking About Religion*, 50.

4. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 3.

5. Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, 64.

6. Stewart, *The Courtier and the Heretic*, 101.

7. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 867.

is something more, and more disturbing, in his work” according to Roberto Esposito, from his book, *Two: The Machine of Political Theology and the Place of Thought*.⁸ As Esposito argues, the thing that is more disturbing than Spinoza’s fairly standard Enlightenment critique of religion “concerns the theoretical horizon to which he takes his attack with an impact force never experienced before”⁹—namely, *Spinoza might be condemned because of his religious skepticism, but he is dangerous because of his lack of a notion of a person*—his fundamental rejection of a philosophy of subjectivity—the very notion upon which not only is the machine of political theology predicated according to Esposito, but upon which it draws its legitimacy and fuel. With Spinoza, the linkage between the divine will and the sovereign will is severed just as the place of thought is displaced, dislocated:

Nothing like a personal consciousness as a place of self-identification or imputation is recognizable in what Spinoza calls thought. Rather, thought can be ascribed to the organization of individual minds in a collective structure arising from their interaction—a sort of polyvalent mode, or multiple competence, from which the modes of the substance draw from the elements already acquired by the social brain, continually adding new ones to it.¹⁰

This makes the quintessential Enlightenment man of reason a modern heretic of the first order, for he effectively denies the foundation upon which all modern thought rests. Thought does not take place upon a stable, secure and certain foundation. Rather, thought is dislocated, taking place “out of place . . . because, like a whirlwind, it flows through the entire universe, without ever getting stuck in an individual form.”¹¹

In this way, for Esposito, Spinoza joins the ranks of Averroes before him, and Nietzsche, Bergson, and Deleuze after him, as philosophers of the impersonal, and thus, subjects of and subjected to the “full frontal attack” from the metaphysical tradition. It is these philosophers of the impersonal who insist on “the exteriority of thought with respect to the individual subject.”¹² It is they who say “that a human being is not a subject but an occasion or vehicle for thought,” who conceive of thought as an ability rather than as an exclusionary people, who are not proprietary, who insist that thought belongs to no one, but rather to all people, and finally who “see intelligence not as a property of the few, to the detriment of others, but as a resource for all, through which once can pass without appropriating it for oneself.”¹³

8. Esposito, *Two: The Machine of Political Theology and the Place of Thought*, 159.

9. Esposito, *Two: The Machine of Political Theology and the Place of Thought*, 159.

10. Esposito, *Two: The Machine of Political Theology and the Place of Thought*, 163.

11. Esposito, *Two: The Machine of Political Theology and the Place of Thought*, 176.

12. Esposito, *Two: The Machine of Political Theology and the Place of Thought*, 10.

13. Esposito, *Two: The Machine of Political Theology and the Place of Thought*, 12.

What we might say, therefore, with regard to Spinoza's heresy is that it was not his secularity that was heretical, nor his naturalism. To be sure, his beliefs—specifically, his denial of the immortality of the soul, his rejection of the notion of a providential God, and his claim that the Law was neither literally given by God nor any longer binding on Jews—were considered radical and unacceptable by his orthodox Jewish community. And so, as Steven Nadler asks, “Can there be any mystery as to why one of history's boldest and most radical thinkers was sanctioned by an orthodox Jewish community?”¹⁴ At the same time, he would become a model for biblical criticism just as much as he is now regarded as one of the theoretical architects of the modern, liberal state as he divested the secular nation state of its theological authorization and made the case for the democratic principle of popular sovereignty.

Or better, both his secularity and his naturalism were appropriately deemed heretical vis-à-vis traditional, orthodox belief, *but this does not quite explain why his impiety was thought to be so dangerous*. And so, it is perhaps best to separate Spinoza's heresy from his danger. That is to say, *it was not his religious heresy that ultimately proved to be the danger*. This is the point about him being an “outcast twice removed,” expelled and excommunicated from the People of Israel by the Talmud Torah Congregation of Amsterdam, though remarkably, not only does he never repent or submit, but he also never converts. As others have noted, he lived and died perhaps as the first fully secular individual in modern Europe, and as such, did not violate, but actualized, a norm—namely, the modern, liberal, secular norm that treats religion as an individual matter of private conscience. But by his philosophy of the impersonal, he was deemed a danger, because his thinking seemed to violate, discredit, or dismantle the very edifice upon which said norm was supposedly built. His case proves interesting, therefore, because of an entire series of displacements: (1) the displacement of thought by virtue of the philosophy of the impersonal; (2) the displacement of the heretical from the religious; and, (3) the displacement of danger from the heretical.

If Spinoza was in fact the most dangerous and impious man of the century, it was only because the secularization of the modern West displaces and defangs the disciplinary category of heresy as a means of control. It would seem that heresy has lost its meaning and its force. Meanwhile, the possibility for impious and dangerous thought still abounds.

II

Second, the “heretical imperative”: this is a phrase coined by the sociologist of religion Peter Berger to describe the generalized condition of religious belief in

14. Nadler, *A Companion to Early Modern Philosophy*, 225.

contemporary Western society. Berger was once a proponent of the secularization thesis, the notion that the more modern we become, the less religious we would become. He has since talked in terms of the “deseccularization of the world,” warning that those who neglect the religious dimension of life in their social and political analysis do so at their own peril. His book *The Heretical Imperative* was a relatively early work wherein he first engaged in the effort to develop an alternative to the secularization thesis, opting for what he termed the “pluralization thesis” instead. Anticipating the post-secular critique of Talal Asad, Saba Mahmoud, and others, Berger acknowledges that the secularization thesis was essentially a parochial theory that had adopted a modern, Western norm of religiosity. To be sure, the post-Reformation history of Western modernity has altered the contours of religious belief and practice. But it is religious pluralism more than secularity that best describes our contemporary situation. What Western modernity represents, or what makes the modern world so radically new and different, is not unbelief, but the ubiquity of choices—choice as the “taken-for-granted fabric of modern life.”¹⁵ As Berger sees it, the range and ease of choices within the modern world would represent the “realm of mythological fantasy” for most of premodern society—“choices of occupation, of place of residence, of marriage, of the number of one’s children, in the manner of passing one’s leisure time, in the acquisition of material goods. . . . But there are other choices too, choices that deeply touch the inner world of individuals—choices of what is now commonly called ‘life-style,’ moral and ideological choices, and, last but not least, religious choices.”¹⁶

What is more, this fact of modern consciousness “has a powerfully relativizing effect on all worldviews.” Berger calls this the “vertigo of relativity induced by modernization,” and thus identifies Western modernity as “a great relativizing cauldron.”¹⁷ What was once regarded as fate is now deemed as the result of choice. What was once accepted as divine providence is now critiqued as a function of ideology. The world is not as it is because it must be, but could always be otherwise. As pluralization leads to relativization, this impacts our plausibility structures—or better, institutions and communities’ ability to provide the requisite social confirmation for our respective beliefs about reality. “Quite simply,” Berger argues, “the modern individual must engage in more deliberate thinking—*not* because he is more intelligent, *not* because he is on some sort of higher level of consciousness, *but* because his social situation forces him to this.”¹⁸ There is a felt, internalized sense of the necessity to choose not only individual beliefs, but even more, the very terms of plausibility that determine the very logic of assent.

15. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, 2.

16. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, 2–3.

17. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, 9.

18. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, 18.

Berger is clear about the existential or psychological ramifications of this transformation. In a section entitled "A Very Nervous Prometheus," he acknowledges how the ubiquity of choice is experienced both as a great source of liberation and as a cause for "anxiety, alienation, even terror."¹⁹ We might think here of what Jean-Paul Sartre calls the "burden of freedom"—insofar as existence precedes essence, it is we who shoulder the entire burden of our becoming. The world, for good or ill, is the world of our own making. And it is why for Sartre that existentialism must necessarily be atheistic, for in contrast to Heidegger, there is no god to save us.

Concerning the heretical imperative specifically, the dynamic between pluralization, relativization, and the crisis of plausibility that ensues once the unified social support for religious beliefs and practices has broken down, equals a generalized transition from religious certainty to religious doubt. Literally speaking, choice makes heretics of us all. But the key point from Berger's argument is that once heresy becomes the "root phenomenon" or "general condition" of modernity, it loses its meaning. "For this notion of heresy to have any meaning at all," Berger writes, "there was presupposed the authority of religious tradition. Only with regard to such an authority could one take an heretical attitude."²⁰ In sum, if heresy was a permanent, though always remote, possibility within premodern societies, the modern world makes it a necessity in that "*modernity creates a new situation in which picking and choosing becomes an imperative.*"²¹ And so, rather than inquiring into the conditions of possibility for heresy today, we should speak instead in terms of the *conditions of impossibility*. To go back to the point made with regard to Spinoza, once the danger has been dislocated from the heresy, the figure of the heretic loses all meaning and force.

Or, to invoke another theoretical frame of reference, Catherine Malabou has written extensively about the concept of plasticity. First noted in her study of Hegel conducted under the tutelage of Jacques Derrida, she also has explored the concept within the work of Heidegger, Freud, and Kant, writing landmark works that provide new and different readings of these seminal figures that attend primarily to how change, mutability, and metamorphosis lie at the root of difference, are the source of difference, and, thus, how a metabolic ontology displaces the ontological difference and how the epoch of plasticity has displaced the epoch of writing. In what is perhaps her most well-known work, *What Should We Do With Our Brain?*, she suggests a radical freedom to the human condition that is almost inconceivable—the idea that we are free not only to think thoughts or to perform actions, but literally to make or remake ourselves, to rewire our brains. For Malabou, the dissolving of the distinction between mind and brain does not lead to a moral (pre)determinism as if biology is destiny; on

19. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, 20.

20. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, 25.

21. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative*, 25 (italics in the original.)

the contrary, it is a new materialism that radicalizes by extending the notion of freedom from mind to body, from being thought of as an ideational aspect of culture to being absolutely essential to a proper understanding of nature itself.

The “genius” of plasticity, Malabou argues, is in how it resists. The genius here refers to the dual aspect of plasticity—that is, the concept of plasticity means not just the capacity to receive form or to be acted upon, but also, the capacity to give form or to resist. She argues that our current neuronal ideology gets it only half right. It is correct that the brain is not a fixed entity, and that it retains this permanent capacity to open up new neuronal pathways, to adjust to certain traumas, and to actualize almost an infinitude of possibilities. The brain demonstrates a remarkable resiliency and flexibility, adjusting and responding to almost any environment. Likewise the worker in a post-industrial economy—the worker is nomadic. To thrive in today’s global economy, the worker must be willing and able to adjust to new market demands, adjust to the rapid pace of change, learn and relearn new skills and capacities. As such, it is a biopolitics of extreme flexibility that renders the subject almost entirely pliant, a blob of clay that can be molded and remolded at the market’s whims.

But, this is only one half of plasticity. Malabou draws a hard line differentiating between flexibility and adaptability. What differentiates them is the latter retains its resistance. Our current neuronal ideology blinds us to the possibility of resistance because such agency runs counter to the demands of a global workforce. We see in the brain only what we want to see. Or more precisely, the brain lacks self-awareness because of the biopolitical restraints imposed upon it by virtue of certain economic realities. This is the biopolitical culture of late capitalism as described by Fredric Jameson. If the plasticity of the brain is misconstrued only as a flexibility, then this naturalizes and thus justifies all forms of the dislocation and exploitation of labor. Consider here the work of those such as Gramsci and Berardi, who have chronicled the particular post-industrial form that contemporary exploitation takes through its captivity of mental labor. Malabou goes one step further: this captivity must be understood to be not only ideological, but material—because, after all, the mind is nothing other than the brain.

Applied to Berger’s notion of the heretical imperative wherein the ubiquity of choice that defines the general condition of modernity renders heresy meaningless, what we might learn from Malabou is that we must find and restore the element of resistance to the heretical. Likewise the danger. We must ask what modes of action, identity formation, material practices, and habits of thought might distinguish the heretic today. With Spinoza, we saw how the danger was dislodged from the heretical, or better, how the most dangerous heresy was dislodged from the religious. By virtue of the philosophy of the impersonal, we might say that it is not the case of Spinoza as an individual that is most interesting and important, but rather the spectral figure of the anonymous sovereign that Spinoza invokes: he dislodges thought from the subject. We might even

go further to say that he dislodges freedom from choice. It is not the self who chooses to become a heretic, but the external authority that retains the prerogative to decide. Or better, heresy is something that is *said of you, not claimed by you*. And because the decision is not the heretic's to decide, the figure of the heretic provides a unique insight into not only the nature of choice, but also the possibility for resistance and the realization of freedom. Insofar as the ubiquity of choice is the general condition of modernity and the choices made by an individual are thought to constitute his or her selfhood, the heretical imperative renders heresy a practical impossibility. But when not only thought, but choice, is dislodged from the individual subject, the possibility of resistance is restored even while displaced, and with it, the danger to the figure of the heretic.

What I mean by this is that, when it comes to the condition of possibility for heresy today, we must shift the question from who to where—it is not who is a heretic, but where does heresy happen, and what does the happening of heresy make of the subject who resists?

III

Third, is it true that Prince provides for us one of the most compelling figures of the heretic today? So argued Peter Coviello in a beautifully written eulogy for Prince in the *Los Angeles Review of Books* entitled "Is There God After Prince?" The suggestion is that Prince was heretical because he was "the least secular rockstar we have ever known." This doesn't make Prince "religious" in the traditional sense of the term. In this way, I much prefer Coviello's reading to that of someone like Maggie Gallagher from the *National Review*, who renders Prince as one of the "secret Christians among us," enlisting him in the hint of a reprieve of Nixon's "silent majority." For Coviello, by contrast, it was precisely Prince's lewdness, filthiness, and eroticism that made him positively otherworldly—"the otherworldliness of someone very much of this world." More specifically, it was Prince's transitivity with regard to race, gender, and sex, his "feminized masculinity" à la David Bowie, but also his "queer blackness" that made him stand out. The world's categories did not have a hold on him. And so it is that Coviello proclaims:

This, friends, is the otherworldliness—let's just say it: the *divinity*—of Prince. Without contempt, without pity, with louche bemusement and flirty solicitousness, he stands apart from the creaky organizing edifices, the aspirational little taxonomies, of the merely human. They address him, but they do not adhere to him. He speaks in, and as, something otherwise, but also, deliciously, near.²²

While I appreciate Coviello's tribute and accept his presentation of a sort of unassimilable and confounding religiosity, I am not prepared to so quickly

22. Coviello, "Is There God after Prince?"

conflate the heterodoxical and blasphemous with the heretical, as both come before as necessary but insufficient ingredients to the category of the heretical. Coviello does well to get us to reconsider the meaning of religion today. *But in so doing, he simultaneously strips Prince of his heretical credentials.* To be a pioneer is not necessarily to be a heretic. Transgression does not automatically qualify as heresy, or at least without the risk of the further loss of meaning, we must not conflate transgression with heresy. To be unbound is testimony to the condition of impossibility for heresy today. And still, what has become of the danger? Is it still possible for heresy to be an act of resistance at all? Or are we content to allow it to circulate instead as the honorific title it seems to have become?

Consider the case of Pier Paolo Pasolini instead: Of Pasolini, Ben Lawton has written, "If Norman Mailer, Truman Capote, Gore Vidal, Camille Paglia, Madonna, Martin Scorsese, Spike Lee, Michael Moore, and Noam Chomsky were rolled up into a single person, one might begin to get some idea of the impact Pasolini had on Italian society."²³ At his most basic, in his various personas as revolutionary ideologue, artist, filmmaker, public intellectual, and critic, Pasolini was a *scittore scomodo*, meaning an "uncomfortable writer," or more specifically, one who makes others feel awkward and uncomfortable. For him always the measure of art's validity was only in its revolutionary capacity—not just pacing, pioneering, or accelerating the changes to societal norms, but actively resisting, breaking with form, defying expectations, engendering rejection, disgust, and reprimand. He defined the artistic process as sadomasochistic, and as Lawton chronicles, he paid the price: arrested and tried thirty-three times for crimes ranging from armed robbery to contempt for the state religion, and eventually brutally murdered in what appeared to be a mafia-style revenge killing. He was a pessimist through and through who by the end of his life had become so thoroughly disillusioned with the triumph of global capitalism and the prospect of revolution that he wrote a public repudiation of his work. What becomes of an artist whose principal commitment is to revolution when he no longer believes in society's capacity for revolution? Such was the dilemma faced by Pasolini. And by his characteristic sincerity and felt sense of necessity, his repudiation provides a contemporary figure of heresy that resonates as deeply as it disturbs.

The details of his repudiation are as follows: he specifically repudiates his "trilogy of life" films, an experimental series of films made late in his life that were meant to contain a "hidden, indirect, [and] implicit" ideology.²⁴ The trilogy was comprised of *The Decameron* (1971), *The Canterbury Tales* (1972), and *A Thousand and One Nights* (1974). These films were meant to celebrate the creative process in itself, but also be expressive of a clear point of view. By the time of

23. In Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, vii–viii.

24. Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, vi.

these late works, Pasolini had come to the conclusion that “consumer capitalism was worse than fascism” because of the ways by which it “coopts its victims” and “transforms them into willing participants in their own exploitation.”²⁵ In his advice to the young from 1968, for instance, he worries about their inability to “look at the bourgeoisie objectively, from the outside:”

We, young intellectuals of twenty or thirty years ago (and through privilege of class, students), could be anti-bourgeois also outside the bourgeoisie, through the optics offered to us from the other social classes (revolutionary or rebellious as they might be).

. . . As a consequence, we also made of the traumatic hatred for the bourgeoisie a correct perspective in which to integrate our action in a non-escapist future . . .

For a young person of today things are different: for him it is much more difficult to look at the bourgeoisie objectively through the eyes of another social class. Because the bourgeoisie is triumphing, it is transforming both the workers and the ex-colonial peasants into bourgeois. In short, through neocapitalism the bourgeoisie is becoming the human condition. Those who are born into this entropy cannot in any way, metaphysically, be outside of it.²⁶

So how to resist this hegemony? Pasolini came to believe that the best way to resist was through an attack on family values vis-à-vis heterosexuality and procreation. But his cinematic violation of sexual norms were taken by many as mere pornography. As a rejoinder to his critics’ confusion, his final film radically changed course: *Salò, or the 120 Days of Sodom*, based on the work of Marquis de Sade. In contrast to the “trilogy of life” series, in *Salò* Pasolini’s hidden ideology was made more explicit. In the words of Lawton, the “sexual activities [were] depicted in a manner which [was] so grotesque, so dehumanizing, so brutalizing that they simply [could not] become a consumer product.”²⁷ Gone was the belief that homosexuality might represent humanity’s salvation. Gone was the characteristic endearing depiction of the sub proletariat, of the coming revolution. Everything in total now comes under the harshest of gazes and the sharpest of attacks. With the near total triumph of capital and bourgeois culture, Pasolini’s hatred became complete, a hatred of the bourgeoisie that Lawton writes “was not only ‘pathological’ but sterile,” a “pointless gesture” or a “desperate but quixotic wish” that leads to little besides Pasolini’s own “personal trauma.”²⁸

To resist, in the words of Pasolini, was to “live a tragedy.” And the more he saw, and the more he observed, he noted that those who lived it with moral condemnation, and without assimilation or apology, also died of it. To live as a

25. Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, x.

26. Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, 155–56.

27. Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, xii.

28. Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, xxxv.

nonconformist in an age he defined as "the assimilation of bourgeois history to human history" is to suffer rejection, condemnation, disgust, and death.

It is only at this point, I want to argue, that Pasolini, the acclaimed revolutionary artist and intellectual, becomes a heretic. Partly because he is now utterly alone. But even more, having made a career by pushing boundaries with a revolutionary aesthetic all his own, his resistance is now absolutized by rebounding upon himself. He becomes a heretic in the sense that he himself becomes a danger to himself by occupying a position of total resistance to society. I do not mean to say that Pasolini got his comeuppance. I take no glee or comfort in this final act of repudiation. But when it comes to what he terms a "heretical empiricism," there is no finer example than the model he shows.

His repudiation begins by distinguishing between the before and after of an action or creation, claiming a sincerity and necessity to both. *Before* the act of creation, he writes, one acts without fear, knowing full well the potential for being misunderstood or coopted. *After* the act of creation, one must find the courage to recognize how one's intentions have been subjugated, manipulated, absorbed, twisted, distorted, or assimilated. The importance of this distinction between the before and the after is that it allows Pasolini to *repudiate without repenting* for his creation. He affirms the "sincerity and necessity" that motivated the works and details their "historical and ideological justifications." But at the same time, where he was once inspired, he became disgusted. All has become rubbish to him. "The collapse of the present," he writes in the repudiation, "implies the collapse of the past. Life is a pile of insignificant and ironic ruins."²⁹ The present folds into the past, implicating the world in a kind of trance of consumerism masquerading as freedom and a myth of progress obscuring a much more sinister and desolate truth:

My critics . . . seem to think that Italian society has unquestionably improved, that is, that it has become more democratic, more tolerant, more modern, etc. They do not notice the avalanche of crimes that submerges Italy. . . . They do not notice that there is no break between those who are technically criminal and those who are not; and that the model of insolence, inhumanity, ruthlessness is identical for the entire mass of young people. They do not notice that in Italy there actually is a curfew, that the night is as deserted and sinister as it was in the darkest centuries of the past; but they do not notice this, they stay home (perhaps to gratify their consciences with modernity aided by television).³⁰

To be a heretic today, in a world where the heretical imperative comes easy and without consequence, means to enter into this repudiation complete. Picking up where Pasolini leaves off, Wendy Brown has described neoliberal-

29. Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, xviii–xix.

30. Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism*, xii–xiii.

ism's stealth revolution that has effectively remade the soul and remade the state. Neoliberalism has become the world's "global truth" whose signs and effects are "globally ubiquitous" leading to intensified inequality, crass or unethical commercialization, the floodgates of money pouring into electoral politics allowing undue and unequal political influence for the moneyed elite, and increased economic volatility. Roundly bemoaned, but rarely traced to their source, these are the effects of the neoliberal revolution that has rendered us nearly incapable to resist. Or better, this is a situation of *political incapacity*, or these are the political conditions of impossibility, an internalization of a norm of powerlessness whereby the democratic semblance of people's rule is incapacitated by the wholesale reconstitution of *homo politicus* as *homo oeconomicus*.

With such a monopoly on truth—indeed, on the very rationalization of truth and value—the reign of capital is every bit as pervasive as the most totalizing state forms and most fundamentalist of religious ideologies. Its oppression is hidden by the ubiquity of choice masquerading as freedom. In this context, heresy does not happen simply by being heterodoxical. On the contrary, by exercising one's freedom of choice one confirms, rather, challenges the norm. The purchase on the literal renders us nearly a universal community on the vanguard—rebels without cause and without cost. Beyond the literal, we might state the obvious: to be a heretic means to suffer rejection, expulsion and damnation. To be a heretic today is to be a witness to the suffering and alienation that befalls those who dare to resist. To be a heretic today is to be without choice. Heresy today is the supreme example of futility. And it is precisely such waste, expenditure, and nonproductivity that we most need.

Failure is our only option. Even more, it is our only hope.

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Surveying Heidegger for Theology's Future

David Galston

When facing the long tradition of philosophy, Martin Heidegger understood that in the real world of human existence no one regularly wonders about an ideal triangle that must be presupposed when drawing a physical triangle (Plato). No one commonly sits by a fire and questions if the hands that one sees are one's own hands (Descartes). People normally do not ask questions about the pure act of consciousness (Husserl). What people really think about are average things, like what to do, what to eat, and what hammer from the toolbox will do the trick. These are everyday concerns. If philosophy is to address humanity deeply, it must address everyday concerns. Heidegger is certainly one of the most difficult philosophers to understand, and yet his subject matter is the typical experience of the everyday world. Everydayness (*Alltäglichkeit*) is the way questions of meaning become available to us,¹ and indeed, after all, it is the everyday living of human beings that fundamentally shapes the fate of the planet earth.

When seeking ways to reformulate and restate a future form of theology, one point of departure is the everyday experience of the world. If theology is to have a future and to make a difference, it too must be in the everyday. Yet, the enterprise of theology, like that of philosophy, has historically expounded structures, and more specifically metaphysics, and remained skeptical of the value of everyday experience. There are few philosophers better equipped than Heidegger to challenge theology in this way, and a survey of his main insights into the everyday can help identify path marks that theology might note when imagining its future.

Departing from Descartes

In Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, which is the genesis of Heideggerian thought, Descartes was a type of launching point. For Heidegger, Descartes was less significant but does mark what he called the second chapter in the history of the question of the "thing" (i.e., generally, the question of correspondence between perception and reality).² Plus, the critique of Descartes allowed

1. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 24–28, 38.

2. Heidegger, *What is a Thing?*, 108.

Heidegger to distinguish the question of the experience of everyday meaning from a mistaken imposition of technical meaning on things in the world.³ The famous Cartesian axiom, *cogito ergo sum*, recalls a basic idea found in Augustine that extends to Aristotle,⁴ though Descartes meant something slightly different. Descartes meant that being human is being a thinking subject. The human mind, which is the *res cogitans*, is to be distinguished from entities or *res extensa* in the world. The existence of entities can be doubted, but what cannot be doubted is the mind that doubts, for to doubt assumes that the mind is already present for the act. This proof for the existence of the thinking subject is really an Archimedean point in Descartes upon which he pivoted certain indisputable premises. Mathematics was one of those premises, but so was God, who exists as a kind of necessary guarantor of the reliability of the experienced world.⁵ The certainty of human existence was to Descartes like a key that opened the door to parallel certainties in mathematics, physics, and religion.

Heidegger's main criticism of modernity rested on his critique of Descartes and on the way modernity was formed in the Cartesian presupposition that the world "out there" is subordinate to the thinking subject. The world as a spectrum of entities set before the thinking subject holds, through the reasoning of the subject, the value the subject gives it. In other words, to Heidegger, the world out there must have a technical consistency of being for it to be useful as epistemology to the thinking subject's perception. The world must be capable of mathematical expression or order to be useful to the perceiving subject. This act objectifies the natural order, out of a human-centric attitude, as things to be used and to be consumed. The world as a technical object is the world as a consumable entity. Heidegger called the world conceived as that which is for human consumption "standing reserve." The main problem for modernity is technology, because technology is not simply various techniques. Technology is the worldview of modernity. It is the normal, everyday way the world is there as standing reserve, is present at hand, is available for theoretical analysis, constructive projects, and repetitive uses.⁶

The Influence of Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche, for Heidegger, was part of the turn from Descartes's project of the thinking subject to the new task of being an authentic thinker. Recall that

3. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 128ff.

4. Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* says that to be conscious of thinking is to be conscious of existing.

5. Descartes, to us now odd, placed much emphasis on the pineal gland as that which mediated between the mind and the senses, but he always needed God to ensure the universe was mathematically sensible.

6. I am combining here a bit of the early Heidegger from *Being and Time* (the idea of present at hand) with the later Heidegger from *The Question Concerning Technology* (the idea of standing reserve). See Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*.

for Nietzsche a truth-claim is also a power-claim. Whoever holds power and exercises power crafts the regimentation that we call truth.⁷ Nietzsche aimed part of his remarkable critique at Christianity as that regiment that sought and seized power through the cultivation of resentment. Christianity created shame out of noble pride and then upheld weak humility as a virtue. The manipulation of resentment enabled a priestly class to seize social power and to maintain it as the class that held the means of forgiveness. This critique was part of Nietzsche's provocative idea that morality is decadent. Morality is a system that emerges not from human progress but from the gradual decline (decaying) and eventual defeat of ancient noble virtues. Decadence in Nietzsche is the act of decaying; decadence is nihilism.

Heidegger could find some substance for his critique of technology in Nietzsche. For Nietzsche, technology is a type of nihilism, since it reduces human acts to repetition or sameness, and this repetition of the same by anyone who uses technology decays nobility to weakness.⁸ We have to translate "nobility" in Nietzsche to something like creativity and courage (for Nietzsche speaks of virtues), but his point remains. Technology relies on repetition.⁹ Everyone who uses technology must do so in exactly the same way. People cannot uniquely use a bank machine, for example. The machine won't work unless it is used according to its design. The right buttons have to be pressed. Everyone must conform. Technology only works because it is made to operate consistently as a system. Every human operator must repeat the same functions. Technology requires human beings to copy each other and to conform to codes that reduce natural vitality to acts of repetition. We become like obedient sheep; we become part of a herd. There is nothing we do that is distinct from others doing the same thing.

Heidegger was influenced by Nietzsche and the way Nietzsche raised questions concerning technology. These questions consisted of three elements. First, Heidegger takes from Nietzsche the idea that truth is not a fixed category but something that depends on context, culture, experience, and power; second, he takes from Nietzsche a critical attitude toward technology; third, he takes from Nietzsche the idea of the herd,¹⁰ that is, conformity, everydayness, and the one

7. Nietzsche never defines the will to power in a singular way, so occasionally one must pick and choose what Nietzsche means. An ambiguous term, "will to power" is sometimes related to self-governance and peace, and in other cases it is related to ambition and striving to dominate. The latter sense is often destructive, while the former sense can be a type of personal enlightenment. In my comments here and following, I am relying on Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*.

8. Here I rely on *the Genealogy of Morals* and *The Twilight of the Idols*, especially the latter's particular comments on and evaluations of Christianity.

9. In *Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 18, Nietzsche calls this repetition "mechanical activity."

10. "Morality trains individuals to be a function of the herd. . . ." Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 174 (Book Three, Section 116).

or the “they.” However, Heidegger does not just copy Nietzsche. Instead he combines Nietzsche with phenomenology, which, we will see, creates ontological phenomenology—the study of the experience of the meaning of Being.

Exposing Everyday Being

Under the direction of Husserl, Heidegger completed his major work *Being and Time*. It is a phenomenological analysis of the everyday experience of human beings as *Dasein*, as the opening to the question about the meaning of Being. *Dasein* is the being who is aware of Being: so, *Dasein* can open to display the question about Being. Much is made of the German word *Dasein* because it is an older and interesting German way to express existence, derived from “there” (*Da*) and “Being” (*Sein*). Heidegger did not invent the word, but he used it in a phenomenological way. *Dasein* is specifically the being who opens the question of Being.

Being, when capitalized, is the primordial ground of being. We can say that Being is the presupposition to the possibility of beings. So, Being allows everything to come into being, that is, into existence. But we cannot see Being; we can only experience Being through what already exists. Being is like the light that is necessary to see the world: we do not see light, but we see because of light. In the same way, we do not see Being, but we exist because there is Being.

On the other hand what does not exist does not have Being, which means it is no being or nothing. This is a rather obvious point. It is so obvious that it seems pointless. We assume in our everyday being the fact of Being. Existing because of Being and against nothing is the human condition. Heidegger suggests that even though these points seem initially pointless, human beings can only ask such questions because in Being humans are conscious of nothing. Only nothingness, which is a threat to all beings, makes the question of Being the most significant question.

Heidegger starts *Being and Time* with the charge that the question about the meaning of Being has been forgotten. Over time, philosophy and philosophers have grown so accustomed to the everyday use of beings that the tradition of use has calcified the radical sense of the meaning of Being. Heidegger expresses this sentiment and defines his challenge when he launches his great study with the claim that “. . . a dogma has been developed which not only declares the question about the meaning of Being to be superfluous, but sanctions its complete neglect.”¹¹ The important question for philosophy is exposing Being, which means to deconstruct the ways in which the question about the meaning of Being is forgotten. But how can the question about Being be exposed?

First, it is important to note that Being is not an individual and that *Dasein* is not expressly a human being. Rather, the type of beings humans are is *Dasein*.

11. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 2.

Human beings are capable of raising the question about Being; this is what makes humanity "*Dasein*." In Heidegger's own words, humans are "entities" that can be denoted as *Dasein*, and thus "*Dasein*" is the entity in which "Being is an issue." Human beings as the entity of *Dasein* open the question about the meaning of Being through everyday life. So, in effect, Heidegger offers a phenomenology of everydayness. It is the fact of *Dasein* being there that opens Being as the question about the meaning of being-in-the-world. The Cartesian claim that "I think therefore I am" is reversed. For Heidegger, it is that "I am and therefore I think."

The thinking that *Dasein* does is a consequence of "thrownness." This particular expression of Heideggerian language denotes the condition of the existence of *Dasein* that human beings open. The condition of existence—the fact of being in time, of having to live somewhere, of being of some ethnic background, of needing food and some form of employment—is not something anyone can choose. You cannot choose your place of birth, your parents, or the economic circumstances into which you are born. Rather, the world is there as if you were thrown into it. You arrived in the already operating world of a culture and language that you have not chosen. Culture, language, and history are the worldliness of the world. They are always the variables that are at first invariable upon arrival in the world.

In Heidegger the world exists before the individual, and the world is what an individual is thrown into. But the world is cultural activity, and every culture is different from another. So, we are not in the world so much as in worlds. We are in the world of our family, of our nation, of our tradition, and of whatever profession we may choose to follow. As Heidegger examines the world, he breaks it down into different levels and different aspects of being as *Dasein*.¹² For example, there is the world of entertainment, the world of sports, the world of theater, the underworld, and so on. *Dasein* is defined by the various worlds in which it participates. The world is the constant activity of creating *Dasein* as everydayness. Indeed, Heidegger goes so far as to say that there is no difference between *Dasein* and the world. There is no barrier of separation that creates for *Dasein* an object called the world. Being-in-the-world can be better understood as being-involved-in-the-world. *Dasein* has no choice in the matter, for without a world there cannot be *Dasein*. This is entirely different from Descartes's thinking subject and, later, from Kant's autonomous subject, both for whom the world is passive. For *Dasein* the world is constantly the activity of being-with others and, as such, being in the everyday with others.¹³

12. "The compound expression 'being-in-the-world' indicates in the very way we have coined it, that it stands for a unitary phenomenon. This primary datum must be seen as a whole. But while being-in-the-world cannot be broken into contents which may be pieced together, this does not prevent it from having several constitutive items in its structure." Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 78.

13. "So far as *Dasein* is at all, it has Being-with-one-another as its kind of Being." Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 163.

The problem for *Dasein* then becomes the problem of being-with others in the world. This problem is compounded by everyday experience, for the everyday hides the question of Being from *Dasein*. The world of the everyday operates as the "one" or the "they." This is Nietzsche's "herd" instinct. The "one" is experienced in *Dasein* as the sense of "should" that characterizes the moral condition the world has given to *Dasein*. One should be someone or should do something or should feel a certain way: this sense of ought to do or be creates around *Dasein* specific openings to Being of which *Dasein* remains largely unaware. One should pay one's taxes. They say you need experience. One must work for a living. These kinds of everyday sayings, even while often true, express the condition of the usual that has conditioned *Dasein* to forget. *Dasein* forgets the question about the meaning of Being because *Dasein* must make sense of being-in-the-world according to the "one" and the "they" of the world *Dasein* is in.¹⁴

Since each person is constituted by the one, there is no real thing called human nature. Instead, there is a social creation called human nature. Social creations give to *Dasein* three basic forms of being in the world. The first is the sense of should, which is called undifferentiated being; the second is the revolt against the sense of should, which is inauthentic being; and the third is resoluteness toward death, which is authentic being. These categories are helpful but not meant to be taken literally. They are Heidegger's way of identifying openings to Being that occur in *Dasein's* everyday world, but the everyday world is life as Heidegger knew it in Germany and life known in the modern Western experience. So, such expressions are not attempts at universal categories. They are rather phenomenal experiences of the everyday that are open to *Dasein* as the question about the meaning of Being. They remind us of Nietzsche's three main metaphors of the camel, the lion, and the child.¹⁵

Dasein can be in the world "undifferentiated." This is the usual story of a life lived automatically without second thoughts. Perhaps you grew up in a family of doctors. As a young person there is the expectation that you too will be a doctor, like your grandfather was and your mother and aunt are. You are expected to carry on the tradition. The expectation may never be mentioned; it is just there as the condition. Living "undifferentiated" means that the condition covers the question of the meaning of Being with automatic and everyday habits. Types, expectations, and goals predefine life and take from life its radical relationship to Being.

It is possible, though, to decide not to be a doctor. The opening that human experience gives to *Dasein* is an opening to the choice of difference. An individ-

14. The "one" in German is *Das Man*; "one says" is *Man sagt*. The French can use a similar construction with "*on dit*." In English, while we can say "one says," it often works better to translate the expression in the plural as, "they say."

15. In Nietzsche, the camel is burdened with the sense of the "should," the lion revolts against this sense, and the child is the liberated image of the playful and wise being.

ual can defy expectations. Let us say that you decide to be a teacher, not a doctor. Being a doctor was the expectation but not a personal choice. To be a teacher now seems like authenticity because an individual has made an independent choice. Even though you were thrown into the world where the expectation was that one is to be a doctor, with much conscious effort the expectation of the one was rejected. However, what happens is that the expectations associated with being a doctor are now transferred to expectations involved in being a teacher. It is still necessary to do what one does, or should do, to become a teacher. The course is hard, and the eyes of “they” are all around you as you try to do what one should do. This is not authenticity. It is rather another example of nihilism, where a free decision must conform to the everyday world. The form of the world of the one has been substituted by another form of the world of the one. Every profession holds in its pursuit what one is supposed to do. In the larger picture, you are a cog in an indifferent economic wheel. You have liberated yourself from the undifferentiated only to find yourself still “inauthentic.”

With the intrepid realization of being inauthentic comes the unavoidable confrontation with anxiety. Anxiety comes about because there is no way for *Dasein* to experience the world outside of the one. No matter what we do, we have to do what one does. This condition of discovering the inevitable one is more or less a re-encounter of *Dasein* with its state of thrownness. Every attempt to be authentic consists of fleeing or leaping away from the present in search of the new only to end up, ironically, in another tranquilized state of being part of the one. This sense of no escape is called anxiety, a face-to-face confrontation with nothingness. Anxiety comes about with the abject realization that while always being caught up in the one, *Dasein's* final truth is nothingness.¹⁶ *Dasein* is always caught in temporality. The authentic opening to Being for *Dasein* is the certainty of its ending, its finitude, its death. One can avoid anxiety and throw oneself back, fall back, into the everyday world. After all, in the face of anxiety, “inauthenticity” looks good. At least it is stable and the expectations are clear. There is no problem solved here, but there is the sweetness of forgetting.¹⁷

The only way for a human being to be an authentic opening for *Dasein* is to face nothingness. Heidegger called the opening of *Dasein* to nothingness the consciousness of Being-toward-death. Though this may sound macabre, it is the definition of authenticity, because everybody must die. Every person grows old, gets sick, and dies. *Dasein* is really always Being-toward-death. This is its primordiality, its authentic condition of existence. But once *Dasein* grasps this as its authentic way to be open to the meaning of Being, the relationship with the world changes. Once *Dasein* grasps death as its own, it can also grasp life as its

16. One can hear, here, the echoes of Jean-Paul Sartre's great play, “No Exit,” and his major philosophical work, *Being and Nothingness*.

17. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 296–311, 389–400.

own. In place of anxiety turning *Dasein* back to forgetfulness, anxiety can be the first step of Being-toward-death along the road to care. *Dasein* enters the world authentically when Being-toward-death liberates *Dasein* to care about being with the world. So, now the everyday is no longer the everyday of forgetfulness. It is the everyday of authentic possibility for the being who is a Being-toward-death. The authentic is the possible world, the poetic world that does not exist for but dwells with *Dasein*, that is part of *Dasein's* actual Being-in-the-world, that is *Dasein's* care.

Heidegger viewed language as *Dasein's* particular way of expressing Being-in-the-world. He called language the house of Being.¹⁸ But what did he mean? He thought that if we get back to the primordial setting of a word, we will reach that place where the word and the experience of the world are one and the same. Words as signs of primordial experience no longer carry the rust from centuries of use but instead recapture the primordially of *Dasein*. To Heidegger, moving back to the origin of words was virtually a sacred act, because, to him, it is an attempt to arrive at the memory of care. In the significant essay, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," Heidegger pointed out the relationship between the German word *bauen*, which is to build, and the old German word *buan*, which is to dwell. Further, Heidegger pointed to the common relation of these words to *bin* (*Ich bin*, "I am"). So the relationship between being, dwelling, and building was to him evident.

Heidegger pointed out that the word to build relates to the experience of building in order to dwell in and to be with. The modern world forgets that to build is to dwell. Heidegger said, "The essence of building is letting dwell."¹⁹ Dwelling is the care of building, but the modern technical attitude does not build in order to dwell. It builds in order to provide for consumption. Hence, language houses being because it houses the memory of care, but equally language can be the forgetting of being because it shifts the experience of Being (the memory of dwelling) to the functions of technology (the activity of forgetfulness).

Once Heidegger united care with language, it is understandable why he felt that at this point philosophy had done its job and should be let go. Philosophy can bring us to the promise of authentic being, but it cannot deliver on the promise. Deliverance comes through "dwelling" and "waiting" to dwell; these are not part of the deliberations that define philosophy. Dwelling and waiting cannot really be described, because once they are, they become fixed again as the inauthentic attempt to grasp and to hold technical knowledge (*Scientia*, or what one should know). To the contrary, dwelling and waiting are acts of wisdom, and wisdom is about being in Being rather than describing the problems of a being. To be in Being requires a different language, which is the language

18. Heidegger, "Letters on Humanism," 254.

19. Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," 337.

of care, and this comes forward in the poetic. Poetic expression is the passing expression of wisdom; it is wisdom as it dwells with us and travels past us. It expresses the moment, and it waits upon moments to come. Heidegger upheld Friedrich Hölderlin as a prime example of the poetic waiting upon the disclosure of Being. "Fateless the Heavenly breathe Like an unweaned infant asleep" is a line from a Hölderlin poem,²⁰ and we can see how Heidegger could be attracted to such verses that contrast and invoke waiting in the temporal, dwelling here, and letting go. Working out life in its details is like a technical regard of life that seeks to control it, but the poetic nature of life at last arises. There is no plan. There is dwelling in the now. But what about the after-now, someone will say. To Heidegger the poetic regard meant that if the now is fully taken care of, there is no after-now to worry over.

Avoiding and Retrieving Theology from Heidegger

Heidegger was an astounding philosopher but not necessarily a very wise one. On the political front, his yearning for simplicity and for the "dwelling" in being from times past reveal a type of waning or longing for purity and simplicity. The sense of "authentic" can take the form of this yearning, and that is a mistake. Authenticity is not about purity, simplicity, or a life absent of stress. Authenticity, too, when taken as a lost ideal can be a form of forgetting. It can re-imagine human experience in isolating and harmful ways; it can lead us to ideals where we forget that difference and multiplicity, fluidity and stress are all part of the game. To be a Being-toward-death means to be a being fully in life, in the now, with all the complications that come with it. Heidegger can truly inspire the celebration of life, but he can also hide a certain realism or genuineness inside his often troubling and somewhat compulsive idea of authenticity. To take Heidegger seriously we have also to admit to, in order to avoid, this deceptive side of his thinking in which he fools himself. Heidegger managed to believe that virtue related to authenticity was the professed future promise of the German people, and he found that promise expressed in the Nazi Party that appointed him Rector at the University of Freiburg in 1933. He left that position one year later. To his credit, he referred to his support of the regime as his big blunder. Yet, he never commented further, and this silence has left a legacy of suspicion about his philosophy and his personality.

It is important to mention Heidegger's blunder because it is important to avoid in his philosophy a certain idolatry of authenticity. His proclivity for the "authentic" life translated into his German ideal of rustic simplicity, dietary purity, and, as some of my German friends joke, authentic *Lederhosen*. Heidegger consequently was tempted to reduce authenticity to primal feelings of nation-

20. Hölderlin, *Hyperion's Song of Destiny*.

alism, and this blunder has to be named. Inasmuch as theology, in its history, has gotten pressed against nationalism such that a particular interpretation of a religion and the politics of a particular nation are at times hard to distinguish, it is important to recognize that the task of theology is not a defensive task. Theology is about the “away from here,” as Robert Funk once said, referring to a Franz Kafka parable. It is about the here and now that is not here but perpetually promises to be “here,” or the potential of here, if the vision is trusted. The here of theology is the promise of the potential that is presently away from here; theology loses its vitality when this “away from here” is deconstructed into the forms of nationalism, which are petty and which “decay” its care.

Heidegger can lead theology to nationalism, but he can also lead theology away from here. In his concept of Being-toward-death and of waiting and dwelling, he opens himself to the question concerning the value of theology in a post-theistic, if not post-theological, age. Heidegger’s thought continues to challenge theology with the question about its meaning and its task. There are certainly at least two significant re-imagined forms of theology that Heidegger inspires and that can be retrieved from him as tasks for theology in a post-theological age.

In the critique of technology lies the first key task. Technology, as described above, is a form of forgetfulness, because its function is repetition. For Heidegger, machinery represented technology, but for us it is computers and the digital age. The same effect exists in both cases. Machines like computer processes or other functions in digital media are programmed to repeat an operation over and over again. It is possible to program some sophistication and contextual sensitivity into technical operations, but, of course, the point of doing so is to facilitate ease of repetition. Theology can be a form of technology, that is, of repetition, and maybe it is even correct to charge that the doctrinal history of theology is technology unfolded in a metaphysical way. This makes theology the ironic subject of forgetting about theology. That is to say, theology, as Foucault might say, has long centered itself on the training and the repetition of a worldview.²¹ Through its doctrinal history, theology has sought to name the problem of human nature and re-invest dogmatic solutions in hierarchical orders and ritual practices. To put this in a plain way, theology, as the systemic expression of beliefs, practices repetition through doctrine. The doctrinal history of, for example, soteriology expresses itself in universally repeated confessions. The Nicene Creed, accepted across denominations of the Christian tradition, repeats over the ages and in every generation the accepted technology of salvation: that Jesus was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, that for our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, suffered and was buried, and

21. In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault united training with repetition, which further inspired ideas leading to the history of sexuality and technologies of the self.

that on the third day he rose from the dead. Translations of the Latin can vary, but the practice of repetition creates a worldview for the Christian religion and, as Heidegger would be inclined to point out, also creates a great, multi-national form of forgetting.

The theological point here lies in the struggle to define theology anew, apart from its historic technology, as the critique of worldviews. This means to liberate theology from its history of systematic expression. A system is something that repeats with little sympathy for nuance and with very much apathy for change. Theology from the time it became part of the imperial Roman system has constricted its definition to repeated doctrines and multi-volumed dogmatics. What Heidegger inspires, or can inspire, is an interruptive theology, a theology that moves beyond the technology of belief and sets its value on the natural dynamics of human experience. If we imagine a theology like that, it is not simply a non- or anti-technology theology; it is something like a theology-toward-death.

This, then, is the second aspect of Heidegger's thought that involves re-imagining theology as the subject-toward-death. This does not immediately sound enticing, because theology, one would hope, is supposed to be about new life. But theology understood as the subject-toward-death proposes an interesting shift in the traditional horizon. Traditional theology holds that its purpose is found in the pronouncement of life; in Christianity, the resurrection is the first confession after the death of Jesus. The resurrection is intimately linked to the eschatological content of the proclamation. The Apostle Paul relays the earliest confession in the fourfold dictum that Christ died, was buried, was raised, and appeared (1 Cor 15:3-4); even further, the appearances promise a return, for the Lord will come down from heaven with a loud trumpet and the dead in Christ shall rise first (1 Thess 4:16). The words of Paul reflect emerging Christ confessions and aim the principal directive of emerging Christian theology, which is the proclamation of life. How can theology then be conceived, in the Heideggerian sense, as the proclamation of the subject-toward-death?

The challenge is to conceive theology as the announcement of death, which is the announcement about waking up in the present, to the absolute moment of creativity. This is far different from the warnings, the visions, and the prophetic announcements of Paul, of the main biblical tradition, and of the usual theological customs. The act of being present is the poetic rather than gospel act, though we may wish to concede that the gospel properly speaking is poetry, however narrative its nature. Such liberty in theology comes about when Christian salvation technology finally concedes to Being-toward-death. Such a concession should not be confused with a death wish. Being-toward-death is an implosion of the actual present into the consciousness of Being with and Being now. This implosion into the present, into Being with and Being now, opens theology as the subject that dwells, in the parabolic sense, "away from here." Theology is, paradoxically, radically and simultaneously "here-with" the present as the

subject-toward-death that is “away from here.” The eschatological temptation of the tradition, which is the temptation to fall into everyday salvation technology, is redirected in the subject toward death to the now that is away from here. To put this in plain language, theology conceived as the subject toward death promises no “end of the day” and no “at the last”; it carries in its struggles no “return” and no “all in all.” Theology as the subject toward death holds its voice in the struggle that calls out the altered location in the now—dwelling not in a future but in a moment—a place that is here but not here, present but promised, available right here but available away from here. The critical task of theology as the subject toward death is the engagement of the alternative now right now.

Theology, in its historic and technical expression, practiced the project of the future as the repetition of an eschatological event. We mean here that theology comprehended redemption as an act from the past to be repeated in the future. Redemption is the once and future David in Judaism and the once and future Christ in Christianity. Such a form makes the project of theology a metaphysical attempt to convert human hope into an image of theological technology. Indeed, the critique of technology is exactly this: the destruction of vitality in the name of the projected same. This nihilistic history of salvation technology heralds, as both Nietzsche and Heidegger feared, the transference of nihilism from technology onto nature. Theology is now in the era where its own nihilistic project of salvation has transferred itself from metaphysics to practices of fundamentalist repetition and deadly intolerance.

To conceive theology as the subject-toward-death is a radical and even mysterious option for a subject that is used to relying on technologies of salvation founded upon eschatology and apocalypticism, but the future of humanity might well rest in a change to the value of theology. The Being-toward-death is a natural human being. Such a being knows its destiny is an unavoidably surety of nature, but this consciousness opens the now radical to freedom, choice, responsibility, and care. Theology can and maybe needs to hear these words such that its future is that of the subject toward death, which liberates the now from technology and delivers it to the promise of the here that is away from here.

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Paul Tillich and the Discourse of Political Theology

Clayton Crockett

Introduction

This paper puts the theology of Paul Tillich in contact with the contemporary discourse of political theology. First, I will briefly survey the development of radical theology from Tillich to the present, to show how his theology has influenced and inspired many of these expressions of radical theology. Second, I will sketch an overview of political theology from its classical locus in the thought of Carl Schmitt to its contemporary expressions in the work of Jacques Derrida and Giorgio Agamben. At the end of this essay, I will return to Tillich to show how attention to his works on Christian Socialism in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s offers a connection to and supplement of this idea of political theology.

What is Radical Theology?

Radical theology means an open-ended theology that is not invested in apologetics or in the defense of any religious tradition, particularly Christianity. Radical theology works apart from orthodoxy and asks important questions about the nature and meaning of religion and God in the modern world without any assurance of answers, including the answers of the tradition. Radical theology derives from the term *radix* ("root"), and it digs for the roots of experience and the contingency of the formations of religious and intellectual traditions. Radical theology may or may not be conversant with the methods of contemporary biblical scholarship, but it is more open to the conclusions about who people like Jesus and Paul were or may have been before they were domesticated by the tradition of Christian orthodoxy.

The theology of Paul Tillich exerts an indirect influence on radical theology, from the Death of God theology to the present resurgence of interest in radical theology. In this section, I briefly survey the development of radical theology, to construct a somewhat speculative genealogy. The most famous Death of God theologian is Thomas J. J. Altizer, who became well known in the 1960s with his theological declaration that God is dead. For Altizer, the death of God is a metaphysical and dialectical statement about the being of God. The transcendent father God incarnates in and as Jesus, and this divinity "dies" on the cross.

The death of Christ attests not to the resurrection of Christ, but to the death of any transcendent other-worldly God. The resurrection for Altizer refers to the spiritual presence of Christ in the community of believers, who carry on this powerful insight. The Church appropriates and domesticates the “good news” of the Death of God, but it gets retained and re-expressed by the most visionary poets, writers, and philosophers in the history of the Western European tradition, including Dante, Cusa, Blake, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Joyce.

In many ways, the notion of the Death of God in theology became a fad, and it inspired a 1966 TIME Magazine cover that read, in red letters on a black background, “Is God Dead?” Altizer was a controversial and charismatic figure, and he received death threats as well as resisted attempts to get him fired from Emory University, where he was teaching at the time. This was in large part a response to his book, *The Gospel of Christian Atheism*, also published in 1966. In the Preface to *The Gospel of Christian Atheism*, Altizer argues that

Among twentieth century theologians, it was Tillich alone who made possible a way to a truly contemporary theology. While I have been forced to resist and oppose Tillich’s theological conclusions, I do so with the conviction that they are not yet radical enough, and the memory of Tillich’s words to me is that the real Tillich is the radical Tillich.¹

I agree with Altizer’s sentiments, because I think that Tillich’s theological conclusions appear clunky and out of date, including much of the language in which he expressed them. At the same time, the spirit of Tillich has inspired much of what later passes for radical theology. From his deep and abiding interest in existentialism to his acknowledgment that theological concepts function primarily as symbols, to his desire to develop a genuine non-imperialist theology of culture, Tillich opens up theology to a becoming-otherwise-than-Orthodoxy. Tillich labored on his three-volume *Systematic Theology* for decades after coming to the United States in the wake of the Nazi takeover of Germany, and this is an impressive synthesis of this thought, but the *Systematic Theology* largely fails to stimulate creative theological thinking beyond itself. We look to other books, including the more “popular” *The Courage to Be*, to find truly vital and transformative reflections.

Even if many of the representatives of the Death of God movement in the 1960s were apparently more influenced by Karl Barth, it was Tillich’s theology that allowed them to express this insight in theological and cultural terms. In Tillich’s method of correlation, contemporary culture asks questions, whereas theology supplies the answers to these questions in the form of symbols. In his *Theology of Culture*, he says that, confronted with cultural questions expressed primarily in terms of existentialism, “theology must confront [culture] with

1. Altizer, *Gospel of Christian Atheism*, 10.

the answer implied in the Christian method."² The problem with Tillich's formulation of this correlation is the restriction of theology to providing answers, because radical theology is about asking important and provocative questions. Also, contemporary culture is giving us answers, and this reversal forces theology to ask the question whether God still exists, or if instead God is dead? The first book of what came to be known as Death of God theology is by Gabriel Vahanian, and is called *The Death of God: The Culture of Our Post-Christian Era*. At the end of this book, Vahanian radicalizes Tillich's notion of correlation, because as Vahanian explains, "it does not follow that the question of correlation is included in the question of existence."³ That is, the question of existentialism has already eliminated the reality of God. Here the model of correlation that Tillich sets out enables the question of the Death of God, while at the same time it ends up deconstructing Tillich's framework such that this Death of God theology is forced to radicalize and reject Tillich's conclusions.

Another important influence on this Death of God theology is Dietrich Bonhoeffer. After his death at the hands of the Nazis in 1944, Eberhard Bethge collected and edited his *Letters and Papers from Prison*, which were translated into English in 1953. In these provocative and existential writings, Bonhoeffer suggests that Christians should live in "a world come of age" without recourse to the hypothesis of God.⁴ Altizer was not directly influenced by Bonhoeffer's theology, but another Death of God theologian, William Hamilton, was. In 1966 Hamilton and Altizer put together a book on *Radical Theology and the Death of God* that also drew a great deal of attention to the new movement.⁵

In addition to Altizer, Vahanian, and Hamilton, other representatives of the Death of God theology include Richard Rubenstein, Harvey Cox, and Paul van Buren. In retrospect, for many observers this movement is viewed as a consistent if marginal articulation of a theological conclusion that God is dead or simply never existed, and in a secular world we need to move on. However, it is perhaps better to view what is called Death of God theology as a radicalization of theology and an insistence on the questionability of theology and its relevance to the world today. In many respects, it was Langdon Gilkey, a student of Tillich at the University of Chicago, who consolidated the Death of God as a theological movement in his opposition to it. As Michael Grimshaw explains, Gilkey "outlined his position as one of seeking the grounded, defensible reality of Christian faith in God in a secular age; this reality of God being opposed to

2. Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 49.

3. Vahanian, *Death of God*, 226–27. In this early book, Vahanian laments the loss of the reality of God, but he later develops a robust and affirmative secular theology. See Vahanian, *Anonymous God*.

4. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 168–69.

5. See Altizer and Hamilton, *Radical Theology and the Death of God*. This book was dedicated to the memory of Paul Tillich.

God's death."⁶ To simplify these theological works and perspectives under the heading of the "Death of God" was already to distort and dismiss it.

Tillich had less direct influence on liberation theology as it developed in the 1960s and 1970s, including black liberation theology and feminist liberation theology. His theology, while seen as part of the dominant European theological tradition, was less viewed as less of an obstacle and sometimes offered tools for liberation. In his more recent book, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, black liberation theologian James Cone singles out Reinhold Niebuhr as a problematic representative of white Christianity, but he barely mentions Tillich, affirming his language of "the courage to be" in the struggle of blacks for hope and salvation.⁷ Tillich had the most explicit influence on Mary Daly's work, including *Beyond God the Father*, which makes extensive use of Tillich's language and concepts. Daly ends up endorsing Tillich's affirmation of love, power, and justice as "The Most Holy and Whole Trinity," even though Tillich's analysis does not go far enough in its failure to consider the harm done by socialization into sex roles.⁸

In his insightful chapter in *Retrieving the Radical Tillich*, Christopher D. Rodkey demonstrates how Daly "pirated" many of Tillich's ideas, and they informed her feminist analysis, even while she lamented that Tillich's systematic theology "is not radical enough" due to its emphasis on self-affirmation.⁹ Daly saw Tillich's personal manifestations of sado-masochism as linked to this perverse self-affirmation. In a more ambivalent way, Marcella Althaus-Reid laments less Tillich's expressions of deviant sexuality than the need to keep it a secret. In *Indecent Theology*, she claims that "what is to be condemned and regretted is not that Tillich was a sadomasochist, but the fact that he did not find 'the courage to be' out of the closet of his sexuality."¹⁰

A more open, Tillichian perspective on the development of radical theology affirms the continuity from Tillich to the Death of God theologians and some strands of liberation theology to the American postmodern theology that emerged in the late 1970s and 1980s in the work of Carl A. Raschke, Mark C. Taylor, Charles E. Winquist, and others, including Edith Wyschogrod and Robert P. Scharlemann. This movement never achieved the cultural exposure that the Death of God theology did, being largely relegated to the academic world, and it did not express the explicit political engagement that occurred in most forms of liberation theology. Raschke and Taylor were students of Gordon Kaufman at Harvard University, and Raschke wrote the first book of theology that combined the insights of the Death of God movement with the newer ideas of French poststructuralism and deconstruction that were being taken up and

6. Grimshaw, "Did God Die in *The Christian Century*?" 11.

7. Cone, *Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 160.

8. Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, 127.

9. Rodkey, "The Nemesis Hex," 66.

10. Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology*, 88.

read in the US. This was called *The Alchemy of the Word*, and it was republished in 2005 as *The End of Theology*.

Raschke also edited *Deconstruction & Theology*, which included chapters by Taylor, Winkquist, Scharlemann, and Altizer. In his contribution to the book, Raschke states that deconstruction “is in the final analysis *the death of God put into writing*, the subsumption of the ‘Word’ by the ‘flesh,’ the deluge of immanence.”¹¹ Mark C. Taylor’s work ended up being more influential, in particular his 1984 book, *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology*. In *Erring*, Taylor sets out four themes of this postmodern a/theology, including the Death of God, the disappearance of the self, the end of the history, and the closure of the book.¹²

Winkquist, author of *Epiphanies of Darkness* and *Desiring Theology*, was a student of Langdon Gilkey and Schubert Ogden. Winkquist came to the University of Chicago in 1965 to study with Paul Tillich, but Tillich died of a heart attack that fall, so he worked primarily with Gilkey. In his work, including in *Epiphanies of Darkness* and *Desiring Theology*, Winkquist interrogates theology as a discourse formation, and asks important epistemological questions about its ability to signify for contemporary humans outside of the church.

I claim that Tillich’s theology exerts a kind of spectral influence, sometimes acknowledged and other times not, on radical theology through the end of the twentieth century. In the 1990s, due to what has been widely discussed as the “return of religion,” many English-speaking Continental philosophers of religion took up the works of Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jean-Luc Marion. Here religion is analyzed as a pervasive and polyvalent phenomenon, in philosophy and in culture, as a counter-argument to the presumptions of the secularist hypotheses about its demise by scholars, scientists, and even theologians in the 1960s and 1970s.

The most well-known representatives of this movement were Merold Westphal (at Fordham University), Richard Kearney (at Boston College), and John D. Caputo (at Villanova University). Most of the philosophy programs that featured significant Continental philosophy of religion scholars and programs were at Catholic institutions. Starting in 1997, Caputo brought Derrida to Villanova for three conferences over six years focusing on Religion and Postmodernism. This Continental philosophy of religion was not yet radical theology, but it offered insights for radical theology and in some cases, especially that of Caputo, it transformed itself into a kind of radical theology.

There has been a renewal of interest in the tradition of radical theology in the twenty-first century, and much of this work has been done in terms of political theology. In the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9-11 and the ensuing wars against Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the USA Patriot Act, many theo-

11. Raschke, “The Deconstruction of God,” 3.

12. See Taylor, *Erring*.

logians took up more explicitly political themes. It was Jeffrey W. Robbins who articulated the most concise indictment of radical theology. In an essay called "Terror and the Postmodern Condition," he argues that "while the interests of the radical and postmodern theologians were characteristically broad and far-ranging, . . . the political was marked by its absence."¹³ He calls instead for a "truly radical political theology . . . that puts both the political and the theological order in question."¹⁴

Paul Tillich's theology would not necessarily appear to be a resource for a radical political theology, but again, Tillich has been an underground inspiration for radical theology from the start. The problem is that Tillich's American theological work, including his *Systematic Theology*, is largely apolitical. On the one hand, after the end of the Second World War, Tillich retreated from explicitly political issues and concerns. On the other hand, he resisted the temptation that Reinhold Niebuhr did not, when Niebuhr lent his theological reputation to Cold War politics and ideology in the form of a "Christian Realism." To really engage with the political side of Tillich, we have to look at his works done in Germany in the 1920s and early 1930s, culminating in *The Socialist Decision* against Nazism.

Today we can see a renewed interest in Tillich as precursor to radical theology in the efforts of Russell Re Manning in the AAR Tillich Group and his edited book, *Retrieving the Radical Tillich*, as well as Caputo's book *The Folly of God: A Theology of the Unconditional*, that crosses Tillich with Derrida. Tillich's theological language of being came to be seen as hopelessly outdated in the 1980s and 1990s as concerns with language came to the fore in hermeneutics, structuralism, and poststructuralism. Theology was viewed as a discursive formation of writing rather than a way to disclose the being of the universe. Many theologians during those decades would likely agree with Catherine Keller's statement that she was "indebted to the spirit if not the ontology of Paul Tillich's classical redefinition of faith in terms of courage, in *The Courage to Be*."¹⁵ Today, however, there has been a return to ontology in many discourses, including the mathematical ontologies of Alain Badiou and Quentin Meillassoux, the New Materialisms inspired by feminist and science studies, and British Speculative Realism, which makes the language of being more relevant.

Political Theology from Schmitt to Agamben

I want to think about the connection of Tillich's thought to the discourse of political theology, and in some ways to cross the theological tradition of radical

13. Robbins, "Terror and the Postmodern Condition," 196. I try to answer Robbins' challenge in Crockett, *Radical Political Theology*.

14. Robbins, "Terror and the Postmodern Condition," 197.

15. Keller, *Face of the Deep*, 293.

theology with the philosophical conception of political theology. Political theology is a topic of discussion and debate in recent Continental philosophy, and it traces its roots to the influential work of the German jurist Carl Schmitt. Its most noted recent representatives are Giorgio Agamben and Jacques Derrida, as well as to a certain extent Slavoj Žižek. In 1922, Schmitt published his book *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. Schmitt claims that sovereignty consists essentially in a decision—the power or ability to decide what counts in an exceptional situation, to apply or not apply a rule or a norm to a case of exception. For Schmitt, human political sovereignty, along with all of our fundamental Western legal concepts, derives originally from theology. As Schmitt puts it, “all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts.”¹⁶ The sovereignty of God becomes the resource for thinking about the sovereignty of humanity, first in European absolute monarchy and later in terms of a kind of popular sovereignty.

For Schmitt, the question is what happens when we try to govern our politics in liberal, procedural terms. All of our rules come up against limits, where someone has to decide when these rules need to be enforced and when they have to be suspended. In much of his works from the 1920s and 1930s, Schmitt wrestled with the tensions and contradictions in the Weimar Republic Constitution, especially Article 48, which gave the president the power to suspend the Constitution under certain exceptional conditions. Schmitt foresaw that this would lead to a dictatorship, and he worked to prevent the Nazi takeover of the state until it was inevitable, at which point he joined the Nazi party and became one of its main academic jurists. The fact that Schmitt became a Nazi makes his entire work incredibly suspect and controversial, but in recent decades philosophers and theologians have come to appreciate his clear and incisive analyses of politics, law, and war. He was a conservative critic of modern liberal democracy, and he was Roman Catholic in spirit, but his ideas have come to influence many other scholars who have thought hard about the ways in which our politics are implicated in a theological or quasi-theological worldview, and also how profoundly political are all of our theological conceptions.

If we cannot simply or sharply delimit the religious from the secular, then we cannot completely separate philosophy and theology. The opposition between religious and non-religious phenomena deconstructs. The return of religion to the public sphere in neo-fundamentalist terms as well as the awareness of the intrinsically religious or theological nature all our political concepts means that we must grapple with the notion of political theology, whether we are liberal or conservative, radical or reactionary.

One way to read Derrida’s later philosophy in the 1990s and 2000s is to see it as developing and critiquing Schmitt’s thought. Derrida also attends to the

16. Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 36.

ways in which secular political ideas and practices are implicated in religious and theological ones. Derrida is profoundly critical of Schmitt, most explicitly in his book *The Politics of Friendship*, where he shows how Schmitt's opposition of friend and enemy deconstructs. Derrida does not use the term "political theology," since it is tainted by Schmitt's legacy, but he tries to articulate a thinking of religion and politics together that avoids resorting to the idea of sovereignty. If sovereignty is the ability to decide on the exceptional case, then the problem for Derrida is that there can never be only one decider.

We are always already constituted by an irreducible plurality, and any decision is never singular or absolute; it is always with and against the *other*—not only the other person but more profoundly the other who inhabits and haunts our deepest self. Derrida argues that Schmitt's theory of decision presupposes a free and willful subject, but "*a theory of the subject can never account for the slightest decision.*"¹⁷ An event exceeds the confines of a subject's willed decision, and therefore Schmitt's decisionism is incoherent. An exceptional case most of all exempts the subject; it excepts the subject from the rule, in the name of responsibility for an "other." The fact that the self is inhabited by the other means that sovereignty is never absolute. Sovereignty for Derrida is a fantasy, a projection onto a situation that is always an illusory sovereignty.

In his book *Rogues*, Derrida envisions a form of democracy to come that would be without sovereignty. He says that "as soon as there is sovereignty, there is abuse of power and a rogue state."¹⁸ The idea of democracy to come consists of a democracy that is not an actually existing democracy, and it cannot be characterized in terms of sovereignty or sovereign decision. Derrida implies that every commitment to a particular political principle includes some sort of "unavowed theologism," and of course even this notion of a democracy to come involves a certain kind of messianicity, although it is a messianicity without any determinate or specific messianism or messiah. In the course of his discussion of democracy and sovereignty, Derrida refers to Heidegger's posthumously published interview in *Der Spiegel*, called "Only a God Can Save us." Derrida is intrigued by this notion of "a god," that "is not the One God" nor is it the plural gods: "A god is neither the One God nor gods."¹⁹ Here for Derrida invoking Heidegger, God is neither simply One nor many. The God that can save us, that Derrida links to democracy, is a god who exceeds the alternative of the One sovereign God or the plural multiple deities. A god is without sovereignty.

For the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, the state of exception defined as sovereign by Schmitt can be generalized in our modern and contemporary world. In his important book, *Homo Sacer*, Agamben shows how sovereign

17. Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 68.

18. Derrida, *Rogues*, 102.

19. Derrida, *Rogues*, 110.

power hides its inner workings while relegating humanity more and more to the category of "bare life." Bare life is a term derived from the Greek term *zoē*, which means life without any determinate qualities, and this word is opposed to the Greek *bios*, which is a kind of politically inflected life. According to Agamben, *homo sacer* refers to a human who cannot be sacrificed in a religious ritual, but who can be killed with impunity. The term *homo sacer* gets conflated with *zoē*, whereby the human becomes an animal subject to biopolitics, who can no longer be sacrificed but may be experimented on, controlled, and even killed. Biopolitical sovereignty treats the human as a form of bare life stripped of any power and dignity, who is put into confined spaces like camps and prisons.

According to Agamben, modern biopolitics has been dedicated "to producing a single and undivided people" in the form of bare life.²⁰ The analysis and comprehension of this project is informed by Schmitt, and Agamben in a later book, *The Kingdom and the Glory*, shows how theological concepts of early Christianity inform the constitution of modern economics and governmentality. Agamben wants to examine the interconnection of these ideas of biopolitics, theology, and metaphysics at work in human politics, and offer a way out. His solution is a radical withdrawal from being, a kind of non-being or impotentiality that frees itself from the opposition between potentiality and actuality. Sovereignty is always the power to allocate and adjudicate between the potential and the actual, and only a kind of impotentiality can subtract from this entire opposition. Agamben offers a version of negative ontology that is also a counter-politics.

Tillich and Political Theology

In his provocative article "Critique and Promise in Paul Tillich's Political Theology," Gregory Walter shows how Tillich's theology offers an answer of sorts to Agamben's political theory. Walter focuses on the idea of the prophetic as expressed in Tillich's 1929 essay "Protestantism as Critical and Creative Principle." He explains how the rational aspect of Tillich's critique is a form of modern reason that gets stuck in the biopolitical framework that Agamben analyzes, but the idea of the prophetic as an immanent political critique is valid for the kinds of reflections that Agamben undertakes, even if it does not exhaust Tillich's theology. For Tillich, "there is no prophetic critique that is not immanent critique," and yet this prophetic critique opens up a kind of promise or gift, not just as another potential promise, but a pure gift beyond potentiality.²¹

I think the most productive way to read Tillich's theology is to read his later theology of being and non-being back into his earlier theology of *kairos* and cri-

20. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 179.

21. Walter, "Critique and Promise," 464.

sis. The *kairos* is an event, and for the Tillich of the 1920s and 1930s, the event is the possibility of deciding for genuine socialism and against National Socialism. The German Tillich possesses a political edge that the later Tillich lacks, although some of the language of being, non-being, and God beyond God associated with being-itself is useful if fully articulated and thought through in new terms. In *The Socialist Decision*, Tillich makes a last ditch effort to persuade the German people to renounce fascism. Bourgeois modernity believes in the harmony of liberalism and democracy in their interpenetration, but this “*harmony is shaken*” in the twentieth century.²² Socialism represents the form of “*prophetism on the soil of an autonomous, self-sufficient world.*”²³ The prophetic principle Tillich identifies in the Hebrew prophets and the Protestant Reformation recurs in contemporary socialism and its promise and expectation. Socialism is the only thing that can save Europe in 1933, and we know that it did not. But the principle is still valid, the idea that the prophetic principle is aligned with the proletariat and not with the bourgeois. Tillich imagined and called for a Christian socialism that did not really or fully exist, and it never possessed the potential to stop the march of barbarism in the twentieth century. But his analysis is still significant. He concludes *The Socialist Decision*, writing:

The hegemony of the myth of origin means the domination of violence and death. *Only expectation can triumph over the death now threatening Western civilization through the resurgence of the myth of origin. And expectation is the symbol of socialism.*²⁴

In contemporary political theory, using a more sophisticated language, the Marxist philosopher Kojin Karatani also evokes socialism in a religious context. He argues that we need to construct a socialism without the state that would institute a different mode of economic exchange.²⁵ This mode of exchange does not fully exist, but it is closely related to the conception of the gift that has been of much interest to anthropology and theology. Furthermore, Karatani associates this mode of exchange based on reciprocity originally with religious movements.²⁶ So Tillich’s expectation of socialism is not necessarily as naïve as it may appear.

As Slavoj Žižek affirms, there is no neutral being or political existence; existence is always one-sided. In *The Puppet and the Dwarf* he claims that the phrase “‘man is man [sic!]’ indicates the noncoincidence of man with man, the properly *inhuman* excess which disturbs its self-identity.”²⁷ And this idea applies also to

22. Tillich, *Socialist Decision*, 51.

23. Tillich, *Socialist Decision*, 101.

24. Tillich, *Socialist Decision*, 162.

25. Karatani, *Structure of World History*, 235.

26. Karatani, *Structure of World History*, 7.

27. Žižek, *Puppet and Dwarf*, 143.

nature and to God. Tillich's idea of God beyond God is a disruption of classical sovereignty, because being is always inhabited and disrupted by non-being. Being-itself exceeds and eludes the simple opposition of being and non-being, or actual and potential.

There is no simple sovereign God as One, and sovereignty is an idea that is human, political, and suspect. All theology is implicitly political theology, and says as much about us and our interests as it does about God. Theology at its best is prophetic, in the form of immanent political critique, not because there exists a transcendent realm outside our political arena, but because it allows us to envision our world and our lives differently. Genuine theology issues from the depths of our being to try to signify God, who always exceeds signification but never simply does so. This is because God is not a being or an object but a name we give to what cannot be said or shown completely in human terms, or as Caputo calls it following Derrida, *an event*.

For Caputo, "the name of God is an event," or more precisely, it "*harbors* an event." And "theology is the hermeneutics of that event, its task being to release what is happening in that name, to set it free, to give it its own head, and thereby to head off the forces that would prevent this event."²⁸ This event calls us toward a different future than the one that we imagine we possess. For Peter Rollins, theology consists of an insurrection, that is, the "work of pyro-theology," or "an incendiary question that houses the very power to set the Church alight, burning away the rot to reveal that which cannot be consumed."²⁹ Insurrectionist theology attends to events rather than institutions, including political events.³⁰

Today the proto- or neo-fascism of white Christian nationalism functions as a way to contain and control the event of human desire for liberation from the oppression of contemporary neoliberalism and global capitalism. A radical political theology inspired by Tillich must make a "socialist decision" to oppose the racism, traditionalism, and xenophobia that is intertwined with the expressions of frustration and anger by the white working classes. American Christianity is a trap, not only because it is idolatrous, but because it draws off the energy of human sufferings and redirects it towards stereotypical scapegoats: illegal immigrants, elitist liberals, liberal media, blacks, and leftist academics who buy into a shallow multicultural political correctness. The task for radical theologians is to expose this fake religion for what it is, and offer religious and secular people a genuine alternative, a political theology inspired by Paul Tillich.

28. Caputo, *Weakness of God*, 2 (emphasis in original).

29. Rollins, *Insurrection*, xiii.

30. See Blanton, et al., *An Insurrectionist Manifesto*.

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Archive Theology and the God of Paul

David Galston

The Apostle Paul is that well-known figure of Christian theology about whom little is known. Paul seems there for the taking in a way Jesus cannot be, for Paul wrote things and Jesus did not. Yet, it is quite clear now how the framework for Paul's life that largely comes from Acts is fictional. In Acts, Paul is a literary figure, not a historical one. And the letters of Paul contain Paul's rhetorical and very public style but do not reveal his private thoughts, personality, or biography to any reliable degree. Still, Paul remains interesting because of his rhetoric, his ironies mixed in with his assumed authority, and because of the longstanding interpretations of Paul that still lay a foundation for thinking philosophically about God.

Academic instincts lead one to inquire first about the historical Paul. It is natural to ask, what did Paul say and do so that we might understand him correctly. This instinct, though, is already misdirected. The true question is not so much about how to understand Paul as how to hear him. The authentic letters give us a rhetorical Paul but not a "historical" Paul. It is a mistake to confuse these two elements, just as it is a mistake to confuse them in the case of Jesus. To Robert Funk, the historical Jesus is the rhetorical Jesus,¹ and this insight holds true for Paul. Paul's "authentic letters" are not Paul's authentic opinions. They are his rhetorical relationship to communities in light of the gospel (the strategy—the "world transforming news") to which he was committed. A common mistake is to think we are talking about Paul when we talk about Paul.

Once the question is asked about the rhetoric of Paul, philosophy can switch into high gear. Rhetoric is about meaning: it is the production of discourse aimed at persuasion, but persuasion is of course not possible if the audience does not participate in a collective experience of meaning.² In order for rhetoric to be effective, the speaker and the audience need to share a common meaning experience. Aristotle called this the *ethos* of the rhetorician and the audience.

1. See Funk, *Honest to Jesus*, 143–63.

2. Long ago Aristotle astutely identified three elements in rhetoric: *logos*, or the structure of reason; *pathos*, or the emotional appeal; and *ethos*, or the appeal to a common set of values. Explanations of these terms appear in Books I and II of *Rhetoric*. The English title is sometimes given as *The Art of Rhetoric* or *A Treatise on Rhetoric*.

Even when rhetoric is used ironically as counter-meaning, the assumption is that there is a “meaning” to counter. The “common meaning experience” pre-given to the rhetorical act can be called various names, but I do prefer the Foucauldian way of imagining this as an archive: a space in which the circulation of power moves and in which the *episteme*—the thinking style or rhetorical forms—of a given era operate to produce certain effects, that is, meaning-effects or events.

The types of philosophy that employ the images of an archive can be distinguished as archaeology and genealogy, which are the words Michel Foucault used, but to combine these two words for the purposes of analysis, as Foucault did in *Discipline and Punish*,³ is to engage in an archive study. It is this latter study that needs some definition.

In structuralist thought, a word signifies a meaning, and this combination composes a basic linguistic sign. The sign has two sides, as Ferdinand de Saussure so defined, which in English are the “signifier” (*signifiant*) and the “signified” (*signifié*). I utter a word like “dog,” and the word is the signifier, what De Saussure called, among other things, “*l’image acoustique*.”⁴ Let us call the signifier the top half of the word. But the bottom half is the concept of the thing signified. The “concept,” which in this case is a dog, is not necessarily out there as an external thing. There need not be a dog physically present for the linguistic sign to work.⁵ The concept always accompanies the utterance, and (regardless which one is considered top or bottom, right or left) the two go together as a single, instantaneous act. The two are a linguistic sign. The structuralist philosophers who accepted this basic linguistic analysis were on many occasions able to offer a social analysis to accompany the simple signifier/signified dyad.⁶ They were able to do so by indicating that a signified concept was a meaning experience, and a meaning experience depended upon a value system.⁷ For example, there can be different values to the word “dog” depend-

3. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

4. De Saussure, *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, 99.

5. This, to my mind, is the basic problem with religion as much as metaphysics: it is never physically there but only there in simulation, which means it can be dangerous, deceiving, mis-representing, and delusional, but fortunately it can also be helpful, insightful, community building, and comical.

6. The social analysis could be extremely creative since the dyad is unstable: the signified/signifier relationship can slide in and out of different formations and sign different edges of meaning. Roland Barthes used the fashion system to demonstrate this instability. Barthes did not think instability was always the condition of the sign, but in expressing the idea of things (like fashion), the sign was subject to arbitrary change. To make his point he succinctly wrote, “Fashion does not evolve, it changes.” Barthes, *The Fashion System*, 215.

7. John Searle replicated a similar idea with his notion of illocutionary speech acts. With this expression, Searle describes a type of background noise to every speech act that can be understood as the silent presence of a culture and mutual participation within it. De Saussure’s idea of value is similarly an implied texture that accompanies a word.

ing on the sentence, which is a string of signifiers employed. To say, “you are a dog” is an insult; to say, “there is a dog” is an indication. The two significations hold different values. In rhetoric, the question is what value is being employed and to what effect? To ask this question is to employ a structuralist analysis of linguistic signs.

The structuralist analysis was modified in post-structuralism, where it was noticed that a signifier signifies another signifier. In other words, the meaning of a signifier is already a social event: it is a consequence of the history of signification, and it is also a consequence of the interrelationship of all signifiers. If this is put in a simple way, the word “dog” has a history, and so no one can assume that its meaning (value) in the first century of the Roman empire will be the same as its meaning today. We can say that at different times signifiers have different social weights. There is then in post-structural analysis a recognition of diverse historical weights held in the function of signifiers in given contexts. This is what Foucault called archaeology: the historical uncovering of the system of weights of signifiers. Foucault, of course, did not explain himself in this way, but effectively, in such works as *The Order of Things*,⁸ he is examining the archaeological position or value of words in the schema of different epochs.

The second point that post-structuralism raises is a very elementary one: How do we know what a signifier signifies? In order to answer that question signifiers must be employed. Accordingly, a signifier signifies a signifier on an endless string with no central or master signifier around. To think there is a master signifier around that puts an end—and here we might mean *telos* as well as *terminus*—to the signification of signifiers is to be guilty of logocentrism, to use Jacques Derrida’s signifier. To put this another way, there is no underneath part of a signifier; there is only the surface. A signifier signifies a signifier, which in turn signifies again. My “dog” has a value, but this time not so much as a weight but as a strategy. I still like the structuralist understanding of the weighted value of a signifier, but in a post-structuralist way the right signifier to use (that is, the better description) is the couplet “strategic-value.” When I call someone a dog, as opposed to referring to my friendly pet, I am strategically employing a signifier based on the value that this signification can hold in a system of signification. Finally, the “system of signification”—the location of all the words and the strategic value each holds in relation to others—is the archive in which I live. Foucault called this system of signification a system of power-knowledge, and the study of such a system in which knowledge is an event of power is genealogy. Putting these two elements together for theological

8. Foucault, *The Order of Things*.

considerations, we can call the study of the system of theological production “archive theology.”⁹

When we employ archive theology there are several key words that need to be explained. Among these words are horizon, event, and transgression. These three are of particular importance when considering Paul’s letters as rhetorical strategy. These words allow us to step beyond the question about what Paul describes (his meaning) to the question about what Paul enacts (his strategy). The second question is a constructive question that asks what horizon is Paul engaging and what is the status of his rhetoric in relation to it?¹⁰

When we think about an archive as an epoch in which an active regime of signifiers operates, we can open up several ways to understand how meaning is an event of human rhetorical experience.¹¹ In place of thinking that words describe things, the idea is that words position things. Words place things in relation to other things, and it is in relationships that words and things carry meaning (or value or strategy).¹² The meaning, then, is an effect of the relationships engaged. Meaning is not an independent thing or even a hidden thing. Theological history is filled with attempts to uncover the hidden thing as the basic structure of being. Existential theology, in its modern expression, was about this very “structure” alienated from the immediate experience of living in the fluctuations of time. To Paul Tillich, this state of living in time alienated from the structure of Being was the condition of sin (estrangement).¹³ In archive

9. I am not certain to what degree anyone in the philosophical study of theology has used this term. It was central to my own work in *Archives and the Event of God*, and I have noticed that some writers have tried to use the same or similar analogies elsewhere. In her M.A. thesis, entitled “Archives and the Event of Islamophobia,” Emma Sturgeon attempts to use some of these ideas. Professor Mehmet Karabela, also of Queens University, positively regarded these ideas in his “Review Essay: David Galston’s *Archives and the Event of God: The Impact of Michel Foucault on Philosophical Theology*,” 11–14.

10. There is one significant word missing from the three mentioned above, which is repetition. In the archive, the word “repetition” takes a distinctive meaning from how it is otherwise employed in hermeneutical analysis of religion. Repetition in the archive relates to expectation (or anticipation), and thus transgression interrupts repetition—which of course is why it is called transgression. In this essay, however, repetition is not engaged. The different ways repetition is used can be seen in comparing Kierkegaard and Foucault. For Kierkegaard, repetition is positive, going-forward, affirming the new; in Foucault, repetition is the timetable, discipline, and normalization.

11. An “event” in this archival way of thinking is distinct from “event” in general hermeneutical philosophy. In the latter an event is like the oncoming future, whereas in the former an event is like “recognition” in the immediate circumstances of power relationships composing the instant. Slavoj Žižek’s understanding of “event,” in his book *Event*, is closer to an archivist understanding, but Žižek lacks the dynamic analogies of power that one finds in Foucault and Deleuze.

12. The French title of Foucault’s *The Order of Things* was indeed *Les Mots et Les Choses* (*Words and Things*).

13. For Tillich, the existential condition of human beings is estrangement from our essential nature. This is the foundational way Tillich understood “sin”; sin is not an act, something we do or refrain from doing, but the human condition. Tillich’s presentation of estrangement as the condition of being human is pervasive in his thinking. The most careful presentation occurs in Chapter 1 of the second volume of *Systematic Theology*.

theology, there are no such structures; there are rather events. Structures are the product of events. In this way of thinking, the event of a word refers to its strategic location in relation to other words, and if that word in particular signifies a dominant strategy, it produces the horizon of the archive to which it belongs (the horizon being the epistemic setting of the archive operation). The repetition of the word reinforces the horizon in which strategies operate. Two things are to be noted in this act. One is the emphasis on the relationship of the signifier in a regime of signifiers. No signifier exists in isolation; a signifier is an event because in its appearance and its effect it is related to the signifiers that position it in the archive. If I talk about theology in highly metaphysical ways, such that I talk about God as the *ens realissimum*, I am employing a positioned linguistic sign—a strategic linguistic move—that places my meaning in the family of metaphysical signifiers and in relation to all the linguistic signs that give the expression “most real being” its sense. There does not have to be a “most real being” actually for there to be a “most real being” strategically. And, we can even add, the strategy of “the most real being” is more real than the doubtful actuality of the thing itself. In the Middle Ages the strategy of the most real being was deadly, and we can argue that the strategy of the most real being continues to linger in deadly form in society and international politics today.

When we say that the “strategy” is more real than reality, the reference is to two basic things in archive theology: the production of things, and the horizon of things produced. It is in the act of production that there is a consequent reinforcement of strategies, and this constant reinforcement or even constant re-enactment means that the horizon of the event (its historic sense) is made actual in an experience of recognition. We can say then that the experience of recognition is an epistemic event of power-knowledge that produces the horizon. For example, so-called “Islamic fundamentalism,” as Ebru Thwaites indicated,¹⁴ is the power-knowledge event around which is produced the horizon of Homeland Security. The event is the recognition (the location of power-knowledge), whether justified or not, of fundamentalism, and the horizon of the event emerges in the apparatuses of the archive; the horizon is the way the archive “kicks-in,” so to speak, through the productive strategies of recognition.¹⁵ Now, the “event” here of fundamentalism is not isolated. It does not just happen. Since the horizon is the *episteme* or reasoning of the archive that

14. Thwaites, “Review of David Galston’s *Archives and the Event of God*,” 291–92.

15. Keep in mind that in Archive Theology a recognition is similar but not the same as Husserl’s notion of *Vorzeichnen* (pre-sketching: anticipating and to a degree pre-determining the thing in advance of its full experience). *Vorzeichnen* is quite private in Husserl, and he only attempts to counteract this limitation in his last “introduction” to phenomenology, *The Crisis of European Sciences*. It seems that every work of Husserl’s was an introduction to phenomenology, and this makes a certain sense. Since phenomenology travels backwards, each work must precede and introduce the one before. In an archive, by contrast, recognition is intended socially and in relation to power-knowledge. It is a product and is productive rather than pre-structural like *Vorzeichnen*.

kicks-in with the event, the horizon is the always already present setting of the sense of an event. The archive analysis in this way is a more perceptive social analysis than traditional hermeneutics. It is what sets Foucault's analogies in history apart from Derrida's, where Foucault can be said to hold the texture of history in his concerns for power, epistemic events, and the horizon of events. So, in the example of fundamentalism, archive analysis will hold that fundamentalism is a product of the archive in which it appears. It is an expression of forces circulating in the archive and producing its horizon. Fundamentalism is a "recognition" within a specific circulation of power that folds back on—reinvests—the horizon in the productivity of strategic values. This does not mean that fundamentalism should be judged evil or good. Such a judgment searches in the depth of things for the nature of things. Archive theology, like post-structuralism, stays on the surface. The point is the productivity of fundamentalism as a strategy; the question is about why this "strategy" is making sense in our time, and if there are not ways to counteract a strategy that has proven itself so harmful.

Now comes the hardest but the most central concept: the forces expressed in events create the horizon that folds back on the event as the setting of its sense. Both Deleuze and Foucault have the concept of the "folding back" of power,¹⁶ and here in archive theology that concept is expressed as the return of the event to the horizon as its sense.¹⁷ The event of fundamentalism produces an horizon of insecurity, then the horizon folds back as the justification of Homeland Security—the justification of violence against violence. It is to be sure hard to make these concepts of events, horizons, and the folding back of horizons sound practical, but they are incredibly practical: an event like colonialism produces the horizon of the sense of colonialism and thus encourages the repetition of the event. The British empire goes into India ostensibly to engage in trade, but the act of creating ports of trade and holding properties of value in an unstable political environment¹⁸ produced an horizon that justified (folded back) further occupation. The system of colonialism was and remains, in the many traces of its legacy, a system of power-knowledge events that formed and folded back an horizon of justified occupation—a *raison d'être* or system of reasoning for colonialism.

In an archive, events produce an operating system of signification. They produce, that is, an horizon that folds back as the sense of things. This is why

16. Deleuze attributes this idea to Foucault, but it seems the expression really comes from Deleuze's analysis of Foucault. See Deleuze, *Foucault*. One can say quite seriously that Deleuze understood Foucault and the implications of Foucault's thought significantly better than Foucault did.

17. It is a type of haunting of the event in the horizon and gives us another way to think about hauntology.

18. The era was that of regional states replacing the collapsing Mughal empire.

an event is “power” and a system of repetition is power-knowledge: the repetition of colonial acts, for example, was the power-knowledge expression of a so-called enlightened British society.

In relation to the sense of things, then, there are strategic acts and counter-acts. Since the event produces the horizon that folds back as sense, there is an apologetic relationship to the folding back—which consists of strategic acts—and a transgressive relationship to the folding back—which consists of counter-strategic acts. Archive horizons come into being—that is, operate and collapse, persist and desist—in the activities of strategies and counter-strategies. Sometimes counter-strategies go unnoticed. Sometimes they are anonymous.¹⁹ The horizon can give a certain permission that allows a counter-strategy to make more sense than the strategy it replaces. Foucault talked about the strategy of prisons, which is to reduce crime, but prisons effectively increase crime. Thus the archive of criminal justice produces the non-sense of its strategy and the sense of its counter-strategy. When this occurs, there is an anonymous shift in the archive arising in its forms of recognition. In relation to prisons specifically, Foucault, along with the public support of Jean-Paul Sartre, actively sought prison reform, which was an obviously sensible (counter-strategic) goal given the (strategic) non-sense of prisons.²⁰ Other times, a counter-strategy focuses on a movement or an individual. Any movement of justice-making can be at once a counter-strategy set against the anonymity of the archival operations that either do not notice or have too much to gain from an unjust situation. In Canadian history, Louis Riel (1844–1885), as a member of the métis nation, experienced injustices aimed at indigenous peoples in Canada. He also defended the rights of the French-speaking population of Western Canada. In the system of the archive of Canada at that time his revolt was threatening, unjustified, and treasonous. He was executed. But his acts changed the archive of a national experience, and today his statue stands on the legislative grounds of Manitoba and there is a public holiday in his honor. He became the focal point of a significant counter-strategy that now defines a new meaning for his life and that continues to draw a nation to repentance. A counter-strategy corrupts the dominant archival horizon, it transgresses, and in so doing it produces the potential, which we can call the counter-horizon or even the promise of a reformed archive. Riel had no idea that this would be his fate, but neither do other such figures—like Jesus and Paul—have any clue in their lifetimes what will come after. The point is that a philosopher can look back on a figure of history and see in that figure a theme or a trace of something different that was not in the immediate circumstances of the horizon. Despite the protests of professional historians and the all too com-

19. “Anonymous” is an important word in Archive Theology that holds a second meaning I will explain in my comments about Paul.

20. The advocacy for prison reform was through the *Groupe d’information sur les prison*, founded in 1971 by Michel Foucault, Jean-Marie Domenach, and Pierre Vidal-Naquet.

mon critique of “anachronism,” a philosopher is justified to see in an historical figure a counter-horizon that the figure did not know about.²¹

Archive studies, then, can be summarized with these terse statements. An archive is the composite activity of signifying strategies; the employment of a strategy is an event; power is the productivity of events; events fold back the horizon onto the setting to form sense (the active *episteme*). In addition, archive studies can take two forms. They can take the form of the study of apologetic events, and they can take the form of the study of transgressive events.²² When the events mentioned occur with and through theological rhetoric, then the study of the events is archive theology.

Paul as Rhetorical Event

When talk is directed toward a “new” Paul, that is, a way to see Paul outside of the traditional narrative of conversion, from the archivist point of view the discussion centers on a different way in which Paul is rhetorically an “event” in an archive. This means that the horizon in which Paul resided is a rhetorical setting, the employment of signifiers by Paul is a rhetorical strategy, and the way in which his strategy was employed is either an apologetic or transgressive event. This kind of inquiry is different from the traditional questions about Paul’s identity, whether Jewish or proto-Christian, and Paul’s theology, whether conservative or liberal. In place, the central concern of his rhetoric draws attention to the way in which certain linguistic signs are “strategic values” that hold certain functions in Paul’s rhetoric.

One of the pioneering scholars advocating a new understanding of Paul was Lloyd Gaston (1929–2006). In many respects Gaston went further in his analysis of Paul than most scholars both before and after his career. In a significant book, *Paul and the Torah*, Galston collected his key essays on Paul. He demonstrated the difficulties involved in translating Paul, and he offered some genuinely insightful reinterpretations of Paul. Like anyone who works on sincere problems, Gaston both knew and did not know what he was doing. His main idea, however, seems sound. For Paul, “Christ” is a gentile version of the Torah. This means, for Gaston, that Albert Schweitzer was right at least about one thing: the central problem for Paul is not justification by faith but life in the body of

21. In “Historical Integrity, Interpretive Freedom: The Philosopher’s Paul and the Problem of Anachronism,” Paula Fredriksen suggests the philosophers are guilty of reading Paul in a-historical, anachronistic ways. While Fredriksen’s concern holds merit, it only goes so far. Half of the problem of history is getting history right, but the other half of history involves understanding it well. To put this another way, history as a discipline cannot speak without the philosophy of history as its companion. The philosophy of history names the event of history, which is not the same as the discipline of history. Equally, sometimes the event of history is more historical than history.

22. There are, of course, many “in-betweens” to the two forms named here.

Christ. In the Scholars Version of the letters of Paul, Christ is translated as “the Anointed,” and this gives sense to why life in the body is central to Paul. It is so because the Anointed is a trustworthy representative of God’s intention for the nations. To put this in an archive theology way, the event of Paul’s rhetoric takes place in the horizon of Roman imperial theology, and in this archive Paul expresses in Christ a counter-strategy rhetoric. That is the heart of the “new” Paul. Much of this insight rests on understanding how Paul uses the word, the strategic signifier, “law” (*nomos*). I will focus briefly but specifically on Gaston’s interesting and still unique approach to translating *nomos* in Paul’s letter to the Galatians.

In *Paul and the Torah*, Gaston claimed that we have to assume Paul knew as much about the Torah (covenantal nomism) and salvation (soteriology) in ancient Judaism as E. P. Sanders does.²³ In other words, Gaston is saying in his often subtle but comical way, that it would be both peculiar and implausible to assume that Paul did not know the Judaism of his own time. To think that Paul was guilty of a “fundamental misapprehension” of the Torah or that he was so Hellenized that he forgot the Torah is the promise of salvation constitutes a certain foolishness similar to that of Gal 3:1.²⁴ Against such conclusions that ought to be implausible, Gaston holds the reasonable assumption that Paul did understand the Torah and that the problems with Paul arise from the fact that many Christian commentators do not. In particular, Gaston focused on *nomos*, usually translated as law. If the way Paul uses “law” seems unacceptable from a Jewish perspective, this ought to mean that Paul did not mean it this way and that it is far more likely we are not hearing—and perhaps even can no longer hear—the rhetoric of Paul. Salvation comes from the Torah, for the Torah is the promise of salvation; it ought to be assumed that Paul believed this with all his heart.

Why then would Paul write, “Those from (ἐξ) the works of the law are under a curse” (3:10)?²⁵ Gaston has a significant hypothesis about what Paul means, and an archivist can hold interest here because Gaston’s version of the rhetoric of Paul constitutes, in the horizon in which Paul participates, a counter-strategy directed at the people of the nations in Galatia. Gaston assumes Paul knows the Torah is a blessing and on several occasions makes this advantage of the Jewish people clear. “We who are justified by birth and not Gentile [*ethnē*] sinners know that a Gentile is not justified by works of the law but rather through the faithfulness of Christ” (Gal 2:15). We might note that *ethnē* is better translated in

23. Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 65.

24. Gaston refers to Schoeps, who charged Paul with a misapprehension, and to Betz, who suggested Paul denied the contemporary Pharisaic understanding of salvation.

25. It is interesting how Gaston employs “from” in his translation of this passage. Very few translators, from what I have observed, translate the preposition this way in English. Where Gaston read “for all who are from,” most translations have “for all who rely on” (NRSV, ESV, and SV). This minor word translated differently can make a major difference.

the Scholars Version (SV) as a member of the nations, but Gaston's point stands. Paul sees the people of the nations as those under the law (works) who are distinct from those born under the promises of the law (Torah). The work of Christ, that is, the faithfulness of Christ to the will of God, was to include the nations under the promises. Regretfully, Paul only has one Greek word to talk about these two types of law, the law of works and the law of promises. The works of the law are the powers that confine and condemn the nations, whereas the promises of the law are liberation and justification for the nations. That there can be two senses to one word is not only confusing but sometimes baffling. How does one translate "tell me you who desire to be subject to the law, will you not listen to the law" (Gal 4:21; NRSV)? The Scholars Version does not solve the difficulties of this verse when it offers, "Those who want to live under the law, tell me: Don't you hear what the law says?" Are both laws the same in this phrase? The reader is left to wonder both what the translators think and what Paul is rhetorically offering.

To Gaston, Paul employs irony with *nomos* because he can use it in two senses, but English translators do not always hear the distinction. Gaston otherwise and uniquely translates the passage with two senses employed: "Tell me you who want to be under the law, do you not listen to the Torah?" With one word Paul is able to create a contrast of worldviews, what Funk called an antithetical couplet.²⁶ In Paul's case, the couplet of law and Torah occurs in the single word *nomos*. Gaston creatively picked up the distinction and expressed it in his translation, but many hide this distinction when in English only one word is used. The difference from the archivist point of view is not just the missed irony; it is the missed transgression. Paul is transgressing works of the law with the promises of the Torah.

Gaston noted the transgression in the way he commented on how the Jewish people in Paul's lifetime knew and distinguished themselves from the people of the nations. While God is one, for Paul God was not equally available to the nations as to the Jews except through the indirect routes of *stoicheia* ("natural elements"). Paul is explicit. The people of the nations who now know Christ had formerly served "gods who were not gods" (Gal 4:8), gods that were "weak" and "impotent *stoicheia*" (Gal 4:9), and that made the people of Galatia and other nations like "children" who were under a "guardian" (Gal 4:2) in need of a disciplinarian (Gal 4:3), that is, "under the law" (Gal 3:25; 4:5). Gaston makes this point admitting that "it would have been much simpler for everyone if Paul had used a different word than *nomos* when he wanted to speak of the law outside the context of the covenant."²⁷ Unfortunately, Paul did no such thing, and a modern translator is left to wonder when *nomos* refers to being inside the

26. Funk, *Honest to Jesus*, 151.

27. Gaston, *Paul and the Torah*, 43.

covenant and when it refers to being outside the covenant, when it is Torah and when it is works of the law. When Paul uses expressions like “works of the law” (Gal 2:16), “curse of the law” (Gal 3:13), and “the law works wrath” (Rom 4:15), it should be obvious that he does not mean the Torah.

When returning to the problematic Gal 3:10, it is now clear why Gaston places significance on translating ἐξ directly as “from.” If the Scholars Version had followed suit, it would have relayed the Greek as “Whoever is from traditional religious practices is under a curse” and recognize that Paul knows this because the Torah says so: “Cursed is everyone who does not remain in all the things written in the book of the law to do them” (Deut 27:26; Gaston). Paul exaggerates Deuteronomy, both in making his point and in confusing the sense of the Deuteronomic passage. But presumably he has done so deliberately to effect a rhetorical point. He wants to say to the Galatians that their syncretistic practices, like combining circumcision and observing times of the year, are the works of the law, that is, works derived from natural elements. Having been given the “world transforming news” (gospel) about how indirect and abusive natural practices have been replaced by the direct and promised faithfulness of Christ, the Galatians have turned back to the works of the law. They seek promises under works, and they act like they are “from” the works. Paul employs a rhetoric that undermines if not shames the Galatian practices. He reverses their reversion back to natural elements, indicating how embarrassing it is for them to start with wisdom (the spirit) and return to materialism (the flesh). “Are you so ignorant,” Paul asks, “that you start with metaphors and end with literalism” (Gal 3:3; Galston)? And then, when he reaches the point of 3:10, Paul employs the ambiguous *nomos* to undermine the whole sense of the order—the foundation or justification or horizon—of the Galatian experience. To expand the sense of that phrase, Paul poses the question, “if you continue to live as if you are derived from the works of the law, you will not hear how the Torah condemns those who live outside it.” Paul’s rhetoric gets away from him, and we do not know which law is which in his charged phrase, but it makes sense to think that Paul understands the Torah explains the curse over the nations rather than that Torah legalism is a curse.

Gaston’s point also makes archive sense, for Paul is transgressing the normal expectation of life in the nations with the new expectations of the promises (of the Torah) faithfully brought to the nations in Christ. Paul, in his rhetorical style, identifies with the nations and speaks to the people of the nations as if he were one with them. He uses the contrast of old and new not for himself but for the sake of this identification. Sometimes he slips and speaks to the people of the nations as a Jew, accusatively saying, “Formerly you were slaves.” But other times Paul is with them, sharing their identity as former slaves, saying, “God’s Anointed set us free” (Gal 5:1; SV). Paul already knows the promises and was already “from” the promises (born of them), so he does not need to be set free. But rhetorically he speaks as a member of the nations and employs “us” out of

his identification with their status. This means that for Paul there are not only two senses to *nomos* but also two senses to *ethnē*. There is an older sense of *ethnē*, which refers to people bound in ignorance and enslaved in the elements of the world (Gal 4:3), but now in place of this older order of the *ethnē* there is a new, transgressive, community of *ethnē* who are known by God and are the children of promise. In another troubling metaphor, the old *ethnē*, as Paul has it, are the children of Hagar and the new *ethnē* are the children of Sarah. The old remain slaves; the new are heirs to the promises (Gal 3:21ff.).²⁸

This brings us to a point where archive theology can indicate what is at stake in the rhetoric of Paul and where one of the significant insights about the “new” Paul can be emphasized. Bernard B. Scott, in *The Real Paul*, places some focus on the underlying revolution—to use an anachronistic but surely appropriate word—of which Paul is an advocate among the new communities. The new *ethnē* of promise effectively do not hold the same “strategic value system,” the same regime of truth, exercised in the old. They transgress the old and fold back a new order in the archive horizon. They do this in many ways, but Scott reminds us of the setting or archive in which this occurs. The features of the Roman horizon that fold back the normal practices of life include the assumed weakness of women, the assumed centrality of Roman family values, and the assumed civilization of the Roman way. Paul, in contrast, when recognizing the apostleship of Junia and the ministry of several collegial women (such as Aquila, Phoebe, Prisca, and others), counter-values women participating in the body of the Anointed. Paul also undermines Roman family values with his equal emphasis on male and female partners (1 Cor 7:1ff.), and transforms the Roman way, in a fashion typical from the Jewish perspective of that time, from morality to immorality founded upon idolatry. Pauline communities, like Philippi, who got the point, reverse the world order in which they lived by placing Roman heroic gods underneath the glory of the Anointed who humbled himself to become like one of a defeated nation. One cannot project back on antiquity ideals about equality that we hold today, and cannot fail to notice that women in the first century Roman empire did hold certain powers,²⁹ but it is still significant that in Paul’s reversals, as Scott indicates, “the crucified one is God’s Anointed” who “corrodes the implication of any compromise with the empire.”³⁰ What is significant, Scott implies, is how Paul folds back the horizon in acts of transgression for the purpose of re-setting the sense of the archive on a final foundation of justice. Paul, of course, expected justice to arrive imminently. He expected the founding of Jerusalem as the central governing body in

28. The allusion to Hagar and Sarah is troubling for a couple of reasons. One is that Paul does not name Sarah but only Hagar, and the second is that over time Hagar would emerge as a central, liberating, figure in Islam.

29. Corley, *Women and the Historical Jesus*, 141.

30. Scott, *The Real Paul*, 236.

a transformed creation. Equally, he assumed that the Torah was the revelation of this very aim, and his evidence for this was the Anointed. But what makes Paul transgressive is not this vision. It is the way in which this vision, despite how none of it ever came to pass, opened a way to be in the world transgressively. The Anointed in Paul is counter-strategy; the Anointed is the ironic corrosion of the normal that will finally reveal the abnormality of the normal. Counter-strategy is that which resides in the normal horizon as its corrosive agent. Both the rhetoric of the historical Jesus and the authentic Paul strike this startling note. In parable, Jesus employs the corrosive image of leaven and of mustard seeds that undermine authority, but in Paul, Jesus becomes the corrosive element. The Anointed became a curse of the law, someone outside the Torah³¹ for the sake of the nations who were outside the Torah and under a curse.

Archive theology, in this analysis, sees in Paul the rhetorical activity of transgression that rested on his basic vision of a transformed world order. If the vision is placed in brackets, such that we are not side-tracked by a transformation that never happened, the effectiveness of the transgression can be discussed. One might say that while Paul was incredibly effective in the memory of the Church, in his immediate lifetime his effect was limited to a few scattered communities among the nations humiliated under Roman defeat. He enabled, perhaps inspired by Second Isaiah, a rhetorical strategy in which a defeated people could think of themselves as the very vehicle of salvation. Despised and rejected, they are, in the body of the Anointed, heirs to the promises. Who then is the God of Paul in light of God being the power of corrosion that dwells among the despised?

The God of Paul

For Paul, God acted in the Anointed because of the faithfulness of the Anointed to the righteousness of God. In this way, God became, as it were, activated toward the nations because of the faithfulness. The Christian Church historically claimed the God of Paul as an independent, true reality transcending the false, human reality. But in the rhetoric of Paul, the independence of God is not central. God is only indirectly accessed through the faithfulness of the Anointed. It is due to the faithfulness that Paul knows God acted to extend the promise. So, Paul does not have "faith in God"; neither does God "exist" directly for Paul. Rather, the faithfulness of the Anointed created a ripe condition for God to act. Paul recognized God because the Anointed acted faithfully, and the recognition

31. In this case, Paul, in his ambiguous way, indicates that if you hang on a tree you are outside the Torah and therefore cursed (corrupt). So, the Anointed in the crucifixion becomes a curse (outside) of the Torah in order to save those outside the Torah who are in a cursed state. Here again, because Paul uses "law" (*nomos*) in two ways, it is essentially impossible to know exactly what he means. In considering this problem according to the new Paul, the rhetoric cannot be construed such that the Torah is the problem. For Paul, rather, the Torah reveals the solution.

that Paul experienced even surprised him as one untimely born (2 Cor 15:18). If the Anointed had not been faithful, the time of salvation for the nations would not be upon us. So, in effect, it is the Anointed who made God take on a new shade of meaning, who awoke God from a dogmatic slumber.

Though the authentic Paul would not like the conclusion that God's activity in the Anointed renders God as an idea secondary to the faithfulness of the Anointed, for it is the faithfulness that makes the promises actual, still Paul expresses the promises in this way. They are an alternative horizon. The promises come about because of the faithfulness, and the faithfulness is evident in the alternative communities of the Anointed where imperial forms of power corrode. Paul's gospel strangely shifts the reality of God from God to the Anointed and then to the communities of the Anointed. It is at the level of the communities that the faithfulness of the Anointed has its meaning. The alternative promises gained through the Anointed are set at the transgressive edge of the norms the nations had heretofore known. The first thing that might be said about Paul and the God of Paul from the archivist point of view is that the reality of God is not about God but about the strategies of transgressive communities.

Then, if consideration is given to Paul as an event of an archive, there are at least three more highlights worthy of consideration. One is how Paul catches a glimpse of an alternative and how his whole rhetorical presentation involves setting this glimpse against the working norms of the empire. In his lifetime, Paul is actively a counter-strategy. Yet, secondly, over time, Paul suffers the fate of archive anonymity. He becomes not a counter-strategy site but the central site of normative power-knowledge in Christian theology. Paul is not just the author of authentic letters; indeed, the historical Paul is lost to an anonymous cluster of signifying events called "Paul." Then, in a third way, because the real Paul became an anonymous power-knowledge event in Christian theology, an archivist can focus on the absence of the "real" Paul in Christianity and the presence of the anonymous Paul.

To begin with, the way Paul catches a glimpse of a counter-strategy is as hard to pin down as his rhetoric. He seemingly refers to "revelation" for his base of authority (Gal 1:12), but it is a revelation that holds no specific details outside of his being a messenger to the nations. Then, when Paul does appeal to an astonishing revelation, he does so as if to mock the very idea of revelation (2 Cor 12:2). He describes an individual "of the Anointed" who got caught up in the third heaven. To be caught up in the "third" heaven is already a bit of a disappointment; this is not even half way to the ultimate seventh.³² But even further, the individual concerned, who perhaps is Paul, heard things that cannot be said.

32. The second book of Enoch has ten heavens, but it is presumed that the shorter version of the book, which ends at chapter 21 with the seventh heaven, is the original recitation. At the third heaven, the author describes the Garden of Eden as a place prepared for the righteous. That is not bad, but it is still not the seventh heaven where the throne of God resides, where the angel Gabriel is met, and where one is placed before the face of God.

Accordingly, what's the point? Paul exaggerates the significance of revelation not for the sake of revelation but, apparently, satire. He indulges in theological instability, which challenges the normal expectation of things. He employs a comic reversal where a heightened religious experience is deflated through humor to insignificance. Revelation does not hold a master narrative but is rather reduced to foolishness. It is indeed in foolishness (weakness) that the nations, scattered into the body of the Anointed, are to understand the promise. Paul engages counter-strategies in order to invoke a vision of a counter-horizon that is formed in his communities where the corrosive elements of a new *ethnē* are formed.

Christian theology has rarely seen the real Paul as a satirist and counter-strategy genius. More often, Paul is contrasted with Jesus. Usually, Jesus is innocent of dogma and a much gentler, more sympathetic figure; Paul is the dogmatic theologian and fervent creator of Christianity.³³ Yet, on a rhetorical level, Paul and Jesus remain very similar. Both pierce through the edge of the archive to fold back an alternative horizon where the strategy, the operating *episteme*, is called "faithfulness" by the one and the "empire of God" by the other. Equally, both suffer from a similar fate: that of anonymity. Their metaphors about God become master narratives for God. In archive theology, anonymity is the tragic fate of a metaphor when it becomes a master narrative. It means that neither the historical Jesus nor the real Paul can account for the ways in which their rhetoric produced the linguistic signs (*episteme*) of a future horizon. In the case of Jesus and Paul, the horizon was eventually called Christianity, and Paul in particular became an anonymous effect that justified the strategies of Christian theology.

The crucial second point, then, is that Paul is the anonymous effect of the history of Christian thought. Another way to say this is that the unstable rhetoric the real Paul created, as he emerged in the memory of Western history, held certain side-effects for Christian theology. These are necessarily called "anonymous" effects because they do not derive from Paul as an historical author; they derive from Paul as a power-knowledge event. Like Marx or Freud—figures who are not authors, or not only so, but literary clusters of power-knowledge effects³⁴—Paul creates historic discourse despite himself. These discourses reflect

33. This is certainly the spirit of Lüdemann in his *Paul: The Founder of Christianity*. Lüdemann is not shy to accuse Paul of a basic misunderstanding of Judaism. He also concludes that due to Paul's amalgam of Hebrew and Greek ideas, he was fundamentally different from, and a distortion of, the Jesus of history.

34. Foucault examines this distinction in the essay, "What is an Author?" 205–22. Foucault and Roland Barthes talked about an author-function and indicated that this function is a product of individualization arising through the Enlightenment era. But once that function is in operation, there can be (what I have called here) an author-event in which a certain named personality anonymously collects a regime of statements, ideas, and actions or movements. In the history of Christianity, Paul effectively becomes an author-function and anonymously creates theologies like justification by faith or action narratives like conversion. Neither of these theologies relates to the historical Paul, and yet "Paul" created as an author-function, as an event.

the anonymity of Paul as power-knowledge, and the case must be made that various theological insights, like justification by faith, while not reflective of the authentic Paul, are still Paul authentically. In other words, the productivity of strategies creates Paul and Pauline theology out of Paul, who remains anonymous in relation to these effects. The Paul of real social, historical, and ecclesial power is an anonymous Paul, a Paul who never existed. This is a genuine problem for philosophical theology because the social reality of Paul, which is Paul as power-knowledge, exists despite Paul and despite corrective efforts, such as those of Gaston or Scott, to mend Paul of his anonymous ways. The problem for philosophy in relation to history, on this level, is the anonymity of power. The philosophical question about Paul is not about Paul historically but the legacy of Paul strategically.

If Paul is anonymous in the history of Christian thought, then the third point addresses the God involved in the instability of anonymity. Paul's God is encountered indirectly in the faithfulness of the Anointed, but this makes God elusive. The God of Paul is the hope of the nations promised through the Anointed, but the Anointed, by way of crucifixion, is absent. By way of crucifixion, the Anointed "became a curse" on behalf of the nations in order that the nations might no longer be under a curse. But this makes the communities the reality of the Anointed. This makes the communities the substitute—simulacrum—of the Anointed in the absence of the Anointed. The communities are glimpses of the promise.

Much theological effort is spent defining Paul's God without reflecting on the absence of Paul's God. The divine reality for Paul is that which recedes into the horizon. The God of Paul, in absence, becomes the imperative of a new strategy of promise to be realized in community, but due to the absence of God the horizon always lays open. The new horizon for Paul, in his ironic twists and demanding imperatives, plays out as if a theater of transgression. The horizon for Paul is malleable: something to be worked, twisted, and cajoled into being the reality of the promise, but this depends on the instability of God, which comes with absence and which allows Paul to re-create God as transgressive rhetoric for the nations.

The metaphor of the promise of the Torah was for Paul about the liberation of the nations, but due to anonymity the metaphor easily slipped through the hands of the Church to become a metaphor about the Torah as "works of the law." The defining problem of religion is exactly that it can be re-strategized in different power-knowledge complexes. Paul's God can be sexist or anti-Jewish or Greek inasmuch as Paul's God can be liberating, transgressive, and visionary. There is no safeguard in religion against these eventualities. The anonymity of Paul and how it recreates Paul in power-knowledge strategies is evidence in archive theology of the sincere problem of God as a strategic-event in human history.

For the purposes of discussion, some of the significant points can be summarized. First, the main concern about Paul and Paul's God, when understood in an archive way, is not about what Paul believed. It is concern for Paul as an event, and this directs focus to Paul's rhetoric and the strategy of his rhetoric. With the help of scholars like Gaston and Scott, we can see that Paul's rhetoric, while unstable, proposes a glimpse of God as a transgressive or corrosive element in the archive of his time. This glimpse comes to Paul in the faithfulness of the Anointed. Second, there is not, though, a "real" Paul and a "false" Paul when Paul is thought about in an archive way. In place, there is a real Paul and an anonymous Paul. The first is the historical figure behind the rhetoric of the authentic letters. This Paul can be called the rhetorical Paul. The anonymous Paul is the legacy of Paul as a power-knowledge event in the archives of Western history. This anonymous Paul is no less real in the regimes of power that employed him. In archive theology, reality is not real as an independent thing but real as a real product of strategy. The question about Paul as power-knowledge strategy is sometimes even more real than the "real" Paul. Third, the philosophical question related to Paul is justifiably not about the accuracy of history. It is about the effects in history. These composite effects, even when metaphysical, form the horizon in which the strategic values of signs play out. The troubling aspect of religion is that it is anonymous. It is not properly an object of study in history but a strategic event that produces history and the manner in which certain strategies are justified as reality.

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