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CHAPTER 13

CONCLUSION

FROM VULGAR TO REFINED SKEPTICISM: FAITH IN A POST-METAPHYSICAL CONTEXT¹

It is not merely theology that is confronted with a crisis today. This is because our epoch's crisis is not concerned with any specific content of knowledge or specific region of action, but with the very notions of knowledge and praxis in general. The paradigm revolution commencing in the 14th century from Christian Platonism to Christian Nominalism resulted in a dramatic transformation with respect to what it means to know. Where Christian Platonism spoke of reality in terms of imperceptible intellect and the enduring structures of consciousness² (νοῦς) entirely independent of the transient world of materiality, Christian Nominalism has come to embrace a form of Aristotelian rationality which speaks of actual reality as the material order and of reason as providing causal explanation to events. The subsequent splitting of the sources for knowledge about God into natural and revealed theology provided a refuge for theology by maintaining a parallelism between material rationality and spiritual ultimacy. Nature can teach one about God, for by investigating the causal laws of nature one is following in the eternal footsteps of the divine. Nature, however, cannot teach one about the goal, purpose, and/or meaning of life. Nature can only tell one

¹The following is the concluding chapter of a book manuscript entitled "Strangers and Pilgrims: On the Role of Aporiai in Theology" which is in the final stages of completion.

²To avoid distorting associations with Cartesianism, Kantianism, and Neo-Kantianism, the following is employing the term "consciousness" for the Greek notion of νοῦς. Furthermore, it understands νοῦς to apply to what the entirety of the upper portion of Plato's simile of the line in Book VI of the Republic is trying to represent, i.e., it is not restricted to ideas/hypotheses, nor is it reducible to either διαίρεσις or θεωρία, nor is it self-contained mind or mere abstract reason "outside" of a world of engagement, πράξις. Plato's simile does not divide reality into two unrelated substances. Ἀγαθόν or the first principle of the whole enables the entire line not just mind. Furthermore, the first of the four classical virtues (wisdom, justice, courage, and self-control) of Greek thought, φρόνησις, means not mere abstract insight, but practical wisdom (see Max Pohlenz, *Die Stoa. Geschichte einer Geistigen Bewegung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992 <1947>), p. 126).

Paul Ricoeur speaks of νοῦς in his discussion of Aristotle's notion of friendship and the Other as "what is best in one." See Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 184-185. Ricoeur, as does the present project, wishes to avoid any suggestion that his project is concerned with Spirit in the sense of a Hegelian meta-narrative. See *ibid.*, p. 249 and 255, and chapter 9, "Should We Renounce Hegel?," in *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988). Nevertheless, the present project seeks to rethink "spirit" precisely in the sense of νοῦς, and, hence, wishes to rethink spirit in a non-Hegelian sense. Therefore, it disagrees with Ricoeur's judgment that Geist (spirit) "... seems to be superfluous in an investigation centered on selfhood." (*Oneself as Another*, p. 240)

the “facts” of life. Hence, revealed theology, the scriptures, complimented natural theology by providing an empirical source of information about the ultimate purpose of life, i.e., salvation.³ Although it disturbed

³In the first half of the nineteenth century the conflict between the “Catastrophists,” those arguing that the geological record can only be accounted for by acknowledging supranatural causal agency given that the earth is only some 6,000 years old on the basis of scriptural calculations, and the “Uniformitarians,” those proponents of the newly emerging science of geology who maintained that the geological record can be explained by uniform causality throughout an unimaginably extensive length of time, was summed up: to surrender the notion of catastrophic cause means the loss of God; where, on the other hand, to surrender the notion of the uniformity of cause means the loss of science. See Charles Coulston Gillispie, *Genesis and Geology: The Impact of Scientific Discoveries upon Religious Beliefs in the Decades Before Darwin* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), p. 121.

Both alternatives are too simplistic, for assuming uniform causality throughout all time to account for natural, material phenomena does not deny (or confirm!) “nomothetic” creation, i.e., the Christian Aristotelian notion that God established the eternal laws and material conditions for nature to continue creating on its own. On the other hand, if by science one means “knowledge” as is implied by the root “scientia,” science is easily seen to be no threat to “theology.” If one isn’t convinced that the relationship between religion and science is a simple contrast, then one may defend a form of parallelism (to use Ian Barbour’s descriptive categories). See chapter 5 of Ian Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1971). The assumption is that one can hold religion and science in parallel, i.e., religion is concerned with the meaning of experience; science with the facts. Hence, theologians have embraced the materialist epistemology of the natural sciences while still carving out a niche for themselves by defending nomothetic beginnings and the insight that nature can only say what life is; not what the meaning, purpose, and goal of life is. The former is the preserve of the natural sciences; the latter that of theology.

Barbour also speaks of a derivative relationship between religion and science in which religious judgments are “confirmed” by scientific insights, e.g., the Heisenberg uncertainty principles confirm the notion of freedom, the Big Bang theory of the universe suggests history has a beginning and an end, or the paradoxical character of the theory of light, requiring contradictory models of wave and particle theories, confirms the paradoxical character of all experience. The derivation model is a sophisticated version of the God of the gaps which is committed to a materialist ontology and seeks to gain confirmation for non-verifiable components of experience on the basis of that materialist ontology.

Parallelism between religion and science is as old as the natural/revealed theology distinction, and even Galileo argued, quoting the Vatican’s cardinal librarian, that “the Bible teaches how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go.” See Owen Gingerich, “Hypothesis, Proof, and Censorship or How Galileo Changed the Rules of Science” in *Colloquium: The Australian and New Zealand Theological Review* 25/2 (1993), p. 59. Gingerich, Professor of Astronomy/History of Science at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astro Physics, reports this aphorism emerges in the debate over the church’s acceptance of Galileo’s defense of the Copernican system. He demonstrates that several popular conceptions about the Copernican revolution and the Church are erroneous, e.g., “[n]owhere in the decrees was it actually stated that the Copernican doctrine was heretical” (p. 61), how Galileo was never excommunicated but censored for disobeying the Holy See (p. 64), and that the distress over the heliocentric model clearly appears to be an Italian ecclesiastical political affair (p. 61), i.e., outside of Italy there is little evidence that the writings of Copernicus were “corrected,” for even in orthodox Spain his works were recommended (p. 61). There appears to have been a far greater awareness by the ecclesiastical authorities that reality is a limited human model. Gingerich suggests that Galileo changed the rules of science by shifting to coherence rather than empirical evidence as the fundamental criterion for scientific truth (p. 65). If that is the case, science is just beginning to catch up with him.

some that the transition to empirical rationality pulled humanity “down” exclusively into the world of natural causality, no one seemed disturbed that this paradigm revolution limited the sources for all truth to the senses: truth is learned either from nature or from the scriptures, i.e., there are and must be empirical warrants and backings for all truth claims.

Hence, the stage for the conflict between natural and revealed theology of the so-called Copernican revolution in the 17th century (although Copernicus died in 1543, it is not until Kepler and Galileo in the 17th century that one may speak of the emergence of a consensus with respect to the heliocentric universe) was set already in the 14th century with the emergence of Nominalism following the West’s gaining access to the Aristotelian corpus in the 13th century.⁴ A process began here which resulted in a shift in understanding Being from having a “quantitative” meaning (i.e., things having Being to the extent of the quantity of their participation in what is unchanging in the imperceptible dimension of intellect) to having a “locative meaning,” (i.e., things “are” or exist to the extent that they occupy a particular place in the material world).⁵

Nominalism rests upon the conviction that the material dimension of experience contains the explanation (meaning causal explanation) not only of empirical events but of mental abstraction and life, as well. According to nominalism, ideas do not exist independent of consciousness. They are mere names for abstractions accomplished by the mind’s synthesizing perceptions of the external world.⁶ The physical is what is enduring! The mental is transient! Platonic realism, on the other hand, rests upon exactly the opposite metaphysical conviction. The empirical world is derived from mental reality, since the material

⁴John Nijenhuis in “‘Ens’ Described as ‘Being or Existent’” in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 68/1 (Winter 1994), p. 3, has pointed to the fascinating fact that “[w]hile St. Thomas uses the VERB *esse* close to half a million times, the verb *existere* is found a mere 4,000 or so times. Equally revealing, of these 4,000 verb forms, more than 3,000 are participles which, as a rule, function as the participles for *esse*.” Nijenhuis observes: “The present writer belongs to the small chorus of language-sensitive medievalists who feel pressed to sing *extra chorum* because they have conclusive evidence that the translation of the Latin *esse* (as also of the Greek *einai*) by the usual existence-terminology leads to a flawed interpretation of the ‘onto-logical’ thought world where use is made of the ‘being’-term *ens* (and its Greek equivalent). (Ibid., p. 1) A revolution is contained in Nijenhuis’ paragraph (ibid., p. 5): “The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that the very word ‘exist’ is not yet found in Cooper’s *Dictionary* of 1565, and seems at a loss to explain this when it states that ‘[T]he late appearance of the word [read: verb] is remarkable.’ Shakespeare uses the verb only three times, and in one of these three cases it is clearly in the etymologically suggested sense, ‘The orbs FROM whom we do exist.’ Descartes, also writing in the 16th century, seems to be aware, that something was astir in the world of language because his *Cogito ergo SUM* sometimes contains the addition, both in the Latin text and the French translation made under his supervision, ‘*vel EXISTO.*’ Kant, on the other hand, writing as late as the second half of the 18th century, was blandly unaware that ‘something had happened’ in the world of being and existence or, to use the two German verbal infinitives, *sein* and *existiren*. For he freely interchanges the two verbs, along with the German ‘*es ist*’: this thing ‘*existirt, ist*’ and, God ‘*ist, oder es ist ein Gott.*’”

⁵I am indebted to John Nijenhuis for this distinction between “quantitative” and “locative” meanings for Being. See, Nijenhuis, “‘Ens’ Described as ‘Being or Existent’,” pp. 7-8.

⁶Fernando Inciarte argues that Aristotle has been mis-represented by the representational theory of forms, i.e., the ectypal theory of universals that argues that universals are a posteriori abstractions. See Inciarte, “Der Begriff der Seele in der Philosophie des Aristoteles,” trans. by F. Dirlmeier, in *Seele. Ihre Wirklichkeit, ihr Verhältnis zum Leib und zur menschlichen Person*, ed. by Klaus Kremer (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), pp. 61 and 62.

world is an inadequate copy (it can be other than the way it appears to be) of perfect ideas (which can't be other than what they are). Analogous to the way an individual creates an artifact, i.e., making a copy of a mental model, Platonic realism spoke of the world as a copy of a mental system of eternal ideas. The mental is what is enduring! The physical is transient!

Platonic metaphysics lost credibility in this 14th century revolution, because it could neither give a satisfactory account, much less proof, of its universals (i.e., its inability to define universals⁷) nor could it give an adequate account of the origin of the physical world out of the mental (i.e., the problem of "participation"/μέθεξις in Being).⁸ The pragmatic success of commerce, energized by the Crusades and the Hanseatic League, equally challenged the model of reality associated with Platonic metaphysics.

The presumption of the mathematization of reality⁹ as a consequence of the Nominalist and Copernican revolutions and shaping the epistemology of contemporary physics is that all experience can be explained on the basis of material reality and causal calculating rationality. This is a metaphysical claim that is exactly 180° from the Greek world shaping the Western tradition, including Christian theology, down to the 14th century. Such mathematization of "reality" is a direct result from Galileo's distinguishing between "primary" and "secondary" qualities. The primary qualities of mass and motion are quantifiable in the "new" sense of "objective," mathematically measurable and spatially located things unlike such secondary non-quantifiable qualities of "subjective" taste, color, etc. The triumph of objective, locative quantifiability labelled all that was not quantifiable as subjective capriciousness (mere "emotion" in the positivist sense) to the loss of any value for consciousness except as a more or less capable (yet accidental in the sense of non-essential) witness to material, measurable reality.

The theological crisis engaging us today in particular, but the epistemological crisis in general, has emerged as the confidence in both these metaphysical alternatives has crumbled. For three centuries Western humanity has been fascinated, if not blinded by, calculating, causal rationality, but now recognition of our lack of immediate access to the physical world indicates the limits of the materialist paradigm so extensively embraced and cultivated in the Western world since the 14th century just as that paradigm revolution indicated the limits of the idealist paradigm.

The benefits from the materialist paradigm, of course, have been incalculable, and no one would claim that there should be a return to the pre-Nominalist world. But the costs have been high, as well! Technology is both a blessing and a curse depending upon the kind of understanding driving it. Having let the genie of epistemological materialism out of the bottle, however, there is no putting it back.

⁷It is not possible to state both what a number of particulars have in common (similarity) that simultaneously distinguishes those particulars from everything else (difference). This is the insight of Socrates. See Plato's Euthyphro and Apology as well as Grundprobleme der großen Philosophen. Philosophie des Altertums und des Mittelalters, ed. by Josef Speck (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), p. 23.

⁸Both of these challenges to Platonic metaphysics are found in Aristotle. See, for example, Metaphysics 1078b30-1079b3: "... if the ideas and the things participating in them have the same idea, it will be something they have in common ... But if they do not have the same idea in common, then they have only the same name." Hume pointed out in Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1982), Part VII, p. 47 and Part VIII, pp.52-53, that all experience teaches that mind is dependent upon vegetation, hence, if God is the first cause, then God must be a vegetable.

⁹For the significance of Galileo and the mathematization of reality see Edmund Husserl, "Galileo's mathematization of nature" in The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

Nevertheless, the turn toward materialism epistemologically as well as experientially has, above all, resulted in spiritual poverty as the human species has pursued the calculation, prediction, manipulation, and control of what is accessible to the senses at the expense of experience itself which is inaccessible to the senses.

Simply observing the epistemological limits of materialism is not going to result in the undermining of general confidence in, or limit the desire to pursue, materiality. Perhaps the greatest barrier to what can be seen as a necessary course correction is that, what was once understood in the Western tradition by uneducated and educated alike (Cynics and Stoics, Christians and Pagans) to be the very framework and content of experience, i.e., intangible consciousness (νοῦς), has lost all worth except as an instrument or tool.¹⁰ One is either blessed or not blessed with a good mental instrument. The consequence is that the retrieval of human spirituality requires acquiring “knowledge” of what once entirely and exclusively defined one’s pre-consciously understood reality. With life defined narrowly in terms of the senses, one has to “learn” that one cannot touch, smell, taste, hear, or see one’s own experience -- that very dimension “above nature” which makes one a member of a human community and defines the meaning of culture. One surely does not have to be an intellectual to recognize the non-material nature of experience, but the exotic character of such awareness, given its deviation from everything that is counted as worthwhile in the world today, makes it appear like it is the preserve of intellectuals, hence, unfathomable and irrelevant to the average person in the pew much less on the street.

1) The Crisis of Reason: Two Kinds of Rationality

The first step, then, on the path of spiritual and theological renewal in an age of post-metaphysical materialism is the recognition of the epistemological limits of materialism. This is what Thomas Kuhn was wrestling with in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* as he came to realize that reality as an exogenous world external to and/or independent from consciousness eludes any and all attempts to reach it.¹¹ Rather, reality is a communal, mental model (a sociological paradigm consisting of

¹⁰In the vocabulary of Plato’s simile of the line, understanding is now called reason and Platonic reason has been forgotten.

¹¹Paul Ricoeur’s theory of “threefold mimesis” describes the mediating character of all understanding as an arc from practical experience over emplotment in language/narrative back to practical experience. (See (Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, trans. by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 53.) Practical experience, however, is not direct and immediate experience. Practical experience both prior and subsequent to emplotment “... is always already articulated by signs, rules, and norms. It is always already symbolically mediated.” (Ibid., p. 57) For his discussion of threefold mimesis, see chapter 3, “Time and Narrative: Threefold *Mimesis*” in *ibid.*, pp. 52-87. Ricoeur’s point is that all understood mediation influences acting. “It is the task of hermeneutics ... to reconstruct the set of operations by which a work lifts itself above the opaque depths of living, acting, and suffering, to be given by an author to readers who receive it and thereby change their acting (emphasis added).” (Ibid., p. 53) Speaking of the process of emplotment itself, Ricoeur writes: “Remaining in a Kantian vein, we ought not to hesitate in comparing the production of the configurational act to the work of the productive imagination ... The productive imagination is not only rule-governed, it constitutes the generative matrix of rules (emphasis added) ... [T]he productive imagination fundamentally has a synthetic function. It connects understanding and intuition by engendering syntheses that are intellectual and intuitive at the same time [precisely the function of the understanding in Plato’s simile of the line!].” (Ibid., p. 68) Ricoeur employs the term “paradigm” to speak of the “sedimented” syntheses or the “typologies” of emplotment and adds: “the labor of imagination is not born from nothing. It is bound in one way or another to the tradition’s paradigms ... deployed between the two poles of servile application

universal paradigms of exemplary past achievement and the particular experience of individuals). What Kuhn has not acknowledged in his epic making work is that even causal explanation is relative to one's sociological paradigm. As David Hume observed in the 18th century, we do not perceive cause; we perceive only effects.¹² For example, the key causal ingredient of our materialist paradigm is energy, but we don't perceive energy directly. We can only perceive (and measure!) the effects of energy. Energy is a hypothesis of the paradigm that has become a "fact." The notion of sociological paradigms and imperceptibility of cause raises serious questions about our access to the world "as it truly is." Kuhn almost reluctantly acknowledges that there is no perception independent of the lenses of a paradigm. As a historian of science, then, it is not surprising that he is obviously uncomfortable with the idea that perception is not simply the interpretation of a world that is the same for every observer.¹³

Thomas Kuhn points out, however, that science itself is engaged in a mental (read, spiritual!) modeling of physical reality without there being any means for gaining direct access, independent of the spiritual model, to the physical world of "facts" to confirm or deny the "truth" of the model. At best, one has a confidence of statistical probability that confirms the legitimacy of one's model, but there is no means or method to acquire absolute certainty -- the holy grail of the physical sciences. If empirical data accessible through the senses are the warrant for truth claims, then science cannot give us truth, for there is no direct access (Kuhn, at best, speaks of "concrete indices"¹⁴) to the world through the senses -- there is only mediated access filtered through the paradigm lenses of the observer and her/his community.

Hence, the calculating reason (*διαιρέσις*) of Aristotelian rationality, seeking causal explanation, as well as the contemplating reason (*θεωρία*) of Platonic rationality, focussing on the eternal imperceptible, immaterial, and illimitable order of reality, are inadequate options in our epoch. Both depend upon metaphysical claims (either material or intellectual) that are indefensible given our understanding of the mediated character of all experience and understanding.

2) Beyond Critical Realism and Heidegger

[requiring a hermeneutics of suspicion] and calculated deviation [dependent upon a hermeneutics of restoration], passing through every degree of 'rule-governed deformation.'" (Ibid., p. 69) But the mimetic process does not stop at the level of synthesis in emplotment. "[N]arrative has its full meaning when it is restored to the time of action and of suffering in mimesis₃." (Ibid., p. 70) In agreement with Gadamer in Truth and Method (See "The Hermeneutic Problem of Application" in Hans-Georg Gadamer, Truth and Method (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), pp. 274-278), Ricoeur insists that all reading/understanding is "application." (See *ibid.*, p. 70)

¹²"Suppose two objects to be presented to us, of which the one is the cause and the other the effect; 'tis plain, that from the simple consideration of one, or both these objects we never shall perceive the tie, by which they are united, or be able certainly to pronounce, that there is a connexion betwixt them. 'Tis not, therefore, from any one instance, that we arrive at the idea of cause and effect, of a necessary connexion of power, of force, of energy, and of efficacy. Did we never see any but particular conjunctions of objects, entirely different from each other, we shou'd never be able to form any such ideas." David Hume, "The Treatise of Human Nature. Book I. On the Understanding" in Hume: Selections, ed. by Charles W. Hendel, Jr. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 48.

¹³See, for example, Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 120-121, 192-193.

¹⁴See Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 126 and the section "Tacit Knowledge and Intuition" in the "Postscript," pp. 191-198.

It has become popular to take the attitude of “critical realism” to acknowledge the tentativeness of scientific modeling while maintaining one’s confidence that there is no better alternative for acquiring a true understanding of the world.¹⁵ Critical realism, however, neither adequately understands its content nor its conditions of possibility. It is, to be sure, a modified realism (since it acknowledges no direct access), but it remains committed to the agenda of Enlightenment rationality which seeks to acquire knowledge of the world in terms of causal explanations enabling calculated predicting of future events. Its error is not that it is incorrect (that cannot be established), but that it is too narrow!

Critical realism buys into the materialist paradigm for “common sense” and “pragmatic” reasons, but, by focussing attention exclusively in the direction of materiality, it, like Martin Heidegger, has drawn the human so far down/out into the world that any and all understanding of the human spirit and of faith is covered over in the confidence of relatively successful understanding of physical events.¹⁶

For his part, Heidegger insightfully refuses to equate the human “spirit” with the cleverness of calculating reason or a tool, but, he does reduce human spirituality down to “resolve:” “Spirit is neither empty cleverness nor the irresponsible play of the wit, nor the boundless work of dismemberment carried on by the practical intelligence; much less is it world-reason; no, spirit is a fundamental, knowing resolve toward the essence of being.” (Rektoratsrede, p. 13).¹⁷ According to Heidegger, that “knowing” resolve consists of Dasein’s (human being’s) deciding to actualize her/his ownmost possibilities as those possibilities are enabled and limited by the “world” of things present- and ready-to-hand. Heidegger’s constructive contribution is twofold: α) He overcomes Descartes’ two substance notion of spirit and world by focussing on possibility rather than actuality. In other words, rather than taking human experience to consist of two actual substances (mind and body) creating a gap (Lessing’s ugly ditch) that one must jump over, Heidegger focuses attention upon possibility which indicates Dasein’s inseparability (i.e., eliminating any “gap”) from its world of engagement: “higher than actuality stands *possibility*”¹⁸. Why? Because the

¹⁵Critical realism has its defenders among scientists, theologians, and biblical scholars. See, for example, Ian Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), pp. 172-174; Arthur R. Peacocke, *Creation and the World of Science* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 20-21, especially 40-41: “The viewpoint adopted in these lectures is that in both the scientific and theological enterprises the basic stance, the working assumption, is that of a sceptical and qualified realism--the belief that they are processes of finding out the ‘way things are’. This belief is justified, in the case of science, by its success in prediction and control. In the case of theology, it is justified by providing resources which give moral purpose, meaning and intelligibility to the individual plotting his (sic) path through life and also, so it has been well argued, by contributing to the survival of society;” and the use of the term in Londergan circles found in Ben F. Meyer, *Critical Realism and the New Testament* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1989), particularly the “seven traits of critical realism” discussed by Meyer, pp. ix-xv. A conference entitled “Critical Realism in Science and Religion” was held at the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA, March 7-9, 1986.

¹⁶Of course, the character of what counts as “successful understanding” is radically different between Heidegger and critical realists. For Heidegger, successful understanding is concerned with resolute projection of one’s ownmost possibilities undeterred by the public they world’s expectations of the self. For critical realism, successful understanding is concerned with adequate calculation, predication, manipulation, and control over events having neutralized the self as a disinterested observer.

¹⁷Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. by Ralph Manheim (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1961), p. 41.

process of understanding is a project of “projecting of possibilities” which one has only in a context of “world.¹⁹” β) Heidegger challenges any foundationalist or metaphysical grounding of experience precisely because of the role of possibility in all experience: possibility is no-thing, i.e., it is not an actual ground from which one can calculate, predict, manipulate, or control, i.e., it defies explanation. In the process of focussing on drawing our understanding of Dasein out into a world of possibilities and with the goal of overcoming metaphysical explanations, Heidegger turned away from the “spirit” of German Idealism which is a spirit of meta-narrativity explaining all “that is” as a process of non-material Oneness spilling itself out into material, historical multiplicity returning to itself only after a long process by means of which consciousness emerges out of materiality to once again experience Oneness in the unity of non-materiality. Rather than meta-narrativity, spirit, for Heidegger, means resolve in the face of one’s accountability to oneself for one’s own possibilities. Hence, he truncates the spiritual in the laudable attempt to retrieve the priority of possibility over actuality.²⁰

Critical realism similarly truncates the content of experience, for it ignores the imperceptible, immaterial, indivisible, immeasurable, and unchanging character of human spirituality, i.e., it ignores experiencing, to focus attention exclusively on the experienced, the perceptible, material, divisible, measurable, and ever changing physical world. It substitutes what is inaccessible for what alone is accessible. In short, it ignores the content of experience to concern itself with the mere appearances of

¹⁸Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Mcquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, Pub., 1962), p. 63.

¹⁹See Martin Heidegger, Section 32: Understanding and Interpretation in *Being and Time*, pp. 188-192. Paul Ricoeur employs the language of “imaginative variations” and “thought experiments” to articulate this notion of understanding as projecting of possibilities inseparable from one’s context/world. See Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, pp. 148, 159, and 288. The present project prefers the more encompassing “projecting of possibilities” to imaginative variations and/or thought experiments, because projecting of possibilities includes possibilities of which one is not consciously aware, i.e., which are concealed in the very process of projecting but which nevertheless play a crucial, sometimes determinative, role in understanding. Imaginative variations and thought experiments, while not incorrect, suggest far too much conscious control over the project of understanding.

²⁰Heidegger’s project is very Aristotelian. He has rejected Platonic realism, but, despite his embracing of Aristotle, he has redefined Aristotle’s material cause in terms of possibility (Being) rather than static actual substance (Which is more appropriately Aristotelian than to translate *ὄντῶς* as locative substance, i.e., existence. See footnote 4 above.). He rejects, therefore, Aristotle’s claim that actuality precedes possibility (e.g., *Metaphysics* 1049b11-29), at least with respect to understanding the human condition in the world, by insisting on the priority of possibility over actuality.

It should be remembered that Being and Time originated out of a project on Aristotle. See Martin Heidegger, “Phänomenologische Interpretation zu Aristoteles (Anzeige der Hermeneutischen Situation)” in *Dilthey-Jahrbuch*, 6 (1989) 234-274. This is Heidegger’s description of his writing project as part of his application in 1922 for positions in Marburg and Göttingen (*Being and Time* was published in 1927).

Despite, perhaps precisely because of, his rethinking of metaphysics and ontology, Heidegger continued to insist that the God of Christianity must be a being rather than to wrestle with the theological implications of Being as the possibility of beings (*das Sein des Seienden*). See Martin Heidegger, “Phänomenologie und Theologie.” In *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermanns, 1978), 45-67.

experience.²¹

As a method, in addition, critical realism has ignored the key insight from Kuhn that rules presuppose paradigms rather than rules defining paradigms.²² In other words, critical realism has forgotten its own conditions of possibility, i.e., one's always and already being committed to a notion of reality prior to all methodology or any investigation or explanation of events. Again, analogous to Heidegger: if language is the house of Being,²³ one must not forget that there needs to be a lot (in the fullest sense) before one can build a house!²⁴ If critical realism indicates how one best gains access to true judgments, it has forgotten that it has already committed itself to an understanding of reality before it goes looking for it! This is the fundamental role of paradigms, i.e., they consist of what Kuhn calls "quasi-metaphysical" commitments concerning the way reality "must" be. He calls them "quasi-metaphysical," because he recognizes that they are indefinable much less provable.²⁵

²¹Nietzsche observed the dissimilitude of empiricism when he wrote in "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense" in *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, translated by Daniel Breazeale (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press Inc., 1979), pp. 81-2: "... [W]hat about these linguistic conventions themselves? Are they perhaps products of knowledge, that is, of the sense of truth? Are designations congruent with things? Is language the adequate expression of all realities?"

It is only by means of forgetfulness that man can ever reach the point of fancying himself (sic) to possess a "truth" of the grade just indicated. If he will not be satisfied with truth in the form of tautology, that is to say, if he will not be content with empty husks, then he will always exchange truths for illusions. What is a word? It is the copy in sound of a nerve stimulus. But the further inference from the nerve stimulus to a cause outside of us is already the result of a false and unjustifiable application of the principle of sufficient reason ... [W]ith words it is never a question of truth, never a question of adequate expression; otherwise, there would not be so many languages. The "thing in itself" ... is likewise something quite incomprehensible to the creator of language and something not in the least worth striving for. This creator only designates the relations of things to men, and for expressing these relations he lays hold of the boldest metaphors. To begin with, a nerve stimulus is transferred into an image: first metaphor. The image, in turn, is imitated in a sound: second metaphor."

²²See Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, pp. 42-43.

²³See, for example, Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism" in William Barrett and Henry D. Aiken, *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, Vol. 3 (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 205: "Man, however, is not only a living being, who besides other faculties possesses language. Language is rather the house of Being, wherein living, man ex-sists, while he, guarding it, belongs to the truth of Being."

²⁴Ricoeur observes: "... language does not constitute a world for itself. It is not even a world. Because we are in the world and are affected by situations, we try to orient ourselves in them by means of understanding; we also have something to say, an experience to bring to language and to share.

... Language is for itself the order of the Same. The world is its Other. The attestation of this otherness arises from language's reflexivity with regard to itself, whereby it knows itself as being *in* being in order to bear *on* being." (Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, p. 78)

²⁵See Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 41: "Less local and temporary, though still not unchanging characteristics of science, are the higher level, quasi-metaphysical commitments that historical study so regularly displays ... That nest of commitments proved to be both metaphysical and

Kuhn, clearly, is not aware of the problem of definition from the Socratic tradition which observes our inability to identify what is both common to a set of perceptions and at the same time distinguishes that set from all other sets (i.e., the problem of identity and difference at the core of Socrates' aphorism that wisdom consists in one's knowing that one doesn't know what one thinks one knows). He has encountered the issue of definition in terms of our inability to identify and differentiate sets not by Socrates but in Wittgenstein,²⁶ who spoke of "family resemblances" in the absence of indubitable universals as the most satisfactory form of definition available to consciousness. Nevertheless, the critique of critical realism cannot be accompanied by a call to a return to traditional Platonic realism -- although it is all too readily forgotten that Plato spoke of universals as "hypotheses"²⁷ and of the necessity of having both dimensions of the One and the Many, the intellect and the world of becoming, for an adequate understanding of human experience.²⁸

Neither universals nor particulars offer a metaphysical explanation of experience. Humanity is caught in the middle, however, requiring both universals and particulars, structured by a coherent model, in order to experience as it does. What has been too easily overlooked, given our materialistic prejudices, is that the same pragmatic argument justifying one's confidence in the world of sense perception, i.e., try ignoring the world of sense perception and see what happens, that same pragmatic argument applies to universals, i.e., try ignoring ideas that are the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow and see what happens! Nonetheless, not only are we always "on this side" of the physical world and universals, we cannot define the very universals so necessary for experience much less make claims, as for example one finds in Plato, about a First Principle of the Whole "above" universals.²⁹ Plato's discussion of dialectic in the simile of the line may itself be taken to be an expansion of Socrates' wisdom aphorism, however, just as Kuhn's notion of sociological paradigms rooted in exemplary past achievement paradigms (universals) is an expansion of Plato's notion of the understanding in that same simile (although Kuhn has no awareness of what Plato calls "reason," i.e., dialectic).

With respect to Plato's dialectic, however, a careful reading indicates the tentativeness of a thought process that commences with hypotheses (i.e., indefinable universals for which one cannot tell where one stops and the next one starts although one can clearly distinguish one idea from another) to arrive at a synthesis uniting all universals, which itself is not a universal³⁰ and, as an absolute unity, is unable to be

methodological. As metaphysical, it told scientists what sorts of entities the universe did and did not contain: there was only shaped matter in motion. As methodological, it told them what ultimate laws and fundamental explanations must be like ..."

²⁶See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 45: We must ... grasp some set of attributes that all games and that only games have in common. Wittgenstein, however, concluded that, given the way we use language and the sort of world to which we apply it, there need be no such set of characteristics. Though a discussion of *some* of the attributes shared by a *number* of games or chairs or leaves often helps us learn how to employ the corresponding term, there is no set of characteristics that is simultaneously applicable to all members of the class and to them alone."

²⁷See the simile of the line in Book VI of *The Republic*.

²⁸See *The Sophist* 249c-d.

²⁹Arrived at, according to Plato, by means of dialectic to which he limits the activity of reason. See the simile of the line in Book VI of *The Republic*.

³⁰*Republic* 509b.

experienced directly by consciousness, because consciousness requires twoness to experience (experience consists precisely in our ability to distinguish one thing from something else,³¹ e.g., one object from another object or one idea from another idea). This is, indeed, a profound unknowing that is rooted in necessary ingredients (to be sure, contingently necessary ingredients) of experience, which are themselves indefinable, to point to a unity that is not able to be experienced directly.

The Christian tradition has too easily overlooked that its metaphysical traditions are radically grounded in unknowing! The critique of critical realism and of Heidegger for failing to acknowledge the full implications of unknowing with respect to the spiritual dimension of all experience, therefore, cannot be accompanied by a call back to a “higher” form of knowing, i.e., either anagogical knowledge or a meta-narrative!

³¹This is why our understanding of experience tends to focus on actuality at the expense of concealed possibility, because experience consists in distinguishing.

3) Non-epistemic Faith and the Priority of Spirit

The crisis in theology and with epistemology in general in a post-metaphysical context means not merely the bracketing of God-talk either with respect to claims about, or for, God -- as constitutive as this bracketing is for post-metaphysical theology³²! Our present crisis requires the same bracketing of indubitable claims about the physical world. Hence, post-metaphysical theology is not a call to return to negative or apophatic theology, but rather commences with the radical unknowing at the core of the human condition: it commences with that non-epistemic faith enabling and structuring all experience (material or spiritual).

Rather than speak of epistemic faith, which provides one with knowledge about ultimate things inaccessible to reason, theology in a post-metaphysical sense is concerned with non-epistemic faith or the radical unknowing and limitation to all rationality either the calculating rationality of Aristotelianism or the contemplative rationality of Platonism (either *διαίρεσις* or *θεωρία*). Hence, more than a quest for empowerment of the marginalized and/or oppressed, justice, compassion, and peace (as unquestioningly important as these are!), theology is that discipline concerned: α) with the non-epistemic faith, or radical unknowing, at the heart of all experience and β) with that which has been, and is, ignored, forgotten, and concealed by our contemporary understanding of the human condition -- both in the sense of human spirituality as the imperceptible, illimited, and indefinable whole of consciousness and in the sense of the open-ended dynamic of the revealed (actuality) and the concealed (possibility) that roots human spirituality in a communal world. These two constitutive elements of theology are precisely what enable theology to call for empowerment of the marginalized and/or oppressed, justice, compassion, and peace. Marginalization, oppression, injustice, and conflict all result from the absolutizing of actuality and the covering over and suppression of possibility. A post-metaphysical theology of liberation is a figurative theology breaking open the hegemony of actuality both visible and invisible.

In short, post-metaphysical theology is a call to awareness of the symbolic character of all experience as everything is seen to point somewhere else (things to consciousness; consciousness to things; the actual to concealed possibility; concealed possibility to the actual, etc.) and to awareness of the figurative character of language which is not rooted in a literal meaning but which discovers meaning through a dynamic process of dis-covering similarity and identity in difference (i.e., consciousness/spirituality is metaphoric not literal). Post-metaphysical theology recognizes that no one dimension of experience is in the position to serve as an absolute ground or explanation of the whole, but, rather, both the invisible and the visible are necessary constituents of experience. Nevertheless, there is a priority given by post-metaphysical theology to the spiritual and to concealed possibility -- and not simply

³²This bracketing does not mean a denial of the possibility of God-talk. There is nothing about human spirituality that would deny (or logically prove) God as the ultimate source of all that is, any more than there is anything about human experience that would deny (or logically prove) the existence of an exogenous world independent of consciousness. Yet theology has foremost the task of acknowledging its limits and to indicate where speculation begins. Both calculating and contemplating reason are limited in that their content is always and already mediated. Those limits indicate that faith must reign in unbridled speculation either about material or spiritual causality. As David Hume suggested in *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, p. 89: “to be a philosophical skeptic is, in a man (sic) of letters, the first and most essential step towards being a sound, believing *Christian* ...” Post-metaphysical theology would have to speak of God itself as possibility, i.e., no-thing, out of which every-thing emerges. This is a *creatio ex nihilo* that is continuous and commences with possibility rather than Aristotelian actuality, i.e., rather than Aristotle’s Unmoved Mover which is actual (see Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* 1072a20-1073a15) or Process thought’s primordial nature (in contrast to the consequent nature) of God.

because they have been ignored and forgotten. Rather, it is because the spiritual is the very dimension of experience and concealed possibility is the key to all understanding.

4) Beyond Self and Actuality to Concealed Possibility

All experience transpires in that dimension of the human that is inaccessible to the senses. But, furthermore, we have not begun to understand experience if we only focus on actuality. A cup is more than an actual cup; it is a whole horizon of possibility engaging and evoking an entire world (cups don't occur in vacuums). Understanding is concerned far more with possibility than it is with mere actuality. Yet all experience, understanding, and "knowledge" conceals possibility as it selectively actualizes certain possibilities.³³

Crucial to post-metaphysical theology is that spirituality is inseparable from possibility. Hence, the errors of Cartesianism are twofold: α) that the self is treated as an isolated ego next to, if not outside of, the world to which it goes out into and from which it returns or retreats; and the corollary β) that mind and body are taken to be two distinct, and separated, substances. Human spirituality is never isolated but is inseparable from the horizon of possibility established by the actuality that is its world. There can be no consciousness that is enclosed exclusively upon itself.³⁴ Language denies such isolation and affirms the cultural and historical rootedness of all spirituality.³⁵ One cannot experience, much less think, without language which Ricoeur spoke of as "the great institution, the institution of institutions, that has preceded each and every one of us."³⁶ To be sure, human experience is always unique and unrepeatable, but that by no means leads to encapsulated isolation. A central paradox of the human condition is that one cannot

³³This is what Heidegger refers to in *Being and Time* as the fundamental "nullity" (Nichtigkeit) of experience. See, for example, *Being and Time*, p. 331. All understanding involves the selective projecting of possibilities that requires the suppression and negation of other possibilities. This is at the heart of Kierkegaard's dilemma/despair over repetition. See Søren Kierkegaard, *Repetition: An Essay in Experimental Psychology*, trans. by Walter Lowrie (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964).

³⁴Already Aristotle, i.e., the teaching does not commence with the Stoics, maintained that "die Seele immer Seele eines Körpers ist." From Fernando Inciarte, "Der Begriff der Seele in der Philosophie des Aristoteles," p. 46, in reference to Aristotle's *De Anima* 414a18-22 and 413a6f. Ricoeur speaks in a similar, though more expansive fashion: "the being of the self presupposes the totality of a world that is the horizon of its thinking, acting, feeling--in short of its *care*."

... the being of the world is the necessary correlate to the being of the self. There is no world without a self who finds itself in it and acts in it; there is no self without a world that is practicable in some fashion." (Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, pp. 310-311)

³⁵The historical, hence communal, character of all consciousness is identified by Schleiermacher as the key to the "identity" of a religious community rather than its identity being determined by a particular dogmatic content or an individual's inward experience. See Brian Gerrish's review, "The Nature of Doctrine," of George Lindbeck's *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* in *The Journal of Religion* 68/1 (1988), particularly his critique of Lindbeck's reading of Schleiermacher as an "experiential-expressivist," pp. 88-90. Troeltsch also stresses the historical and cultural character of the human spirit. See Ernst Troeltsch, *Der Historismus und Seine Überwindung* (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1979), pp. 77, 101-102.

³⁶Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, p. 221.

begin to make sense of one's unique and unrepeatable experience without language and the cultural accumulations of the human community in, and by means of, which one gains consciousness.³⁷

What Cartesianism has neglected, as well as most of the Western tradition including Deconstructionism, is the role of possibility in experience. Attention has focussed on actuality and what "actually is" as if knowledge was concerned with merely what is actual. Of course, one attends to what is actual in order not to be distracted, or led astray, by fantasy and illusion, but there is a huge difference between fantasy and possibility. Furthermore, it is "easier" to focus one's attention on the actual, either actual objects/occasions or actual thoughts, than it is to focus on possibility, precisely because we have access to the actual; where the possible is always concealed. Nevertheless, we have not understood anything, if we have not understood it in terms of its possibilities. For example, a chair is not merely understood as a mere actual thing, it is always and already understood in terms of the possible activities that it enables: sitting at a desk, at a dining table, for reaching to the top shelf for a book, for working at a computer, etc. Hence, simultaneously as one is grasping the possibilities of the actual chair, one's rootedness in a world is announced.

The same applies to the intellect, and this is what has been overlooked in the Western tradition.³⁸ One has not grasped the meaning of an idea/universal without having grasped it as a possibility for understanding something particular. All abstraction is rooted in the possibility of both the illimitable wholeness of consciousness inseparable from the possibilities of the world of engagement of the individual consciousness. There are not two substances of mind and body, there is one horizon of concealed possibility that "contains" both consciousness and matter.

5) The Correspondence Theory of Truth and ἀλήθεια

All of the limitations of the two substance theory are indicated by the inadequacies of the theories of truth that have dominated the Western tradition since the 14th century: first, verification and, more recently, falsification. Both verification and falsification are versions of the correspondence theory of truth. This theory maintains that truth consists in the correspondence of one's judgment to the "facts" or state of affairs to which one's judgment refers. This notion of truth, however, is limited to actuality at the neglect of possibility. The correspondence theory of truth does not claim that the judgment itself is true or false; nor does it claim that the "facts" or state of affairs are/is true or false. Rather, it claims that the judgment correctly (truly) refers to the facts/state of affairs it seeks to represent. Hence, the same judgment can be both true and false (true when it refers correctly to a fact that it represents; false when it refers incorrectly). No matter what elaborate strategies one develops to ensure the correctness, hence, the "truth," of one's judgments, whether those strategies be appeals to warrants and backings of verification (confirming data) or of falsification (seeking those conditions that would count as a denial of the judgment's accuracy), there can be no indubitable confirmation, for all experience is mediated in consciousness: there is no getting outside of consciousness (or outside of one's cultural paradigm) to gain access to the facts/state of affairs as they truly are in themselves. Verification and/or falsification is/are merely the comparing of one

³⁷This is precisely why Heidegger's notion of authenticity is so inadequate, because it is impossible to distinguish oneself from one's cultural, including historical, context. Heidegger's own presentation of this issue is ambiguous, but his conclusion is beyond doubt. (See *Being and Time*, p. 168, but pp. 312, 345-346, and 422, as well.) The call to authentic resolve for the actualization of one's ownmost possibilities, however, ignores the inseparability of the self from the spiritual and physical environment (as an environment of possibility) within which every individual finds her/himself. What one might choose as one's "ownmost possibility" may be in fact, more likely than not actually is, the consequence of influences from one's context of which one has long since, if ever, been conscious.

³⁸Though it was not overlooked by Plato! See the *Sophist* 249c-d.

kind of mental phenomena with another: a judgment with mental images of sense; or a judgment within a coherent mental model. The consequence is that the search for truth in the Western tradition has been limited to an illusory quest of actuality, and, thereby, its very optimism with respect to its success has denied its limitations and concealed the role of possibility inseparable from all actuality.

The Greek tradition, on the other hand, preserves an altogether different notion of truth: that of dis-closure rather than correctness. The Greek word for truth, ἀλήθεια, is derived from λαθάνω which means “to escape or elude notice, to be unseen, unnoticed” and the alpha privative. The alpha privative negates the noun, hence, truth as ἀλήθεια means “to be noticed” but in the sense of arising out of that which eludes notice and is unnoticed. This is precisely the nature of all experience, which one can acknowledge once one moves beyond limiting one’s understanding to actuality to include possibility. In short, what is noticed is the actual; it emerges out of, and simultaneously conceals, what is unnoticed, the possible. Hence, paying attention to “what is” cannot be limited to what is merely actual. “What is” includes the possible. The truth of what is, then, involves a dynamic tension between what is actually visible and potentially invisible. Truth is simultaneously an un-covering, a partial manifesting and concealing.

The notion of possibility functioning here, however, should not be confused with Kant’s “formal possibility” or what are called the conditions of possibility for any and all experience. Nor should the notion of possibility suggested here be confused with probability.

While it is true that all experience requires a presupposed structure or order that makes the experience possible, such formal possibility functions as a kind of actuality.³⁹ One is observing here that there is an actual structure or order that must be in place before any experience is possible. Possibility, however, is not limited to any particular set of conditions. Just as all conditions of possibility constitute a form of contingent necessity (they must be for one to experience as one does, but it is not absolutely necessary that one experience anything) and are not to be confused with absolute necessity,⁴⁰ neither are they to be confused with the dynamic of actuality and possibility (the dynamic of revealing and concealing) that constitutes particular experience itself.

The great shift in Western thought initiated by Cartesian skepticism but reaching its zenith in Hume and Kant, that is, the shift from focussing on what one can know to the conditions of possibility for experience and knowledge, that the certitude of the self simultaneously confirms, has led to such projects as Process theology’s claims for God in terms of these very conditions of possibility. This is the logic of dipolar theism which maintains that God is both the primordial conditions of possibility for any and all experience and the consequence of that experience. As important as Process theology’s quarrel with

³⁹See Bernard Charles Flynn, “From Finitude to the Absolute: Kant’s Doctrine of Subjectivity” in *Philosophy Today* XXIX/4/4 (1985), pp. 284-301; and Martin Heidegger’s *These Über das Sein* (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1963) also available in English translation as “Kant’s Thesis About Being,” trans. by Ted Klein and William Pohl in *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy*, 4/3 (1973), pp. 7-33. Heidegger connects this late meditation on Kant with Being and Time, where Being is thought as possibility. He writes, pp. 35-36: “Im unscheinbaren ‘ist’ verbirgt sich alles Denkwürdige des Seins. Das Denkwürdigste darin bleibt jedoch, daß wir bedenken, ob ‘Sein’, ob das ‘ist’ selbst sein kann, oder ob Sein niemals ‘ist’ und daß gleichwohl wahr bleibt: Es gibt Sein.

Doch woher kommt, an wen geht die Gabe im ‘Es gibt’, und in welcher Weise des Gebens? Sein kann nicht sein. Würde es sein, bliebe es nicht mehr Sein, sondern wäre ein Seiendes. ... Steht es so, dann muß die Frage nach dem Sein unter den Leitittel gelangen: ‘Sein und Zeit’.”

Being cannot be actual, for if it is actual it is a thing among things. If Being is not actuality, then actuality conceals Being as potentiality, and, hence, Being and time are one and the same.

⁴⁰The fundamental error of Process thought.

classical theism's insistence on an unchanging deity is, there can be no illusion that such an appeal to conditions of possibility does not provide one with absolute knowledge about God. Rather, since experience itself is contingent, the conditions of possibility of experience can at best themselves be judged to be contingent. This requires one distinguishing, then, between contingent and absolute necessity. Formal possibility, i.e., the actual conditions of possibility, is neither possibility itself nor is it absolute.

Such focussing on formal conditions of possibility, however, ignores the spiritual, non-material, nature of experience to emphasize the material nature of the conditions of possibility for experience. One can argue that Whitehead's theory of concreting actual occasions is precisely the redefining of Aristotle's material cause in terms of the insights of contemporary physics⁴¹ analogous to Heidegger's project of rethinking Aristotle's material cause as possibility. In both cases, the tendency is to emphasize "world" at the expense of "spirit." What must be done now is to rethink spirit in light of the world⁴² in order to regain an appreciation of human spirituality and faith as constitutive of any and all experience.

Similarly prizing actuality over possibility, the notion of probability is an attempt to quantify possibility to make it quasi-actual, i.e., it is an attempt to deny possibility in a quest to predict actuality. This is the highest task of diairesis and its calculating reason which seeks to eliminate possibility and to predict what will actually be the case and is oblivious to truth as ἀλήθεια.

6) Sola scriptura and Protestant Theology

The need for a retrieval of human spirituality and faith helps to illuminate the limitations of the spectrum of Protestant theological options today. That spectrum can be described as a conservative -- liberal spectrum shaped by the notion of sola scriptura as a consequence of the Protestant Reformation's belief that one can jump over the history of interpretation in the tradition to encounter God's revelation immediately in the text, i.e., the scriptures. It, of course, completely ignores, if not explicitly denies, the role of presuppositions in play in any reading of the text.⁴³

⁴¹See Reto Luzius Fetz, "Aristotelian and Whiteheadian Conceptions of Actuality: I" in *Process Studies* 19/1 (1990), pp. 15-27, and "Aristotelian und Whiteheadian Conceptions of Actuality: II" in *ibid.* 19/3 (1990), pp. 145-156.

⁴²This is not a new project by any means! Beierwaltes indicates that the issue of thinking spirit and world rather than withdrawal from the world into spirit was crucial to Neoplatonism, too often mis-understood by its detractors. See Werner Beierwaltes, *Denken des Einen. Studien zur Neuplatonischen Philosophie und ihrer Wirkungsgeschichte* (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1985), pp. 24-28. Lest the judgment be too quickly drawn that the relationship between Neoplatonism and Christianity was a one way street with Christianity only borrowing from Neoplatonism, one should not ignore the significance of Iamblichus' addition of a "fifth" virtue of love to the traditional four virtues of wisdom, courage, justice, and self-control in his *The Pythagorean Life*. See Iamblichus, *On the Pythagorean Life*, trans. by Gillian Clark (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989), pp. 70-100, and Gillian Clark's introduction, pp. x-xiii.

⁴³The Enlightenment sought to eliminate all presuppositions in the quest for "disinterested" knowledge. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 239-240: "... there is one prejudice of the enlightenment that is essential to it: the fundamental prejudice of the enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself, which deprives tradition of its power."

What today is taken to be an immediate encounter with the scriptures, turns out in fact to consist of a reading filtered by the presuppositions of a materialistic paradigm.

Protestantism is a child of the *via moderna*⁴⁴ or Aristotelian Nominalism. This has determinative consequences for Protestant theology and its interface with its cultural context given the emergence of the natural sciences. For example, the irony of the subsequent struggle between conservative Protestants, who are threatened by the natural sciences, and liberal Protestants, who embrace the natural sciences, is that they all share the same epistemology: truth claims have validity only to the extent that they are empirically verifiable, i.e., sense data provide the criteria for truth. Both conservative and liberal Protestants have been covered by the claim that only quantifiable, primary qualities have validity -- all else is subjective whim, fantasy, and emotion.⁴⁵ What distinguishes them is not their epistemology, but what counts as evidence. Liberal Protestants and the natural sciences appeal to empirical evidence in nature. Conservative Protestants appeal to empirical evidence in the scriptures. The impasse in conversation between these groups can be productively overcome by cutting the Gordian knot: observing that the epistemological model is what is misleading not the particular evidence.

Conservative Protestantism is committed to biblical literalism out of confidence in the senses as the source for truth. They maintain that the meaning of the text is available to anyone who opens her/his eyes and reads it. God does not communicate ambiguously when it comes to the eternal goal of life, and one only has to look to learn. If there are subsequent problems with biblical literalism, those are not problems with the text itself. They are problems with the reader. The text is absolute. The reader is finite and distorted by sin. The text builds community, and the community establishes the consensus with respect to the true faith based on open access to the text. Conservative Protestantism is deceptively democratic as it establishes assurance and security in the faith of the ages. The encountering of discrepancies and inconsistencies in the text is resolved by appealing to those "better trained in the faith," i.e., the theologians, who practice gospel harmonization, intertextual explanation regardless of differences of context, and emphasize the miraculous (the exception not the rule) as physical confirmation of God's sovereignty and power over this world. The faith is announced, confirmed, enhanced, and preserved, however, by sense data informed by "common sense." The touchstone is that the faith is perspicuous for anyone who will use her/his senses. God is trying to reach us through the senses: interestingly enough, exclusively by means of the only vehicle for gaining knowledge that our epoch acknowledges as valid -- sense perception.

Liberal Protestantism is not appealing to an alternative epistemological model, however, which is precisely what fuels the raging fire of contempt between the two groups. Liberal Protestantism is equally committed to sense perception as the key to acquiring truth. Unlike conservative Protestants, however, sense perception is acknowledged to be ambiguous. Hermeneutics has taught liberals that one all too easily reads into the text (eisegesis) what one wants to read out of it (exegesis). Hence, one must develop strategies to neutralize subjective wishes and filters in order to engage the "real" text. Above all, liberal Protestantism must attack anagogical readings of the text which intentionally take one beyond sense experience in a "mystical" reading of the text.

The point here is epistemological: what gives Christian theology legitimacy in a materialist culture (and not merely in the academy) is that it embraces the dominant epistemological model of sensuous materialism informed by the correspondence theory of truth. The difference between conservatives and liberals is not epistemological. It has to do with acknowledgment of ambiguity in sense perception.

Liberal Protestant biblical scholars are basically divided into two camps: the historical/sociological and the principled. The former seeks to establish the correct reading of the text by means of the empirical, historical and/or social evidence of the scriptural community out of which the text

⁴⁴Although Zwingli was trained in the *via antiqua* which perhaps helps to explain the character of Swiss "freisinnige Theologie."

⁴⁵See, Alfred Jules Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1952), pp. 102-3, who dismisses anything not accessible to the senses as mere emotion.

emerges. It is a form of literalism, but now no longer in terms of the dotted “i”s and “t”s of the text itself. Rather, secondary textual evidence (including botanical, agricultural, archaeological, architectural, artistic artifacts, etc.) serves as the invaluable source for grasping the meaning of the primary text, the scriptures. The historical/sociological liberal is epistemologically a materialist, i.e., the warrant for one’s truth claims come through the senses. The faith is definable as a “what.”

The “principled” reading of the text, on the other hand, is aware that “how” one approaches the text is as important as what one finds in the text. According to this form of liberalism, the principles guiding one’s reading are crucial for, if not determinative of, the “proper” reading of the text. Such principles (e.g., acknowledgment of the open-endedness of metaphorical meaning or the search for a hermeneutical key behind the text) are “formal possibilities,” i.e., analogous to metaphysical conditions of possibility, for which it is claimed that without them one cannot begin to understand any particular text. Where the historical/sociological approach to the scriptures can be seen as a kind of gnosticism (the key to Christian faith is knowledge about historical events and/or sociological traditions), the strategy of principled liberals can be seen as a kind of legalism, for principles for reading the text constitute a set of rules/laws governing “proper” reading. In the case of a principled reading on the basis of metaphor: one must have a “proper” understanding of metaphor (often meaning abbreviated analogy as in the case of Aristotle⁴⁶ which privileges the theory of metaphor as substitution or naming over the theory of metaphor that seeks identity in difference while acknowledging concealment and lack of definition⁴⁷). In other words, it is deemed sufficient to deny literalism and allegory simply because one emphasizes the metaphorical character of the teaching material of Jesus. In the case of the search for the hermeneutical key behind the text: one maintains that one’s thesis accounts for the form of the text as it now stands either by indicating that this hidden principle positively explains the present form of the text or negatively explains the present form of the text as the text sought to suppress or exclude the principle.

Precisely because of its legalism, what is concealed by the “principled” reading of the text is exactly what is concealed by formal possibilities in metaphysics: α) that experiential possibility is always contingent not necessary and, above all, β) that spirit is an illimited, unitary horizon of the imperceptible always and already functioning before one has either chosen principles⁴⁸ or engaged in particular readings. One’s ontological commitment, establishing what counts as reality and how reality does/should function, precedes one’s embracing any set of rules for acting in, and investigating that, reality.⁴⁹ Simply focussing on “conditions of possibility” does not ensure one has the proper key for opening up the meaning of the text. In fact, focussing on “conditions of possibility” assumes that one has understood reality properly and can talk about the conditions of possibility of that which one has understood--there is little, if any, acknowledgement of concealment, and ambiguity is simply a matter of incomplete knowledge that one will eventually acquire with time and effort. The principled reading of the text is a classic form of arguing from

⁴⁶See Aristotle, *Poetics* 1457b.

⁴⁷This latter theory of metaphor is indebted to Paul Ricoeur’s *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. by Robert Czerny (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

⁴⁸Paradigms precede rules! One has to have a sense of what reality is before one can establish what the structure enabling reality is. That structure equally establishes/confirms one’s notion of causality which is always inseparable from the coherence of one’s paradigm. Reality for both conservative and liberal Protestants is defined by the senses. Again, it is only a matter of acknowledged levels of ambiguity about sense experience that distinguishes them.

⁴⁹Again, Thomas Kuhn provides insight here. See footnotes 22 and 25 above.

effects to causes which is speculative at best (since we don't perceive cause) and, more often than not, must argue from silence, since the effects (the text) rarely identify their causal presuppositions.

Principled liberalism surely provides no one with sufficient confidence to justify beating conservative or reactionary Protestants/Christians over the head for mis-reading the text and causing the fragmentation of Christentum. For, although the principle of plurivocity is a challenge to narrow biblical literalism, it is equally an affirmation of alternative readings of the text. In other words, plurivocity is a strength for living faith surely not because it provides one with an eternal identity (even in principle) uniting Christians, but because it enables a tradition to speak meaningfully to any and all contexts of experience as well as to a broad spectrum of understanding.⁵⁰ Hence, there is no room in the faith for bashing either by the fundamentalist or liberal, the sexist or racist, or by the defenders of class or creed. The price paid for such truth as the "correct" faith is the price of exclusion, division, separation, and, above all, narrowness of understanding. We have not begun to understand the richness of the tradition if we limit ourselves to a materialist paradigm of sense perception and/or the conditions of possibility for material experience (be it an experience of a text or an event) as the sole source of true experience.

7) Beyond Plurivocity to Spirit and Faith

Nevertheless, plurivocity cannot be an end in itself. It is a means for breaking down the walls of suspicion over against Others and against fear in life just as it enables opening oneself to the abundance of the life of faith. For above all, it enables the breaking open of each and every paradigm's hegemony over understanding, and it leads one to ever new vistas as one moves from the material to the spiritual depths of experience.

To be sure, the spiritual, for its part, is no source for absolutes. We must avoid metaphysical reductionisms of all kinds no matter what enthusiasm might encourage us to embrace. The spiritual as well as the material dimensions of experience require us to speak of an odyssey of faith seeking understanding, because we do not have direct and immediate access to the material, and the spiritual, at the very least, is rooted in indefinables. But spirit is informed by a higher horizon of pragmatic faith. Where the materialist argues that one cannot ignore the physical world without devastating consequences, the person of spirit argues that one cannot ignore the spiritual dimension of life without devastating consequences. True, you can't ignore the speeding train, but, equally true, you can't experience anything without imperceptible and illimitable consciousness structured by indefinable universals. Try making it through a day without consciousness and its universals ...⁵¹

⁵⁰This is the conclusion of my doctoral dissertation entitled "On the Soteriological Significance of the Symbol of the Kingdom of God in the Language of the Historical Jesus," unpublished dissertation at The Divinity School of the University of Chicago (1983). The task of that project was to champion pluralism and tolerance in the faith. The present project focuses on unity in the kingdom, but not in terms of an enduring and exclusive identity. What unites Christians is far higher than anything actual or definable.

⁵¹The Greeks distinguished among νοῦς (consciousness or Reason in the sense of Plato's simile of the line), λόγος (the structuring system of universals), and νόμος (law), and they understood νοῦς to be "higher" than either λόγος or νόμος, because one is more than the content of one's thoughts or the principles governing one's actions. This is a key to distinguishing between the letters of Paul and John's gospel, the most "spiritual" texts of the New Testament. Paul speaks 164 times of the Christian being "in Christ." (See Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1992), p. 73) 1 Cor. 6:16-17 speaks of the Christian's being united in Spirit with Christ (ὁ δὲ κολλώμενος τῷ κυρίῳ ἐν πνεύμα ἐστίν) and 1 Cor. 2:16 says that the Christian has the mind (νοῦς) of Christ (ἡμεῖς δὲ

Life is spirit in the world, and the Christian models of faith are incomplete so long as one has not encountered the faith that calls for elevation into spirit to re-orient one's involvements in the material world. In this respect post-metaphysical theology is picking up a theme of spirit as elevation beyond the limits of the material world while inseparable from that world initially formulated by the 19th century Swiss "fresinnige" theologian, Alois Emanuel Biedermann.⁵² One can trace the theme over Otto Pflieger to

νοῦν Χριστοῦ ἔχομεν), where John, on the other hand, speaks of the Christ as the "Word" (λόγος). If one follows the Greek meaning of νοῦς when reading Paul, one can "see" that Paul is not speaking of the Christian's sharing the "opinion" or "perspective" of Christ, but, rather, that the Christian participates in the consciousness of Christ, i.e., the illimitable unity of spirit that is life, and thereby the Christian becomes a member of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12). In the case of John, the focus is on the indefinable structure of universals that provides the order to any and all experience, i.e., equally the spiritual order that is the key to life.

Yet Paul prefers νοῦς to λόγος, because λόγος is too easily reducible to law. Higher than the law is life: higher than λόγος is νοῦς. This is precisely the interpretive strategy of Origen who speaks of ἡγεμονικός more frequently than νοῦς, because he seeks to draw attention to that aspect of consciousness that enables one to focus one's concentration and energies. See Endre von Ivánka, "Der 'Apex mentis'" in Werner Beierwaltes, ed., *Platonismus in der Philosophie des Mittelalters* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), p. 131: "Erst wo das stoische psychologische Schema sich mit der platonischen Grundidee verband, daß die Grundtendenz des Geistes auf die *Erkenntnis* des Absolutums gerichtet ist, eine Erkenntnis, die aber zugleich ein Hinstreben und ein Hingerichtetsein bedeutet--erst da konnte das stoische ἡγεμονικόν zu einem 'Seelengrunde' im Sinner der mittelalterlichen Mystiker werden. Diese Verbindung des stoischen Schemas mit der platonischen Grundhaltung--zugleich mit der Verchristlichung beider Motive--hat erst Origenes vollzogen." The Christianization of these themes began long before Origen, for they can be found already in Paul. Nevertheless, Origen has used a new vocabulary from out of his intellectual context to speak in the same spirit as Paul.

Kantian deontology seeks to retrieve νόμος and the inner moral disposition as the key to religion within the limits of reason alone. He is followed in this regard by Fichte, who concludes from the facts that humans cannot not act and all action is judged to be proper or improper, that there must be a prior system of norms governing any and all action. This system of norms, he argues, constitutes the "revelation" of God's moral order governing the internal disposition of the practical reason. See Fichte, J. G. *Versuch einer Kritik Aller Offerbarung* in J.G. Fichte- Gesamtausgabe Der Bayerischen Akademie Der Wissenschaften (Stuttgart-Bad Connstatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag (Günther Holzboog), 1964), p. 82. Again, attention to νόμος (as with all rules and methodologies) conceals one's already being committed to an understanding of reality (one's communal paradigm). Hence, exclusive appeal to νόμος as the key to religion offers no guarantee that reality has been properly understood, but it can only insist that its guidelines for action in a presupposed understanding of reality are normative. Νόμος alone cannot protect against systematic distortion of reality any more than it can absolutely justify its understanding of reality.

⁵²According to Biedermann religion is: "Erhebung des Menschen, als endlichen Geistes, aus der eigenen endlichen Naturbedingtheit zur Freiheit über sie in einer unendlichen Abhängigkeit." Alois Emanuel Biedermann, *Christliche Dogmatik* (Zürich: Verlag von Orell, Füssli & Co., 1869), p. 30. See, also, Biedermann, *Christliche Dogmatik*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Reimer, 1884-5), vol. 1, p. 241: "Die Religion, als subjective Erhebung des menschlichen Ich aus einer negativ empfundenen Weltschranke seines natürlichen Lebens zu einer incommensurabel über derselben erhabenen Macht um von ihr Befreiung zu erlangen, hat zu ihrem subjectiven Motiv alles, worin der Widerspruch zwischen dem Lebensanspruch des Menschen und seiner erfahrenen Schranke hervortreten kann. Zum Inhalte der Religion gehört alles, worin

Ernst Troeltsch and Ernst Cassirer although the shift in professional context from theology to philosophy indicates how “speculative” theology (an unfortunate label), as it was called at the end of the 19th century, has been marginalized, even suppressed, in German theological power centers. It is time to take a new look at this theological trajectory in light of our post-metaphysical context.

On the other hand, spirit cannot a priori deny, much less condemn, any model of faith, for spirit informs any and all faith. What one can do a priori is warn against any and all reductionism that seeks to limit spirit by, or to, a metaphysical and/or metanarrative explanation of experience, or a specific formula, a definition, or a hermeneutic strategy. A posteriori one can censure those models of faith that are insensitive to the ambiguities of the conditions of possibility of life. Preservation of the conditions of possibility of life alone as a litmus test is too narrow,⁵³ for it treats all actualities and possibilities as equal. Possibilities and actualities are impossible without both simultaneously. Not all possibilities are mutually compossible, nor may one ignore the limits of actuality in the pursuit of possibility. One should neither naively discount actuality for the sake of possibility nor naively discount possibilities for the sake of actuality. Any context involves both, and life’s decisions remain ambiguous precisely because each context is a dynamic of revealed actuality and concealed possibilities. Any model of faith that ignores that ambiguity and the basic nullity of life (i.e., that any and all future(s) involve(s) the negation of the present) is placing a straight jacket on experience manifest a posteriori in praxis by dogmatic legalism.⁵⁴ Spirit is not a principle or a mere formal condition of possibility. It contains all principles, for spirit is experiential possibility higher than, but inseparable from, all actuality. Spirit is life in the real world.

If liberal Christians may easily accuse conservative Christians of narrow literalism, conservative Christians may easily accuse liberals of gnosticism, legalism, and intellectual elitism making the faith inaccessible to the “common” person. Liberal Protestantism requires either knowledge of tools of textual, historical, and sociological criticism, and/or one must grasp the role of presupposed principles silently guiding one’s reading -- principles which, if not consciously evaluated it is argued, can lead one to a

jene Erhebung sich vollzieht. Die psychische Form des Glaubens ist der einheitliche Act persönlicher Erhebung ...: ein Gefühl von Welt-schranke und Abhängigkeit als Ausgang und von Freiheit von derselben als Ziel; ein Vorstellen von einer unendlichen Macht über derselben, und ein Wollen, als Act der Selbsterhebung zu ihr mit dem Verlangen nach Freiheit von jener Lebensschranke. Alle diese Acte ... bilden jedoch nicht isolirt selbständige Theile, sondern nur in ihrer innern Wechselwirkung auf einander Momente der Religion; d.h. sie sind nicht isolirt für sich, sei’s um ihres Inhaltes sei’s um ihrer Form willen, religiöse Gefühle, religiöse Vorstellungen, religiöse Handlungen.”

⁵³This is the position I took in “The Paradox of a Theologian--Weltanschauungen and Conviction: The Problem of Evil.” *Explorations: Journal for Adventurous Thought* 4/2 (1986): 39-58, and would now modify. Conditions of possibility alone are not sufficient for grounding a moral system, since they always and already presuppose a commitment to how reality is and functions.

⁵⁴This is what is easily forgotten in the abortion issue. Preservation of the conditions of possibility alone might be employed as a criterion for denying abortion. But such a criterion fails to take the ambiguities of the world of the persons involved into consideration. No one can understand those ambiguities for another. This does not mean that one applauds abortion. It merely underscores the moral necessity of acknowledging that such a choice cannot be made for someone. A spiritual community would create an environment of understanding and support not condemnation and violence.

On the other hand, what is too easily overlooked in a technological age is that our ability to actually do something is taken to justify doing it without awareness of the concealed possibilities of that actuality. By focussing on manifest actuality at the expense of concealed possibility one can cause incalculable damage. One need only think of the impact of pesticides and herbicides on the environment.

distorted reading. The one hermeneutic strategy calls for “knowledge,” the other for the proper interpretive “law(s).” Furthermore, from the perspective of the conservative Protestant, liberal Protestantism has distorted Christianity’s scandal to make the faith adaptable to any and whatever context with its hermeneutical open-endedness. The faith is made amenable because it is adaptable. In the eyes of the conservative Christian, the liberal’s “two sources” of inherited scripture and contemporary experience⁵⁵ have resulted in contemporary experience becoming the dominant driving force of religious truth selecting and rejecting those elements in scripture that it finds acceptable and/or offensive. Christianity has become chameleon, and, precisely because it is chameleon, it has lost its identity and its truth.

Surely, the appropriate response to any and all demands for Christian identity either creedal, historical/sociological, or principled is to point out that all readings and systems of the faith conceal as they reveal, and that one must affirm one’s limits in understanding to allow oneself to be challenged by precisely those elements in the tradition that one finds most offensive. It just might be that precisely what one finds offensive today one will discover: α) that it is disclosive and informative in the context of a life experience that one has not yet had or β) that one discovers a new understanding of the offensive claim/teaching when it is placed in a new context of coherence (e.g., a spiritual rather than a material context). Perhaps here is the scandal of faith that drives one onward to increasing spiritual richness. The anomalous, the offensive, the most disturbing is not a diabolical threat, but the strategy of possibility to break down all hegemony in order to open us up to life in the spirit rather than limiting life to the material.

8) Two Models of the Faith

In surveying the Christian tradition from the perspective of its spiritual and material metaphysical options, we can identify two fundamental models of the faith: unification and separation.⁵⁶ There is great variation within these two models ranging from apocalyptic, to red and white martyrology, to apophatic/negative theology, to various understandings of the afterlife, to claims for the kingdom of God as partially and/or completely to be realized in this life, etc. Nonetheless, the metaphysical context of these various understandings of the Christian faith allow one to identify these two fundamental options of unification and separation informing Christian understanding. A case can be made, but lack of space prohibits making it here, that there is a historical sequence to these two models, as well. The church of the

⁵⁵For example, see David Tracy’s “revisionist” model of the Christian faith in *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), although Tracy later warns against the “affective fallacy” (see Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad Press, 1989), pp. 118 and 143, n. 60) and the dangers of “systematic distortion” (see *ibid.*, pp. 366, n. 21; 351, 363) requiring a “hermeneutics of suspicion” in the dynamic interface of these two sources of theology constituting a “hermeneutics of restoration” (see *ibid.*, 131 (the fourth step in interpretation); 146, n. 80; 190, n. 71; and 320). Ricoeur uses the language “strategy of seduction” for “hermeneutics of restoration” and “strategy of suspicion” for “hermeneutics of suspicion.” (See Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, p. 159, n. 23)

Tracy identifies as his source for the issue of the affective fallacy is W.K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Monroe C. Beardsley, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1954), pp. 3-39. In the third essay in this volume Wimsatt argues against the “formalist fallacy,” as well, i.e., that method alone provides the key to the meaning of a text.

⁵⁶One cannot speak of models of the Christian faith without reference to David Tracy’s five models (Orthodox, Liberal, Neo-Orthodox, Radical, and Revisionist) presented in chapters two and three of *Blessed Rage for Order*. Tracy’s Christian Aristotelianism is indicated not only by his embracing of Process metaphysics for the adjudicating of truth claims in theology, but these five models ignore the unification model of the Christian faith, which is rooted in Christian Platonism.

New Testament reflects the tensions in the model of unification among λόγος, νοῦς, and νόμος theologies, and, with the decline of Palestinian Christianity, the λόγος and νοῦς theologies of unification come to dominate the Apostolic and Patristic periods down to Augustine. With Augustine we encounter the classic formulation of the theological model of separation that shaped Latin Christianity including the Protestant traditions with some extremely important exceptions (e.g., Pseudo-Dionysius; monastic theology informed by Evagrius of Pontus and Cassian; Eriugina; Bernard of Clairvaux; the Victorians; Nicholas of Cusa; Wycliffe; Huss; Zwingli; the Cambridge Platonists; Wesley; Edwards; New England Transcendentalists, Unitarianism; Bushnell, etc.).

What are these two models? The model of separation is most familiar to Western post-Protestant Christianity. It maintains that humanity is separated from God because of original⁵⁷ and personal sin. The claim is that there is only one route to overcome this separation, i.e., faith in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, who as the Christ is the exclusive means for re-unification with God. This model is essentially materialistic. The sin of humanity is obvious when one only opens one's eyes. Humanity is driven by lust, greed, avarice, personal aggrandizement, in short, hubris, and one witnesses humanity's fallenness not only by observing others, but by observing one's own actions and inmost motivations fueled by desires in and for the material world. Its logic is informed by distinguishing humanity from divinity with an entire spectrum of theological reflection seeking to describe, and account for, whatever role, if any, humanity can/may play in its restoration to God. The great fracturing of the Western Christian world occurred over this very issue when the Protestant Augustinians, Luther and Calvin, emphasized grace over any and all works in the grand plan of restoration. Here spirit (πνεῦμα) is understood as a power or force that can overwhelm one from an "outside" source, i.e., spirit is merely a part of experience.

This model of separation is in stark contrast to the model of unification that shaped Hellenistic Christianity. Here the emphasis is upon the always and already accomplished union of the individual Christian with God in spirit, i.e., in immaterial consciousness, that can never be taken away from us. Hence, this model is essentially spiritual. Whether it be formulated in its λόγος or νοῦς form, the insight driving the faith here is that we already have access to God's eternal order through the eternal structure of God's thoughts (λόγος) and spirit (νοῦς) whose power is above all transience and every desire for the material world of particularity. Here the locus of conflict is not that separation of the human from God but in a division of focus within the individual: spirit or world; spirit or flesh. Spiritual rebirth is accompanied by a complete transformation of one's frame of reference and motivation in the world. The material world is relativized and one seeks elevation in the spirit, for the natural goal of life is to participate in reality not any mere transient copy of reality. If one enters the world and matures initially materially, in the course of one's development one encounters the spiritual dimension of life in the religious community of faith, i.e., that very spiritual dimension that distinguishes humanity from nature and other animals, and one "naturally" seeks growth no longer materially but spiritually. Christ as λόγος or νοῦς is a constant presence not as some finite, physical being whispering in one's ear warning against eternal damnation, but as cosmic Lord, Savior, and friend providing the very structure to any and all reality.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Some baptismal rituals maintain that "we were conceived and born in sin" reflecting the evil of concupiscence that has tormented Christianity since Augustine.

⁵⁸There is perhaps no one more representative of this theology of unification over against Augustinian separation in the Western tradition than Hugo of St. Victor who as a classic Christian Platonist employs the structure of Plato's simile of the line to speak of humanity having three eyes: a physical eye (αἴσθησις), an eye of understanding (διαίρεσις) and an eye of contemplation (θεωρία). Rather than speak of humanity in the Augustinian sense of hanging in the middle between salvation and damnation, Hugo of St.

9) From Vulgar to Refined Skepticism: Faith in a Post-metaphysical Context

The epistemological crisis of our contemporary post-metaphysical context manifests itself in theology by forcing the recognition that both of the fundamental models of the Christian faith (unification and separation) depend upon metaphysical presuppositions that are logically unprovable. The classical attempts in Christianity at foundational explanations on the basis of spirituality or materiality represent reductionist options attempting to explain the material dimension of experience on the basis of the immaterial dimension or vice versa. Such forms of reductionism depend upon metaphysical assertions that are logically indefensible.

This project has sketched out six aporiai central to the human condition that underscore the unknowing character of the human condition.⁵⁹ In addition to the spirit -- matter aporia, we have examined the mediated character of all experience by means of paradigms (or models) denying immediate access to any foundational structure and indicating that causal explanation itself is relative to one's paradigm, for we can perceive only effects not causes. In short, these two aporiai deny actual knowledge of facts and indubitable causal explanation.

An examination of language has indicated how literal meaning dissolves in the acidity of mediated experience, and language must be seen as radically figurative (the dictionary is full of dead metaphors not literal truth⁶⁰). It is not that figurative language is a kind of ornamentation to literal

Victor speaks of the human as in the middle between angels and animals with a providential responsibility for the natural world (he employs metaphors of agricultural cultivation in contrast to metaphors of domination). See Eckard Wolz-Gottwald, "Oculus Triplex - Das Dreifache Auge der Erkenntnis" in *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift Communio* 23/3 (1994): 248-60. Here is a 12th century ecologist.

⁵⁹Hence, rather than an exercise seeking to elevate Christianity above all other religions, and, rather than employing reason to call for the elimination of religion as an inferior stage of consciousness, that we need to leave behind, this project argues for the universal character of religion across culture, creed, race, gender, or class. But this form of universalism is not arguing for a specific content that all religions have in common. Eliade suggests that religious humanity is aware that the human condition is constituted out of the interface of the visible and the invisible with hierophanies establishing a cosmos in the midst of chaos for a people which is represented by an axis mundi (classically represented by the human spinal chord or Plato's simile of the line). See *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbooks/The Cloister Library, 1961).

Eliade's form of universalism, however, is metaphysical. The "terror of history" (see *The Myth of the Eternal Return or, Cosmos and History*, trans. by Willard R. Trask, Bollingen Series, vol. 46 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1965) is the motivation for the religious quest in search of the permanent, spiritual order behind, grounding, and informing all historical experience.

Rather than seek a universal metaphysical (ahistorical) explanation of experience, this project underscores the historical and communal character of any and all consciousness as an odyssey of spirit in the sense of faith seeking understanding in the world, i.e., always and always shaped by the actual historical conditions of experience as those both limit and enable, though always conceal, possibilities.

⁶⁰This insight with respect to the metaphorical character of language is already to be found in Jean Paul's *Vorschule der Aesthetik in Sämmtliche Werke*, Vols. 41-42 (Berlin: S. Reimer, 1827), originally published in 1804, pp. 24-25: "Just as in writing, the writing with hieroglyphics was older than writing with the letters of the alphabet, so it was that in speaking, the metaphor, insofar as it denotes relationships and not objects, was the earlier word, which had only to fade into the proper expression. The

language, but, rather, literal language is trivialized and anesthetized figurative language born out of the incessant drive of the human spirit to seek similarity, which often leads to a judgment of identity, in difference which then is subsequently confused for an ontological identity. Furthermore, language may be the house of Being, but language is impossible without spirit and world. In other words, the aporia of language negates any reductionism to language as the exclusive component of experience either as a ceaseless folding over on itself or an endless erasing of the trace.⁶¹

besouling and the embodiment still constituted a unity, because I and world were still fused. Thus, with respect to spiritual relationships, each language is a dictionary of faded metaphors.” (emphasis added).

I am indebted to Paul Ricoeur’s *Oneself as Another*, p. 12, n. 17, for the reference to this passage from Jean Paul and to the invaluable service of Ted Peters, who arranged for my gaining access to Jean Paul’s text held in storage in Richmond, CA. Nevertheless, Paul Ricoeur’s statement that “Jean-Paul’s (sic) *Vorschule der Aesthetik* ... concludes (emphasis added) with the following statement: ‘Thus, with respect to spiritual relationships, each language is a dictionary of faded metaphors’” (*Oneself as Another*, p. 12, n. 17) is incorrect! Carol Blaire’s citation in the English translation of “Nietzsche’s Lecture Notes on Rhetoric” (p. 128, n. 38) as “*Sämtliche Werke*, Abt. II, Band 9 (Berlin, 1861), no. 50, p. 179.--Trans.” is equally incorrect! Nietzsche himself, of course, only quotes the text, he doesn’t provide a citation. The passage is to be found neither on p. 179 nor at the conclusion of either the first or the second volume of Jean Paul’s *Vorschule der Aesthetik*, but on pp. 24-25 of the second volume which is a total of 228 pages long!

⁶¹In “The Double Session” Derrida concludes: “Since everything becomes metaphorical, there is no longer any literal meaning and, hence, no longer any metaphor either ... If there is no such thing as a total or proper meaning, it is because the blank folds over.” (Jacques Derrida, “The Double Session” in *Dissemination*, trans. by Barbara Johnson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 258)

Derrida has his notion of the effaced coin and the trace from Nietzsche. Nietzsche had written: “Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins.” (Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense,” p. 84) This is where Derrida picks up Nietzsche’s analysis. See Jacques Derrida, “White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy” trans. by Alan Bass in *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 217, n. 14, 262, n. 74. Derrida’s discussion of “coinage” (see *ibid.*, p. 210, 216), then, can be traced directly to Nietzsche. Derrida thinks of metaphor, in agreement with Nietzsche, as a form of un-truth. “Metaphor is less in the philosophical text (and the rhetorical text coordinated with it) than the philosophical text is within metaphor. And the latter can no longer receive its name from metaphysics, except by a catachresis, if you will, that would retrace metaphor through its philosophical phantom: as ‘nontrue metaphor.’” (Derrida, “White Mythology,” p. 258) Already in *Of Grammatology*, Derrida had written, “There is nothing outside of the text ...” (Jacques Derrida, “... That Dangerous Supplement ...,” in *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 158.) If this was not an explicit enough articulation of his thorough skepticism (i.e., “vulgar” skepticism in the sense of Hume), Derrida immediately adds: “... there has never been anything but writing; there have never been anything but supplements, substitutive significations which could only come forth in a chain of differential references, the ‘real’ supervening, and being added only while taking on meaning from a trace and from an invocation of the supplement, etc. And thus to infinity, for we have read, in the text, that the absolute present, Nature, that which words like ‘real mother’ name, have always already escaped, have never existed; that what opens meaning and language is writing as the disappearance of natural presence.” (Derrida, “... That Dangerous Supplement...,” p. 159)

The project then turned to analyze the Western tradition's notions of truth commencing with the correspondence theory of truth with its variants of verification and falsification to indicate its indefensibility, because it depends upon access to dimensions of experience inaccessible to us. A case has been made that the Greek notion of truth as ἀλήθεια (dis-closing) is more appropriate for speaking of human experience if it is understood in terms of the aporia of actuality and possibility. Where the Western tradition has tended to focus on actuality, it has consistently contributed to the overlooking, forgetting, and suppression of possibility. Yet there is no actuality without possibility even as all actuality distracts one's attention away from possibility. The truth of human experience is that it consists of a dynamic of the actual concealing the possible where the possible is constantly being projected by the human spirit into the future in acts of understanding.

This aporia of actuality and possibility (the aporia of truth), then, points to a fundamental productive negativity at the core of all life, but this is not Tillich's notion of non-Being threatening, yet subservient to, Being.⁶² Rather, Being is both Being and non-Being, for it is the no-thingness of possibility, denying any and all metaphysical ground or foundation, just as it is inseparable from a particular context of historical actuality. Truth is an aporia of revealing and concealing, of actuality and possibility uniting in one horizon of possibility both spirit and matter.

Descartes' two substances and Lessing's ugly ditch are the consequence of limiting one's understanding to actuality while ignoring possibility. The epistemological crisis of post-metaphysical experience has shown that there is no unmediated access to actuality. Having surrendered the "what" of knowledge by acknowledging that one cannot actually know, the tradition turned to describing the "how" or conditions of possibility of experience in a quest for indubitable knowledge. Now it is seen that both the "what" and the "how" of knowledge elude claims of indubitability, and our post-metaphysical context confronts us with a radical unknowing in experience born out of the revealing and concealing dynamic of possibility and actuality.⁶³

The fifth aporia analyzed in this project has been time. The ontological understanding of time by Plato/Plotinus (as the image of eternity) and by Aristotle (as the paradoxical "gap" of the present presupposed by all motion) has been investigated in contrast to the anthropological understandings of time by Augustine, Kant, and Husserl. Perhaps no other component of human experience announces our radical unknowing than does time. Ricoeur speaks of the fundamental paradox of cosmological and phenomenological time in terms of cosmological time consisting of a ceaseless flow of moments in which the individual is meaningless; where it is precisely in the phenomenological time of human experience that makes sense of cosmological time (i.e., phenomenological time gives cosmological time its meaning). However, this project finds Heidegger's analysis of time as the dynamic horizon of possibility to be precisely what unites the limited ontological, anthropological, and phenomenological descriptions of time, since it speaks of time as the dimension of no-thingness upon which all experience depends and by means of which all experience thrives.

⁶²See Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), pp. 40, 176-177. Tillich's argument that non-Being is dependent upon Being, since it can only be a negation of Being, is a classic example of an argument for a contingent, rather than an absolute, necessity. So long as one "is," Being has priority over non-Being, but one does not absolutely necessarily have to be. Such logic applies to all arguments for the necessity of "conditions of possibility," e.g., Process thought, as well. They can at best establish contingent but not absolute necessity.

⁶³As will be suggested below, this enables one's speaking of the Christian virtue of hope in light of non-epistemic faith as one lives in, and out of, the illimitable unity of spirit, i.e., love.

The final aporia investigated by this project has been the paradox of self and Other. Rejecting the Cartesian notion of the self as some kind of permanent substrate (substance) from which we go out into the world and to which we return, this project has focussed on the unique and unrepeatable character of individual experience inaccessible in its depths even to the self while simultaneously the self is inseparable from its context of world and Others which are equally inaccessible to the self. Drawing on the work of Kant, Husserl, Heidegger (particularly his distinction between care and solicitude), Levinas (on our accountability to the face of the Other), and Ricoeur's analysis of the self in Oneself as Another, the self emerges as an aporia of an unknowing project that is successful only when it acknowledges its inseparability from its equally unknown world and the unknown Others in its world. We are fellow strangers and yet fellow pilgrims on an odyssey of faith seeking understanding.

Such pervasive unknowing might lead one to conclude that this project is merely a version of what Cleanthes calls "vulgar skepticism" in David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*: You propose then, *Philo*, said *Cleanthes*, to erect religious faith on philosophical skepticism; and you think that, if certainty or evidence be expelled from every other subject of inquiry, it will all retire to these theological doctrines, and there acquire a superior force and authority. Whether your skepticism be as absolute and sincere as you pretend, we shall learn by and by, when the company breaks up; we shall then see whether you go out at the door or the window, and whether you really doubt if your body has gravity or can be injured by its fall, according to popular opinion derived from our fallacious senses and more fallacious experience.⁶⁴

Long before Rorty, vulgar skepticism is here challenged by pragmatism. But a pragmatic argument is neither a logical proof nor may we limit it to the material dimension of experience as does Cleanthes (i.e., the physical world provides the litmus test of pragmatic truth not the intellect although it is precisely Cleanthes in these dialogues who defends the teleological argument for God as mind). As was indicated above, we can no more ignore the role of universals in experience than we can ignore the speeding train. Yet we only have mediated access to both dimensions of experience, i.e., we can only re-present them we can't know them. This, indeed, requires acknowledgement of the role of faith in any and all experience and understanding. One may wish to conclude with *Philo*:

... in proportion to my veneration for true religion is my abhorrence of vulgar superstitions; and I indulge a peculiar pleasure, I confess, in pushing such principles sometimes into absurdity, sometimes into impiety. And you are sensible that all bigots, notwithstanding their great aversion to the latter above the former, are commonly equally guilty of both.⁶⁵

All that protects humanity from vulgar superstition (of a material or a spiritual order), that would exploit the limits of reason to unbridle speculation about ultimate cause(s) with respect to either the material or the spiritual dimensions of experience, is our embracing of the non-epistemic faith determinative of experience. Vulgar skepticism must give way to refined skepticism: the notion that "[i]f we distrust human reason we have now no other principle to lead us into religion,"⁶⁶ for it is precisely reason that instructs that we live by non-epistemic faith as spiritual beings in the world. Yet, although reason (both calculating *διαίρεσις* and contemplative *θεωρία*) instructs in the necessity of faith, because it is limited, it equally provides the only means for adjudicating the adequacy of our communal model of reality, i.e., coherence continually

⁶⁴Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, p. 5.

⁶⁵Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, p. 82.

⁶⁶Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, p. 12.

examined by the hermeneutics of suspicion⁶⁷ given the role of concealed possibility in all experience and understanding. Pragmatic arguments apply to justify confidence in both matter and spirit. Spirit, however, has the pragmatic priority that it is precisely that dimension in which all experience transpires. Yet, on the other hand, spirit is inseparable from a world, grounded as both are in the no-thingness of possibility. We are spirit in the world as an odyssey of faith seeking understanding.

When we turn to the model of unification (as distinct from the model of separation sketched above) in the Christian tradition, we can hear a call for the elevation of the human into the spirit and out of a life of enslavement to mere materialism in this post-metaphysical understanding of faith. Christians according to this model are in but not merely of the world. Their lives are characterized by the classic Christian virtues of faith, hope (rooted in possibility higher than any and all actuality) and love (informed by the illimitable spiritual whole of experience), which call for theological renewal precisely because (not in spite) of our post-metaphysical context.⁶⁸

⁶⁷Ricoeur offers the formula: an inadequate reading (or any understanding of experience in general, since all experience is a mediated, interpretive process after an event) is narrow and far-fetched; an adequate reading is congruent and a plenitude. See "Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics" in *New Literary History* 6/1 (1974), p. 104.

Ricoeur warns against both the "intentional fallacy" (that the intention of the author is the sole criterion of a proper reading) and the "affective fallacy" (that whatever meaning the reader gets out of, or reads into, the text is valid). See "Erzählung, Metapher und Interpretationstheorie" in *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 84/2 (1987), p. 250. See *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, p. 317, n. 38

⁶⁸Precisely these classic Pauline Christian virtues indicate how faith is a spiritual odyssey seeking understanding inseparable from its historical, communal context. See the following literature of the on-going debate about the source of these virtues in the Pauline literature generated by Richard Reitzenstein's work and Alfred von Harnack's response to it:

Richard Reitzenstein, "Die Entstehung der Formel 'Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung'" in *Historische Zeitschrift* 116 (1916):189-208; "Die Formel 'Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung' bei Paulus" in *Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Philologisch-historische Klasse* (1916):367-416; "Die Formel Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung bei Paulus. Ein Nachwort" in *Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Philologisch-historische Klasse* (1917):130-51; *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen. Nach ihren Grundgedanken und Wirkungen, Vortrag Ursprünglich gehalten in dem Wissenschaftlichen Predigerverein für Elsass-Lothringen den 11. November 1909.* (Leipzig: Verlag von B.G. Teubner, 1920); *Historia Monachorum und Historia Lausiaca. Eine Studie zur Geschichte Des Mönchtums und der Frühchristlichen Begriffe Gnostiker und Pneumatike* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1916); "Iranischer Erlösungsglaube" in *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 20 (1921):1-23; Carsten Colpe, *Die Religionsgeschichtliche Schule. Forschung zur Religion und Literatur des alten und neuen Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961); Peter Corssen, "Paulus und Porphyrios" in *Sokrates. Zeitschrift für das Gymnasialwesen* 73 (1919):18-30; Martin Dibelius, "Reitzenstein, R., *Historia Monachorum und Historia Lausiaca*" in *Wochenschrift für klassische Philologie* 33 (1916):1037-42; Johannes Geffcken, *Der Ausgang des griechisch-römischen Heidentums* (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1920); Adolf von Harnack, "Über Den Ursprung der Formel 'Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung'" in *Preußische Jahrbücher* (April bis Juni 1916):1-14; Hermann Langerbeck, "Paulus und das Griechentum. Zum Problem des Verhältnisses der Christlichen Botschaft zum antiken Erkenntnisidee" in *Aufsätze zur Gnosis, aus dem Nachlaß herausgegeben von Hermann Dörries* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967); R. Schütz, "Der Streit zwischen A. V. Harnack u. R. Reitzenstein Über die Formel

This understanding of the Christian faith will surely not be appealing to all Christians. For some it offers too little, for others it is too vague, for others there is no agenda or succinct formula for arriving at the “true” content of Christianity or for bringing the world to Christ. For its part, it makes no pretense of seeking to bring the world to Christ, but claims that the spiritual depths of Christ are always and already inseparable from what human consciousness (νοῦς) is all about. It openly acknowledges that it is one path or model of the faith among many. Given the mediated character of experience and our inability to adjudicate an absolute paradigm, since we cannot get outside of the paradigm we are committed to in order to test its correctness, it seeks the retrieval of an ancient spirituality informing the Christian tradition since its beginnings that has been too long ignored and forgotten. It appeals to that peace where the lamb has already laid down with the lion in order to spiritually transform individuals, communities, and the world.

‘Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung’ 1. Kor. 13,13” in *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 42 (1917):454-57; Wolfgang Weiss, “Glaube - Liebe - Hoffnung. Zu der Trias bei Paulus” in *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 84, no. 3/4 (1993):196-217; Geo. Widengren, “Die Religionsgeschichtliche Schule und der Iranische Erlösungsglaube” *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* 58;11/12 (1963):533-48.