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HISTORY AND FAITH:
ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FACT AND POSSIBILITIES

What does faith have to do with history? Everything and nothing! The coordinating conjunction here is crucial for an adequate investigation of the relationship between faith and history. History and faith are neither as "factual" as their opposition would presuppose nor are they as "fictional" as their facile equation would presuppose. If it were possible to make a choice between "everything 'or' nothing," we would be concerned with a metaphysical alternative that would force us to choose (or to have chosen for us by grace) between the "factual" truth of faith and the "factual" truth of history. Furthermore, if history and faith were two forms of fiction or narrative constructions, then we would be left with no possibility of reining in (blind) speculation or avoiding systematic distortion. However, by stressing "and" in "everything and nothing," I wish to explore the relationship between history and faith as complementary moments inseparable from one another, as irreducible to one or the other, and as a check on one another. Nonetheless, their mutual dependence and irreducibility does not eliminate a prioritizing of one "above" the other. Higher than history is faith; higher than actuality is possibility.

Kierkegaard and 19th Century Rationalism

No one formulated the alternative between faith and history more sharply in terms of "or" than Kierkegaard.[1] To be sure, for Kierkegaard the "or" expressed the paradoxical relationship

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1. Prior to Kierkegaard we could identify Lessing as having formulated an "or," and subsequent to Kierkegaard we would have to name Kähler. Lessing's "or" is expressed as the "ugly ditch" of the famous aphorism that "*accidental truths of history can never become the*

between the unlimited and the limited experienced by the individual under the conditions of existence.[2] In other words, Kierkegaard understood the relationship between faith and history as an impossibility made possible only by a "leap" of faith in the decision[3] to embrace the paradox of the Christ[4] as the resolution of the impossible human condition caught between eternity and time. The Christian "... believes against the understanding.[5]" In light of the qualitative difference between eternity and time (God and history), faith is the only vehicle for overcoming the difference.

However, Kierkegaard's "or" not only presupposes the spiritual subject of German Idealism,[6] but it also presupposes that the answer to the paradox is found in the Christ event.

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proof of necessary truths of reason" in *Theological Writings*, with an introduction by Henry Chadwick, A Library of Modern Religious Thought (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1957), 53. Kähler's formulation is that "... historical facts which first have to be established by science cannot *as such* become experiences of faith. Therefore, Christian faith and a history of Jesus repell each other like oil and water as soon as the magic spell of an enthusiastic and enrapturing description loses its power" in *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Historic Biblical Christ*, ed, trans & introd by Carl E. Braaten, with a foreword by Paul Tillich (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 74. However, no one formulated the "or" more sharply than Kierkegaard. Although Lessing and Kähler speak of an inescapable "or," the difference between their "ors" could not be greater, for Lessing is speaking out of the metaphysics of (Christian) Platonism and Kähler is speaking out of the confessionalism of dogmatic piety.

2. See Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, David Swenson and Walter (trans) Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968) and Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments or A Fragment of Philosophy*, Hong David Swenson (orig. trans.), Howard V. (trans) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969). See, as well, Wilhelm Anz, *Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1956)..

3. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 540.

4. See Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 498.

5. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 504.

6. This is the central thesis of Anz, *Kierkegaard und der Deutsche Idealismus.* What Hegel and Kierkegaard have in common is their affirmation of the "absolute subjectivity of spirit." See *Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus*, 70, 75. What they don't share, of course, is the Hegelian meta-narrative that eliminates what Kierkegaard calls the existing subject.

The former presupposition is metaphysical; the latter presupposition is meant to be historical. Although these two presuppositions appear to express a tension between the universal and the particular, Kierkegaard's answer to the paradox of faith and history is to collapse the historical, the particular, into the metaphysical, the universal. He absolutizes an "historical" event by means of the "leap" of decision. One cannot overcome an alternative (here between metaphysics and history; the universal and the particular) by reducing one of the alternates down to the other; in this case, by turning an historical event into something metaphysical. Such a strategy is magic, not faith.

If Kierkegaard turns an historical event into a metaphysical truth, the 19th century Rationalists turned metaphysical truths into historical events.[7] The Rationalists saw the laws of nature as the eternal, the metaphysical, in historical events. The Rationalists proposed that the gospel accounts of miracles, for example, were neither lies as suggested by Reimarus nor mere ironic accommodation to the inferior understanding of a naive audience by a "better" understanding suggested by J.S. Semler. Rather, miracles represent mis-understandings of historical events on the part of the observers who did not know that nature is a closed chain of cause and effect. Hence, the Rationalists assumed the events recorded in the gospels were actual historical events, and they proceeded to provide "natural" accounts for all the miracles according to the laws of nature in order to eliminate all supernatural causality.[8] Since God is the source of

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7. For David Friedrich Strauß, the representative Rationalist was Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus. "Dr. Paulus" "... firmly maintains the historical truth of the gospel narratives, and he aims to weave them into one consecutive chronologically-arranged detail of facts; but he explains away every trace of immediate divine agency, and denies all supernatural intervention. Jesus is not to him the *Son of God* in the sense of the Church, but a wise and virtuous human being; and the effects he produced are not miracles, but acts sometimes of benevolence and friendship, sometimes of medical skill, sometimes also the results of accident and good fortune." David Friedrich Strauß, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, ed & introd by Peter C. Hodgson, translated by George Eliot, Lives of Jesus Series (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 49.

8. Strauß in *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* contrasts the Supernaturalist with the Rationalist reading of the text to illustrate their respective inconsistencies and proposes as an

the eternal laws of nature and God cannot be inconsistent, God cannot contradict Himself (!) by violating His own laws. In short, the truths of history establish the parameters of faith by determining what we may and may not say about the nature of God. Faith is secularized and confined to the parameters of the natural (historical).

The goal of this paper is to search for a *tertium quid* between history and faith that avoids the metaphysical option between empiricism/materialism and spirituality/idealism but is also not a mere speculative[9] leap. Strauß' mythical reading of the New Testament provides a strategy that avoids the Supernaturalist - Rationalist alternative by taking the text to be figurative. However, he was able to follow this strategy because he embraced the metaphysics of Hegel's speculative thought. I wish to propose another alternative for reading the tradition as figurative that allows for the tradition to speak suggestively and multi-valently and to transform individuals in ever new historical contexts in a manner that affirms both history and faith.

History and Approximation

When it came to truth claims, already Kierkegaard saw the limits to objective, empirical knowledge. He wrote that objective knowledge can at best only provide us with "approximation." He begins the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*:

> When Christianity is viewed from the standpoint of its historical documentation, it becomes necessary to secure an entirely trustworthy account of what the Christian doctrine really is. If the inquirer were infinitely interested in behalf of his relationship to the doctrine he would at once despair; for nothing is more readily evident than that the

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alternative a Mythical reading based upon the Mythic School's insight that myth is a narrative account whose intent is to communicate at its core a historical event, a philosophical/theological idea, or a symbol. See Christian Hartlich and Walter Sachs, *Der Ursprung des Mythosbegriffes in der modernen Bibelwissenschaft* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1952).

9. Wilhelm Anz defines "speculative thought" as follows in *Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus*, 44: "In the common language at the time of Hegel, speculative thought meant to participate in the thinking of God. It thinks along with God the true essence of things in-themselves just as God thought and willed it." (All English translations of German texts are from me.)

> greatest attainable certainty with respect to anything historical is merely an *approximation.*[10]

Kierkegaard's insight here is valuable no matter whether one accepts his project as valid that defines faith as subjective and inward.[11]

The recent project of the Jesus Seminar to isolate the teaching material of the historical Jesus in the gospels as well as other alternatives for understanding the origin of the Jesus movement reflected in contemporary scholarship[12] illustrate the nature of historical approximation. The Jesus Seminar provides the spectrum of votes from its participants that led to the majority opinion, but that very spectrum reflects the ambiguity and lack of unanimous agreement -- a fact recognized by the Jesus Seminar. In many respects, however, we have come no further than Strauß in the 19th century who was criticized by Ferdinand Christian Baur for having left us with an historical Jesus who is only a collection of pieces and outlines about which it is difficult to understand how the early church came to believe in him.[13]

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10. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 25.

11. Kierkegaard writes *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, 201: "... the inwardness of faith in the believer constitutes the truth's eternal decision. And objectively there is no truth; for an objective knowledge of the truth of Christianity, or of its truths, is precisely untruth. To know a confession of faith by rote is paganism, because Christianity is inwardness." See, as well, 117: "... the difference is, that philosophy teaches that the way is to become objective, while Christianity teaches that the way is to become subjective, i.e., to become a subject in truth. Lest this should seem a mere dispute about words, let me say that Christianity wishes to intensify passion to its highest pitch; but passion is subjectivity, and does not exist objectively." Finally, 33: "Christianity is spirit, spirit is inwardness, inwardness is subjectivity, subjectivity is essentially passion, and in its maximum an infinite, personal, passionate interest in one's eternal happiness.

As soon as subjectivity is eliminated ... there is in general no decision ... All decisiveness, all essential decisiveness, is rooted in subjectivity. A contemplative spirit, and this is what the objective subject is, feels nowhere any infinite need of a decision, and sees no decision anywhere."

12. One voice that rejects the fundamental Bultmannian school's criterion of dissimilarity at the core of the Jesus Seminar's work is Klaus Berger, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums: Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: A. Francke Verlag, 1995), 112.

However, the explanation of how the early church came to believe in the man Jesus as the Christ is not adequately described as a linear progression from a "low" to a "high" Christology on the basis of the historical evidence. For example, Klaus Berger finds evidence of a "high" Christology already in the pre-Pauline tradition.[14] According to Berger the earliest stages of the tradition confront us with an "almost unbelievable openness to variations on the message of Jesus.[15]" Furthermore, "the documents of early Christianity never contain isolated 'doctrine' or 'truth' for its own sake; they are fundamentally in response to particular situations.[16]" Berger calls into question the validity of the attempts at historical reconstruction of Christianity from α) F.C. Baur's "dialectical" model that sees early Christianity as a mediation between Judaism and Greek Christianity, β) to the notion of an increasing "this worldliness" in the sense of a continuous fall from a "pure" beginning, γ) to Bultmann's attempt to portray the history of early Christianity with the linear categories of "the proper" (from Jesus) leading to creation of the early community and on to the work of the evangelists, δ) to attempts at clarifying the early church as if Jesus was independent of Judaism or apocalyptic and the church returned to them for its inspiration and understanding of who Jesus was; ε) to a reconstruction of early Christian theology in terms of creedal formulae; or, finally, ζ) to explain Christianity as a purely post-

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13. See Emanuel Hirsch's summary of Baur's critique of Strauß in Emanuel Hirsch, *Geschichte der neuern evangelischen Theologie, vol. 5* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1954), 503-04. Alois Emanuel Biedermann offered a similar critique. See A.E. Biedermann, "Strauss und seine Bedeutung für die Theologie" (Leipzig, 1875), 218, 220. See, as well, Thomas K. Kuhn, *Der junge Alois Emanuel Biedermann. Lebensweg und theologische Entwicklung b is zur "Freien Theologie" 1819-1844*, in *Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 98* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Morh, 1997), 292-93; and Hans Geißer, "David Friedrich Strauß als verhinderter (Züricher) Dogmatiker," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 69, no. 214-258 (1972): 240.

14. See Berger, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums*, 240-50.

15. Berger, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums*, 5.

16. Berger, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums*, 8.

Easter event.[17] Berger seeks to reconstruct the early Church not on the basis of an "Urtext" or "Urbekenntnis" but on the basis of a thematically combined collection of language elements.[18] Above all, he is struck by the divergence:

> The picture of the history of the early Church as an explosive event is confirmed here [in *Das neue Testament und frühchristliche Schriften*, a collection of all available texts used by early Christian communities in the first two centuries]. At the beginning one does not find a unified confession but very early a great number of theological starting points. The first two centuries still constitute essentially the phase of the working out of different sketches. This wealth is something to be acknowledged, and consequently one should resist attempting to determine the content of "the" Kerygma. One finds a possible significance for the present in that a certain plurality in teaching is to be accepted if not applauded, for the early Christian explosion is certainly a unique phenomenon in the history of religions. It could be that it is the consequence of the fact that one was extremely free to engage ones given situation ...
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> ... The "gospel" demonstrates itself from the beginning to be so unbelievably flexible that the problems associated with establishing a unity to the confession are established at the very beginning of the Christian church.[19]

The point here is not whether the Jesus Seminar, Berger, or any other account of the emergence of the church out of the ministry of Jesus is correct. The point is that the historical investigation of the early church's teachings illuminates a plethora of options and not a linear progression. In short, the investigation raises more questions than it answers. What does this historical ambiguity mean for faith?

Popular Piety

The linguistic turn in German theology associated with Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling

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17. See Berger, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums*, 4.

18. Berger, *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums*, 7.

19. Klaus Berger and Christiane Nord, *Das neue Testament und frühchristliche Schriften* (Frankfurt a.M.: Insel Verlag, 1999), 15. See in addition Berger's description of the early Church in *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums*, 5 as "... a progressive -- in part certainly the result of an explosive -- divergence that finds its unsurpassable end in the distinguishing among the individual sketches. The value of this proposed model (... divergence) might be that the unity and multiplicity of early Christian theology be grasped in a non-static manner. -- Such a comprehensive divergence (with its simultaneously proposed coherence) is in a real sense an historical exception: the consequence of a rapidly accomplished mission and -- as one can see in

in effect encouraged the avoidance of history entirely. What is central for faith is the Word Event of the kerygma as it is proclaimed in the Christian community.[20] Ebeling wrote:

> ... God to whom faith opens and on which faith depends and upon whom existence is grounded is not actually something in experience. Rather, here we are concerned with pure faith that is entirely dependent upon promise and adheres to the [proclaimed] Word. What is believed, precisely because it is believed, cannot be an object of experience. Faith believes despite all experience ... Faith no longer believes more than it experiences. Faith believes contrary to all experience.[21]

Perhaps no one seized upon this agenda of the New Hermeneutic more than George Lindbeck. Lindbeck acknowledges the limits to propositional truth claims, and he dismisses them as establishing the truth of faith. Lindbeck distinguishes such a "Cognitive Propositional Model" of theology from what he calls the Liberal "Experiential-Expressive Model" that grounds theological claims in specific "inward" experiences of the individual. This model is concerned with "inner feelings, attitudes, or existential orientations.[22]" On the one hand, Lindbeck rejects the notion that faith claims are rooted in objective historical events. On the other hand, the Experiential-Expressive Model is taken to be mired in individual relativism. His solution to the limits of propositional truth claims and individual relativism is the "Cultural-Linguistic Model" that takes the enduring language of a community as the authority for the truth claims of that community.

> ... the viability of a unified world of the future may well depend on counteracting the acids of modernity. It may depend on communal enclaves that socialize their members into highly particular outlooks supportive of concern for others rather than for individual rights and entitlements, and a sense of responsibility for the wider social rather than for personal fulfillment.[23]

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the texts of the New Testament -- for today's imagination an almost unbelievable openness to variation with respect to the message of Jesus." (author's translation)

20. See Gerhard Ebeling, *Das Wesen des christlichen Glaubens* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1961).

21. Ebeling, *Das Wesen des christlichen Glaubens*, 224.

22. See George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-Liberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 16.

23. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-Liberal Age*, 127.

Such a sectarian view of religion that invests all authority in the inherited language of the community perhaps preserves the virtue and comfort of continuity, but it leaves the community entirely vulnerable to what Habermas calls the potential "systematic distortion" of any and all discourse.[24] What protects the community from embracing a pure illusion if not even a delusion? Even more problematic, however, is how would we know the difference?

Regardless of our answers to such questions, it is obvious that we can responsibly neither leave the definition of Christianity to the popular piety of religious communities themselves as Lindbeck proposes nor to the anthropologists as Van A. Harvey proposes.[25] However, in the face

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24. Jürgen Habermas, "On Systematically Distorted Communication," *Inquiry* 13 (1970): 205-18.

25. Van Harvey proposes that the "basic hermeneutical rule" (Van A. Harvey, *Feuerbach and the Interpretation of Religion* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995], 308) in religious studies is that "the interpreter of religion should first listen carefully to what the relgious people themselves say" (96). Theology, however, is "a rationalization and falsification of that original naivete" (73). See, as well, Van A. Harvey, "Response: Must We All Be Theologians? A Response to Charley D. Hardwick," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 66, no. 4 (1998): 879.

Whereas Ebeling, Lindbeck, and others are left with no standpoint or criteria to question the possible systematic distortion of popular piety, Harvey seeks the destruction of popular piety (see *op. cit.* 309). By limiting his hermeneutic to popular piety, he both restricts popular piety to one (strikingly Luthern) form of piety and does not have to deal with the broad options in popular piety and theology found throughout the tradition. The popular piety of Gnosticism, the Bogomiles, and Albigensians not to speak of John Wyclif and John Hus is not the popular piety of Eastern Orthodoxy or Western Funadametalism. Even more, Harvey dismisses the theological reflection of the Christian tradition like an evangelist convinced of his cause: "The conflict is not so much between faith and philosophy as between ordinary Christian belief in the God of the Bible, on the one hand, and the dominant Christian intellectual tradition of the West, on the other." (125) The critique of popular piety leads to the illumination of the illusions and wishful thinking of relgion, which "... has its roots in anxiety before death, suffering, and the longing for happiness and for recognition by another" (69). For this reason, Harvey finds attractive the initially "subordinate strand" of Feuerbach's work, the "naturalist-existentialist strand," (48-54; 198, 294) that in the later work comes to dominate over the Hegelian strand of Feuerbach's earlier work.

In light of the discussion of possibility below, Harvey speaks of "possibility" in two senses: 1) as the indeterminate and threatening instability of life since humanity must complete itself and is oriented toward the future (256); and 2) as wishful thinking that in miracle wants to

of the profound limits to propositional truth claims and in light of our access to only historical approximations, how can one adequately speak of the relationship between faith and history that is anything other than mere illusionary if not delusionary constructs created by communities and projected upon reality?

Beyond Fact to Possibility

We seem to be caught in a paradox. Wilhelm Anz quotes Hegel that "[w]here religion is treated only as history, it is all over for religion.[26]" However, where history ceases to play any role in religion, religion loses its ability to check itself from the self-projected ravings of a mad man. In the absence of the Hegelian/Straußian metaphysical option of a spiritual meta-narrative but yet in the awareness that propositional truth claims are always provisional, a helpful strategy out of this logical conundrum can come from a re-examination of the nature of history and faith.

Why is it that humanity is or has a history? What is there about the human condition that makes history an issue for us? Is history an issue for us only because we possess memory, or is there something about who we are that is profoundly temporal, historical?

We could describe our human condition as that of a separate individual in and among a world of objects and others. However, we are not in the world like a liquid in a bottle. Each human being is in a real sense an entire, though always shared, world. In other words, the individual is impossible as an isolated entity. Although we physically move through our world, we are organically related to that world and others. This organic relatedness is suggested but even then not adequately expressed in terms of the interaction of atomic particles. We experience the world as a dynamic interaction of manifest foreground and for the most part

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believe that "with God everything is possible and that everything is done 'for us'" (306-7). Possibility in this latter sense is the overcoming of necessity (306). This paper wants to explore the first meaning of possibility but not in terms of threat and instability. Possibility is what enables the adventure of life.

26. Anz, *Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus*, 42.

concealed background over which we have little control. However, what is concealed is more than a collection of objects temporarily or permanently out of our range of vision. Furthermore, what is concealed is more than a matrix of atomic particles flying around in for the most part "empty space.[27]"

We could say that the concealed involves more than even the collection of physical objects and other persons constituting the foreground and background of the world, for we could speak of the concealed in terms of our mental lives that are totally inaccessible to the senses. We could speak of our mental lives as involved in a dynamic of foreground and for the most part concealed background over which we have little control. However, our mental lives are more than an event of enduring abstractions (or universals) and a ceaseless flow of mental images.

One could describe our human condition as profoundly metaphorical. All of our conscious experience transpires in the mind since we cannot put the world or others directly into our intellects. In other words, our experience involves a mediated doubling or what Paul Ricoeur labels an "is"/"is not." The world "is" as we are experiencing it consciously, but the world "is not" that experience. Once again we encounter the limits, ambiguity, and tentativeness of empirical and objective historical claims based upon the "facts." Since we cannot put either the present world of factual experience or the past world of factual experience directly into our heads, we have at best only a mediated figurative experience that both manifests the present and past worlds but simultaneously conceals both.

However, we have not exhausted our experience of the world or the intellect by speaking only of a manifest and concealed dynamic of foreground and background in these two distinct but never separate "dimensions" of experience. The world is not a mere collection of facts, and the intellect is not a mere collection of abstractions and images. What is concealed in that which is manifest is far more than something we might call "material" and something we might call "mental" (or "spiritual"). Furthermore, no more than factuality exhausts the present of our

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27. What would "empty space" mean? See the discussion of Plato's χώρα below.

mental and physical world does factuality exhaust the past or the future of our mental and physical world. As much as our materialist age has lost the ontological significance of our spiritual/mental lives, our exclusive focus on the factual and the actual either physical or mental conceals far far more.

The Western tradition offers options for thinking the concealed beyond factuality or actuality. Although Aristotle's notion of ὕλη is often understood to be "matter" in the sense of some universal "stuff" or "physical" material, we are reminded by Heinz Happ that "[t]his Aristotelian hyle -- like the [Platonic] Academy's second principle [of the unlimited two] -- in its 'abstract' and in its 'concrete' sense as a whole or in part is *without exception nothing material but is a spiritual* principle, a νοητόν.[28]" "... [N]either is αἰσθητὴ ὕλη [perceived hyle] actually nor is it called 'seen perceptible matter,' but means -- as is the case with all other kinds of hyle -- *as such* nothing perceived through the senses but only through abstraction ...[29]"

> The interpretation of Aristotle's hyle as a unified principle entirely other than "material stuff" is absolutely not one-sided and extremely 'idealistic,' as an empirical critic could suggest, but allows the many sought after particulars of the 'material' to be understood as manifestations, the primary of all principles, and so to become for the first time philosophically relevant.[30]

The notion that hyle is an "abstraction" strikes the naive ear as a contradiction. What could be more "concrete" than matter? However, the dimension of experience Aristotle seeks to express with the term hyle is both abstract and concrete. Furthermore, we never experience hyle (matter) directly, only indirectly:

> ... *matter is unknowable in itself* (emphasis added). And some matter is perceptible and some intelligible, perceptible matter being for instance bronze and wood and all matter that is changeable, and intelligible matter being that which is present in perceptible things not *qua* perceptible, i.e., the objects of mathematics. (*Metaphysics* 1035b 28-1036a12)

Matter is no substance, and it is known only indirectly through form, either concrete or abstract

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28. Heinz Happ, *Hyle. Studien zum Aristotelischen Materie-Begriff* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971), 804.

29. Happ, *Hyle. Studien zum Aristotelischen Materie-Begriff*, 804, n. 626.

30. Happ, *Hyle. Studien zum Aristotelischen Materie-Begriff*, 808.

form. In short, Happ tells us that Aristotle's hyle is "... 'pure possibility' and at the same time the active counter principle to form that cannot be derived from the form.[31]"

> Dynamis and energeia are namely the modes of being of all structures and "the given" that we up to now have learned and so named as hyle and form; that is, everything that is hyle manifests itself as δυνάμει ὄν, all that is form manifests itself as ἐνεργείᾷ ὄν ... The question of the essence of Aristotle's notion of hyle flows into the question of the essence of Aristotle's notion of 'possibility' ...[32]

"Aristotle's hyle-principle is ... 'pure' possibility. Hyle is an Urgrund in which all actuality slumbers and is at the same time an active source of all movement that occurs ateleologically yet always strives for teleological form.[33]"

Another attempt in the tradition seeking to think the concealed beyond factuality or actuality can be identified in Plato's notions of τὸ ἀγαθόν and χώρα. Whereas these terms are translated "the Good" and "space" or "receptacle," the Good is not the opposite of evil, and the receptacle is not some "this" in contrast to a "that"[34] or, in other words, χώρα is no "place" (τόπος).

To be sure, Plato's τὸ ἀγαθόν is no longer a neutral notion. Thanks particularly to Plotinus and Neoplatonism, we have long since come to think of τὸ ἀγαθόν as an absolute One above all change and approachable only through the negation of all finite predicates. No Christian author has articulated such a Negative Theology (today it's claimed to be "Post-modern" and called "Radical Orthodoxy[35]") more clearly and had such an influence on Western

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31. Happ, *Hyle. Studien zum Aristotelischen Materie-Begriff*, 808.

32. Happ, *Hyle. Studien zum Aristotelischen Materie-Begriff*, 687-88.

33. Happ, *Hyle. Studien zum Aristotelischen Materie-Begriff*, 710.

34. See John Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 106-07, especially n. 15.

35. The Radical Orthodoxy movement crosses the Atlantic with the "founder" John Milbank from England at the University of Virginia and Rowan Williams, Milbank's professor and currently Archbishop of Wales. Others who count themselves as part of this so-called "Post-modern" movement in theology include Catherine Pickstock, D. Steven Long, Rev. Graham Ward, Fredrick Christian Bauerschmidt, David Moss, and William T. Cavanaugh.

theology thanks to the translation by John Scotus (Eriugena) in 862 CE[36] than Pesudo-Dionysius. Negative Theology is enjoying a resurgence of popularity these days not only among the British Radical Orthodoxy but also among Deconstructionsists. Apparently, even Derrida is increasingly employing the language of Negative Theology.[37]

However, Plato says explicitly in the famous passage of the ***Republic*** 509b that τὸ ἀγαθόν is ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας (beyond being/essence). It is not some "thing" above all other things. An alternative reading to the notion of τὸ ἀγαθόν as an unchanging One over against the multiplicity of things would challenge the metaphysical assumption of "actuality" employed to contemplate this "One." If we were to think of τὸ ἀγαθόν as nothing actual but everything possible, we would surely be required to think of τὸ ἀγαθόν as ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας (beyond being/essence, that is, beyond all actuality).

Furthermore, when Plato describes the creation of the cosmos in the ***Timaeus***, he suggests that we think of the creation by means of the model of "production." The cosmos comes about analogously to the way in which a master craftsperson creates an artifact. Such a creative event requires, however, not merely the "two kinds" of an "original" (paradigm) and "copy" (image) analogous to the craftsperson's original idea that is externalized or "copied" in the production of

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36. Pseudo-Dionysius, ***Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works***, translated by Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 16. Jaroslav Pelikan writes in the introduction that Thomas Aquinas "quoted Dionysius about 1,700 times." (20)

37. John Caputo develops the notion of the "wholly other" as an "absolute break" in the work of Derrida as a constant eschatological (Messianic) openness of what is always yet to come. See John D. Caputo, ***Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversations with Jacques Derrida*** (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 6, 14, 22-23, 42, 44, 52, 70, 136, 139, 150, 154, 156, 158, 164, 166, 179, 189, and 198. There is no more appropriate label for this "wholly other" discussion than Negative Theology.

One might want to add Martin Heidegger's name to this re-emergence of Negative Theology, for he enigmatically states in Martin Heidegger, ***Being and Time***, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 499, n. xiii (H 427): "If God's eternity can be 'construed' philosophically, then it may be understood only as a more primordial temporality which is 'infinite'. Whether the way afforded by the ***via negationis et eminentiae*** is a possible one, remains to be seen."

the artifact. Rather, "production" requires a "third kind," the χώρα.[38] However, the χώρα. is no thing; it is nothing definite.

> Timaeus insists once and for all on the differentiation: the mother and receptacle [χώρα] of all generation is not to be called earth, air, fir, or water. He continues in a way that gathers up all he has said about this third kind and that opens beyond to the chorology: "But if we call it an invisible εἶδος, formless, all-receiving, and, in a most perplexing way, partaking of the intelligible ... and most difficult to catch, we will not be speaking falsely" (51a-b).[39]

John Sallis continues:

> Since it is *all*-receiving ... it can itself have no form, no determinations whatsoever ... The ramifications of this utter nondetermination are profound, or rather, abysmal ... Then it would have to be said that the third kind has no meaning and that the name it is about to be called, the name χώρα, if it is a name, has no meaning. Both χώρα and the word χώρα, would be meaningless. If, on the other hand, it should turn out that somehow, through some twist of λόγος, they have something like a meaning, it would have to be a kind of meaning beyond meaning, just as the third kind ... is a kind of kind beyond kind.[40]

The similarity of language here with the language used in the ***Republic*** to talk about the Good (τὸ ἀγαθόν) should not be taken as merely accidental. Sallis himself refers to Derrida's own elliptical connection between τὸ ἀγαθόν and χώρα:[41] "This expression [ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας (beyond being/essence)], which in the ***Republic*** (509b) Socrates uses to speak of τὸ ἀγαθόν, is never used in reference to the χώρα. Yet there is every reason to ask, as does Derrida, about the possibility of extending the expression to the χώρα.[42]" Thomas Kratzert's analysis of Plato's notion of χώρα concludes that "space" for Plato means "potentiality" and that "[s]ince the necessity of this space is only grounded through understanding, we are able to speak of a 'noetic

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38. See Sallis, ***Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus***, 110.

39. Sallis, ***Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus***, 110.

40. Sallis, ***Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus***, 111.

41. Sallis, ***Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus***, 113, n. 23. See Jacques Derrida, "Tense," in ***The Path of Archaic Thinking: Unfolding the Work of John Sallis***, edited by Kenneth Maly (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 73f.

42. Sallis, ***Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus***, 114, n. 23.

space' ... [T]hen one is speaking of a non-material space ...[43]" In other words, "[w]ith respect to Plato's notion of space, one may not speak of 'empty space,' but one must speak of a conception of 'noetic space'.[44]" This is exactly what Heinz Happ has observed with respect to Aristotle's hyle. Both τὸ ἀγαθόν and χώρα may be understood to be the concealed dimension of possibility in any and all actuality either physical or mental. Possibility is not nothing, and, simultaneously, possibility is paradoxically both one and many.[45]

Sallis proposes that a "distortion" occurs when Aristotle equates χώρα with ὕλη:[46] "For the identification of ὕλη with χώρα, there is no basis in the *Timaeus*. Plato never uses the word ὕλη in Aristotle's sense, a sense that, one suspects, comes to be constituted and delimited only in and through the work of Aristotle ... [T]he χώρα is not reducible to that from which things are made ...[47]" It is clear that Sallis takes ὕλη to mean "stuff" or something physical. If the Aristotelian notion of ὕλη is not anything physical but is both concrete and abstract possibility, then the connection with Plato's two principles of "the one and the unlimited two" as well as with the "third kind," τὸ ἀγαθόν and χώρα, becomes an unbreakable bond.[48] In other words, we

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43. Thomas Kratzert, *Die Entdeckung des Raums. Vom hesiodischen "chaos" zur platonischen "chora"*, vol. 26 of *Bochumer Studien zur Philosophie* (Amersterdam/Philadelphia: B.R. Grüner, 1998), 109.

44. Kratzert, *Die Entdeckung des Raums. Vom hesiodischen "chaos" zur platonischen "chora"*, 110.

45. A productive reading of Plato's *Parmenides* is to insert the term "possibility" wherever Plato talks about the perplexities of thinking about the "one." See, for example, *Parmenides* 155c - 160b.

46. Sallis finds this shift and distortion (*Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus*, 150) in the "forgery" *On the Nature of the Cosmos and the Soul* assumed to have been a genuine Platonic dialogue "by most Neoplatonic commentators, including Proclus" (148). However, Sallis maintains that this "distortion" originated with Aristotle (152) who identifies "the receptacle with 'primary matter'" (152) in *On Generation and Corrupton* (209b).

47. Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus*, 152-53.

48. Just where in the tradition does the wedge between Plato and Aristotle get

may have to rethink our understanding of the relationship between Plato and Aristotle, and we surely must rethink our understanding of Plato as defender of a static hierarchical order:

> ... only one course is open to the philosopher [the lover, not the possessor, of wisdom] who values knowledge and the rest above all else. He must refuse to accept from the champions either of the one or of the many forms the doctrine that all reality is changeless, and he must turn a deaf ear to the other party who represent reality as everywhere changing. Like a child begging for 'both,' he must declare that reality or the sum of things is both at once -- all that is unchangeable and all that is in change.[49] (*Sophist* 249c8-d4)

The point is not whether we accept the metaphysics of Plato and/or Aristotle.[50] The point is that we have not begun to understand experience of any kind if we reduce experience down to actuality to the exclusion of possibility. One can say that the paradigm revolution initiated by the introduction into the West of the writings of Aristotle in the 13th century prior to the availability of the writings of Plato substituted Platonic physics (mathematics) for Aristotelian physics (motion to rest) and Aristotelian metaphysics (form in matter) for Platonic metaphysics (form without matter).[51] The consequence has been to further encourage a focus exclusively on actuality and factuality to the exclusion of concealed possibility. The unacknowledged assumption of the new paradigm has been that everything can be explained on the basis of actuality. The unacknowledged assumption has concealed not only the dynamic of concealed

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introduced? Certainly in the ancient world, there was never any such a separation. Aquinas drew on Boethius' example of a "synthesis" of Plato and Aristotle. Was it not Aquinas' age that came to perceive an unbridgeable split between the Athenian and the Stagarite?

49. In the *Philebus* (22a-e; 60c-d; 61b), Plato tells us that the "good life" is found in the "mixed" rather than the "unmixed" life that denigrates pleasure for the sake of the enduring intelligence. Of course, the mixed life is under the sovereignty of the "Good," the conjunction of beauty, proportion, and truth (*Philebus* 65a; 66a-b). The "hierarchy" of the *Philebus* is the (1) Good, (2) the proportioned and beautiful, (3) reason and intelligence, (4) the soul, (5) pleasure (*Philebus* 66a-c). As the "third ting," the Good is higher than, but not inseparable from, both reason and pleasure (*Philebus* 67a).

50. It is tempting to assert with Sallis that Plato is the first "post-metaphysical" thinker. See Sallis, *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus*, 123.

51. See Alexander Koyré, "Galileo and Plato," *Journal of the History of Ideas* IV (1943): 400-28.

possibility in any and all manifest actuality, including historical claims, but also the inescapable role of “faith” or unknowing at the core of any and all assumptions.

Rethinking History

If we include in our reflections about history and faith this newly opened, yet old, horizon of possibility in and through any and all actuality, we must dramatically reformulate the nature of history and re-evaluate the role of faith.

History is not merely the collection of facts.[52] To be sure, the introduction of the concealed horizon of possibility into the “task” of history underscores even more radically how

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52. There is much discussion of a “new history” that recognizes the difficulties of determining the historical “facts.” See, for example, Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner, eds., *A New Philosphy of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Herbert Lindenberger in *Die Entdeckung Des Raums. Vom Hesiodischen “Chaos” Zur Platonischen “Chora”* distinguishes between an "old" history concerned with factual evidence appropriate for the courtroom (18) and a "new" history that is more like fiction than fact (16). The "old" history labeled time periods according to a "cause-and-effect" chain with the connecting "links" labeled "transition periods" (17). The "new" history recognizes the loss of canon (17,22). Furthermore, method in historical inquiry is recognized to be "implicated in the ideologies within which ... [it] first developed" (18) (i.e., there is no neutral standpoint for reading). The "new" history juxtaposes perspectives from multiple disciplines (19) and acknowledges the links between social phenomena and aesthetics (e.g., how the audience shapes the historical account (20), how the "network of texts" at the time of the past event/authoring of a text "rethink and rewrite one another" (20) [what Wolfgang Iser speaks of as "repertoire". See *Der Akt des Lesens, 4th edtion* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1994), 114-43], and how the social concerns of the historian illuminates the historicity of history as a consequence of the crumbling of authority (21)). The "old" history's blind confidence in the natural sciences resulted in historians viewing each step of their work as "a dab of mortar, toward some temple of knowledge that would presumably last into perpetuity" (21). The "new" history has jettisoned the word "objective" and "wholly abandoned the analogy to scientific inquiry that marked the older history" (22). Drawing upon Thomas Kuhn's notion of paradigms, the "new" history recognizes that "... what we label 'historical' assumes strikingly different shapes in different historical situations" (22) (again, the historicizing of history).

Richard Rorty distinguishes among five (not four!) historical genres: historical reconstruction, rational reconstruction, Geistesgeschichte, doxography, and intellectual history in “The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres,” in *Philosophy in History: Essays on the Historiography of History*, eds. Richard Rorty, J.B. Schneewind, and Quenten Skinner

"impossible" it is to do history. As if it were not enough that every historical account is at best

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(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 49-75. He proposes that "[t]he main reason we want historical knowledge ... is to learn 'the distinction between what is necessary and what is the product merely of our own contingent arrangements'." (51) We want to know "... that the high culture of a given period [including our own] is not just froth, but rather an expression of something that goes all the way down." (72) Furthermore, "... we cannot get along without canons ... because we cannot get along without heroes." (73)

Rorty's entire discussion and particularly his discussion of canons indicates that the focus of his interest is almost exclusively on the "actual" in history with only a slight if indirect hint that history also has to do with the possible. Rorty speaks of a "good" intellectual history as one that produces "... a sense of how ... possibilities changed." (69) Yet Rorty's possibilities are concerned merely with actual alternatives. The purpose of identifying these (actual) alternatives and how they have changed is "... to produce a sense of the differences between the options [i.e., the actual options] open to an intellectual at different times and places." (69)

Rorty acknowledges it is quite possible that we will engage only contingencies and merely justify conversation "... with creatures of our own phantasy ..." (71) This is of central concern for Rorty because he denies Thomas Kuhn's claim that we experience sensations rather than stimuli (see Thomas S. Kuhn, ***The Structure of Scientific Revolutions***, vol. 2, number 2 of ***Foundations of the Unity of Science***, 2d ed., reprint, 1967, International Encyclopedia of Unified Science [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962], 192-93) to insist that "there are no such mental faculties as 'thought' and sensation' ..." (52, n. 1). We experience stimuli and not sensation according to Rorty. "We need to see ourselves not as responding to the same stimuli ..., but as having created new and more interesting stimuli ..." (63) If we only respond to stimuli that we can change at will, then it is all the more disturbing that we might be concerned with the "contingent" and not the "necessary." According to the "materialist and nominalist" (73) Rorty, "[w]e should justify ourselves by claiming to be asking better questions, not by claiming to give better answers to the permanent 'deep, fundamental questions' which our ancestors answered badly. We can think of the fundamental questions of philosphy as the ones which everybody really ought to have asked, or as the ones which everybody would have asked if they could, but not as the ones which everybody ***did*** ask whether they knew it or not." (63) Leaving aside the impossibility of ever determining what "everybody ought" to be doing, however, there is a more important task than determining whether or not we are asking the right actual question or providing "better answers" (63). The higher task is to engage history for the mining of (treasured) possibilities that we can appropriate in the right way for our lives.

Why is it that "[w]hen one tries to tie in Plato and Aristotle, there seem so many ways to do so ..." and why is it that "Plato and Aristotle are ***so*** big and impressive that describing them in terms originally developed for use on people like Hobbes and Berkeley begins to seem a little odd" (65)? Is it because they asked the "right" (actual) questions or proferred the "right" (actual) answers? Yes, but more, No! It is because they knew how to draw their hearers/readers into the richness of possibilities. So much of the history of philosphy has been an attempt to limit Plato and Aristotle to what they actually said or meant to say. We need a reading that acknowledges their own reservations about what it is we can actually say.

an approximation as Kierkegaard tells us, now we must deal with the "fact" that any reconstruction of events in the past by their very nature elude the historian's net that fishes only for the facts.[53] However, we cannot say that we have understood an event of the past if we ignore the concealed possibilities in that event. Surely, what did not happen but might have happened has as much to do with the event as what did in fact happen. However, what did not happen but might have happened was not necessarily even understood by the participants in the event.

One can speak of the human condition as a project of possibilities in an actual world.[54] The language of project hints at the temporal aspect of any and all human experience. Yes, we cannot ignore and must respond to the actualities of our individual and corporate situation(s), but there is far more to our experience than the actual situation. There is a constant and incessant play between actuality and possibility that involves a dynamic of the manifest and the concealed within a temporal horizon of future, past, and present. The possibilities that we will actualize in the future are inseparable from the horizon of possibilities of our past and present.

Possibilities are neither free floating nor calculable probabilities. In other words, possibilities are neither empty logical possibilities nor are they simple alternatives between actual states of affairs. Possibilities are inseparably tied to an actual situation, and, yet, they constitute a partially but never exhaustively graspable horizon of open-endedness concealed by any and all actual conditions.[55] The relationship between history and faith is rooted in this dynamic interaction between actuality and concealed possibilities.

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53. We are reminded by Philip Wheelwright that "[i]f reality is largely fluid and half-paradoxical, steel nets are not the best instruments for taking samples of it." Philip Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1968), 128. See, as well, (39): "Meanings always flit mockingly beyond the reach of men with nets and measuring sticks."

54. See Heidegger's discussion of the "equiprimordial" elements of "state-of-mind" (Befindlichkeit), "understanding," "interpretation," and "discourse" in Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 172-210.

Rethinking Faith

We have not adequately understood the nature of faith if we see it as a set of propositions in contrast to a set of propositions known by reason. The relationship between reason and faith in Christian theology finds its classic formulation in the traditional distinction between Natural and Revealed Theology. Calvin begins his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* with a discussion of what we can know of God through the natural order independent of revelation.[56] In contrast to what we can learn about God from reason's investigation of nature, redemption requires knowledge that one can only acquire through revelation.[57] This framework sets faith over against nature in the sense of two kinds of knowledge. Natural theology provides us with knowledge discoverable by reason through the investigation of nature. Revealed theology provides us with knowledge acquired only through revelation (i.e., the scriptures). The knowledge of revelation we can appropriate only by faith.[58] Such a dichotomizing of reason and faith is not unique to Calvin, of course, but Calvin represents a classic formulation of faith as knowledge.

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55. It is not as if one's horizon of possibilities was limitless. Rather, one's possibilities are limited by the capacities of one's actual situation. See Alfonso García Marqués, "Der Begriff von 'Möglichkeit' nach 'Metaphysik' IX,3-4," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 100, no. 2 (1993): 357-65. The limit to possibilities is what ensures that the other (as object or person) emerges as an other to which/whom one is accountable. If possibilility was not limited by actuality/factuality, one would have not way to critique solipsism. Although we are not in the position to establish absolute truth, such skepticism is not "vulgar" but "refined" (i.e., our judgments must be proportioned to the degree of "evidence" and their coherence with all other judgments). See David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion and the Posthumous Essays of the Immortality of the Soul and On Suicide*, edited by Richard H. Popkin (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., Co., 1982), 5, 9.

56. See "Book One. The Knowledge of God the Creator" in John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, editor John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles, The Library of Christian Classics, Vol. XXI (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1973).

57. See "Book Two. The Knowledge of God the Redeemer in Christ, First Disclosed to the Fathers Under the Law, and Then to Us in the Gospel" in Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

An adequate understanding of faith, however, must contrast such "epistemic" faith from "non-epistemic" faith. The nature of faith is not knowing but, rather, unknowing. We can establish a contrast between reason and epistemic faith only so long as we can embrace a metaphysic that grounds propositional judgments. Once one recognizes the limits to propositional knowledge, one is incapable of playing knowledge acquired by reason off against knowledge acquired by faith. Rational[59] knowledge is profoundly limited by assumption, lack of definition, and dependence upon the lenses of a set of commitments one has made in advance about the nature of reality and how it works. In a post-metaphysical age, reason has lost its privileged position over faith.[60] Calculating reason itself is a form of (non-epistemic) faith.

Faith in its non-epistemic sense is concerned with all of the presuppositions necessary for us to experience and/or make sense of our world. We can distinguish among faith systems, but are we able to prove or dis-prove any faith system? Here is where history and faith meet. Faith of any kind can always and only speak out of a particular actual situation, and that actual

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58. See "Book Three, The Way in Which We Receive the Grace of Christ: What Benefits Come to Us from it, and What Effects Follow" in Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

59. It is not possible here because of space to investigate the alternative meanings for "reason." Suffice it to say that what Plato means by "reason" (θεωρία and dialectic) in his discussion of the highest portion of the line simile in Book VI of the ***Republic*** has nothing to do with the calculating reason of the modern age. Rather, what we now call reason, Plato calls "understanding."

60. I am perplexed (Rorty would certainly assert I am wrong-headed) when I read Richard Rorty's comment in "The Legacy of W.V. Quine," ***The Chronicle of Higher Education*** 2 (2001 February 2001): B7 about Martin Heidegger "... a megalomaniacal ex-Nazi who asked questions like 'What is Being?' without bothering to make clear how he would know when he had given the right answer." First, I don't know that the title "ex-Nazi" is appropriate, and, second, just what would allow one to determine whether or not one had the "right answer"? Certainly there is a range of pragmatic immediacy over which the likelihood is high that one is correct, but the farther one gets from intuitive immediacy, the greater the ambiguity about the correctness of one's judgments. If we dismiss Heidegger for failing to provide us with criteria, then we have to dismiss all of Western thought, including Rorty.

situation past or present places parameters on the possibilities of that situation. However, faith breaks open the horizon of any and all actual situation(s).

History and Faith

The *tertium quid* between history and faith is nothing actual (it is neither a substance nor a common set of propositional truths). The *tertium quid* is concealed possibilities that are always circumscribed by and never independent of a particular situation. Properly understood, history provides us with greater or lesser clarity about the *actuality* of past situations, but it cannot begin to exhaustively grasp the *possibilities* of past situations. Properly understood, faith is non-epistemic and is inseparable from the project of understanding itself. To be sure, understanding is not to be narrowly tied to the conceptual. We understand ourselves and our world at a far deeper level; a level that includes our affective selves as well as the actual particulars of our world. Understanding is a ceaseless process of projecting of possibilities in and out of our situation.[61]

Paul Ricoeur speaks of the activity of the imagination as the common activity between historical events and fictional texts.

> A new sense of the word "history" will appear ... that exceeds the distinction between historiography and fiction, and one that takes as its best synonyms the terms "historical consciousness" and "historical condition." The narrative function, taken in its full scope, covering the developments from the epic to the modern novel, as well as those running from legends to critical history, is ultimately to be defined by its ambition to ***refigure*** [emphasis added] our historical condition and thereby to raise it to the level of historical consciousness. This new meaning of the word "history" ... is attested to by the very semantics of the word, which has designated for at least two centuries ... both the totality of the course of events and the totality of narratives referring to this course of events.[62]

Ricoeur speaks of refiguration as the third stage in the interpretive process that commences with

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61. There is no more powerful description of the equiprimordiality of the affective moment and understanding than sections 29-32 in Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, 172-95.

62. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3, translated by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 102.

the "pre-figured" of experience and language drawn on by the historical[63] or fictional narrator to create her "configured" narrative. However, the written narrative is incomplete until the reader "re-figures" the narrative in light of her own life-world of experience and language.[64] With respect to history Ricoeur writes:

> For historical knowledge, the notion of a trace constitutes a sort of terminus in the series of references that leads back from archives to documents to the trace. Ordinarily, such knowledge does not linger over the enigma of this historical reference with its essentially indirect character. For historical knowledge, the ontological question, implicitly contained in the notion of a trace, is immediately covered over by the epistemological question relating to the document, that is, to its value as a warrant, a basis, a proof in explaining the past.[65]

Ricoeur concludes that fiction and history are two sides of a common coin:

> ... fiction is quasi-historical, just as much as history is quasi-fictive. History is quasi-fictive once the quasi-presence of events placed "before the eyes of" the reader by a lively narrative supplements through its intuitiveness, its vividness, the elusive character of the pastness of the past, which is illustrated by the paradoxes of standing-for. Fictional narrative is quasi-historical to the extent that the unreal events that it relates are past facts for the narrative voice that addresses itself to the reader. It is in this that they resemble past events and that fictions resembles history.[66]

If one of the values of fiction is to free "certain possibilities that were not actualized in the

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63. See Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1, translated by Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 182.

64. Ricoeur continues to write in volume one of the interpretive process in general in Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, 53: "What is at stake ... is the concrete process by which the textual configuration mediates between the prefiguration of the practical field and its refiguration through the reception of the work ... [T]he reader is that operator par excellence who takes up through doing something -- the act of reading -- the unity of the traversal from $mimesis_1$ to $mimesis_3$ by way of $mimesis_2$." Wolfgang Iser wrote in a similar vein in *Der Akt des Lesens, 4th edtion* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1994), 255: "Die im Lesen erfolgende Sinnkonstitution besagt ... nicht nur, daß wir den in der Aspekthaftigkeit des Textes implizierten Sinnhorizont zur Erscheinung bringen; sie besagt darüber hinaus, daß in einer solchen Formulierung des Unformulierten immer zugleich die Möglichkeit liegt, uns selbst zu formulieren und dadurch das zu entdecken, was unserer Bewußtheit bisher entzogen schien. In diesem Sinne ***bietet Literatur die Chance, durch Formulierung*** [Ricoeur's "configured"] ***von Unformuliertem*** [Ricoeur's "pre-figured"] ***uns selbst zu formulieren*** [Ricoeur's "re-figured"] (emphasis added)."

65. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, vol. 3,* 143.

66. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, vol. 3,* 190.

historical past, it is owing to its quasi-historical character that fiction itself is able ... to perform its liberating function.[67]" Yet, it is not as if only fiction were concerned with liberating possibilities. "The [historical] past questions us and calls us into question before we question it or call it into question.[68]" In another context, Ricoeur distinguished between the "documentary redescription proper to history and the imaginative variations of fiction in the ... intersection between ... history and fiction.[69]" However,

> [i]t is easy to show that history makes use of fiction and fiction of history as each refigures time ... [T]he role of the imaginary is clearly evident in the non-observable character of the past ... [T]he reconstruction of the past needs the help of imagination that can place it 'right before our eyes,' according to the very striking expression of Aristotle in speaking of metaphor.[70]

The past is capable of questioning us and calling us into question because it is both actual and possible. Its possibility demands the engagement of the imagination. We are no longer directly related to the actual people, objects, and events of the past, but we are connected to them through a common horizon of possibilities. Our understanding of others, objects, and events is precisely our ability to recover at least partially the possibilities that they were and continue to be. What is crucial for a discussion between history and faith in this process is to recognize that our relationship to the past is not shaped primarily by the actual. Our understanding in the present can only occur at the level of possibilities mediated by our grasp of the actualities of the past and what they left and leave concealed.

The truth of the past is not the actual; it is the possible. Truth is not propositional but the dynamic of the concealed in the manifested, the possibilities of the actual. How are the truths of history related to the truths of faith? They are organically related at the level of possibility. Is

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67. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, vol. 3,* 191.

68. Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative, vol. 3,* 222.

69. Paul Ricoeur, "Narrated Time," translated by Robert Sweeney, *Philosophy Today* 29, no. 4 (Winter 1985): 270a.

70. Ricoeur, "Narrated Time," 270a-270b.

faith a set of propositions? No! Is history a collection of facts? No! Faith is an expression of our profound unknowing illustrated by the same dynamic of manifest actuality and concealed possibility that is the past, present, and future.

How does one appropriate the past in faith? Do we establish a set of facts? We are human only as temporal beings; both history and faith are an expression of that temporality. The condition necessary for that temporal dynamic is the inescapable interplay of actuality sustained by concealed possibilities. Do we try to construct a linear explanatory account of the factual development of the church? Not only are such facts only partially available to us, but the development of the church seems to defy linear explanation. Could this be because possibilities are not linear?

What hermeneutic of the tradition is involved in such an understanding of history and faith? We must pay as much if not more attention to the possibilities of the past as they shape and inform our present. Concretely, rather than history establishing what we may and/or must actually believe, history offers the challenge of a range of possibilities that can illuminate our actual situation. To be sure, one may not read the Sermon on the Mount as expressing an agenda of aggression and personal material gain. However, that does not reduce the Sermon on the Mount down to "one" or "the" proper reading. Furthermore, there is not one but a range of possibilities expressed in Luke 17:20-21: "Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them, 'The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, 'Lo, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst [within] you." Christianity is neither "one" nor "the" truth.

No account (fictive or historical) is taken more frequently as the litmus test of the truth of Christianity than the resurrection. Pannenberg insists that the factual and objective if not physical resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is the central claim of Christianity upon which everything else hinges.[71] The resurrection is the litmus test for determining if one shares the

"Christian" faith. However, even a superficial reading of the resurrection accounts and claims of the early Christian church tell a very different story. Not only is resurrection not everywhere and always portrayed as physical, but resurrection is also not necessarily everywhere at the center of the "Christian" faith.[72]

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71. Pannenberg is frustratingly ambiguous about the meaning of resurrection although he is absolutely clear that the resurrection was an historical event. See Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus--God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), 98-99. Pannenberg asserts that when one speaks of the resurrection of the dead one is concerned with a metaphor (*Jesus--God and Man*, 74). Nevertheless, despite the appeal to metaphor, the language skirts as close as one can get to literal language: "There is no substantial or structural continuity from the old to the new existence ... [H]owever, the transformation will occur to the same earthly body that we are here: something different will not be produced in its place, but there is a historical continuity in the sense of continuous transition in the consummation of the transformation itself." (*Jesus--God and Man*, 76) Later Pannenberg proposes: "the so-called 'life after death' can no longer be thought of as immortality of the soul, but onlly as another mode of existence of the ***whole*** man." (*Jesus--God and Man*, 87) Nevertheless, Pannenberg returns to metaphor in his conclusion: "Jesus' resurrection from the dead and thus the incarnation of the Son of God in Jesus is that event in tme through which the Son mediates the creation of the world and executes God's royal Lordship. Through the power of this historical event that at the same time remains the eschatological future of the world, Jesus exercises his Lordship over the whole of the world process.

... All such statements anticipate something that will be shown to be real before the eyes of all only in the eschatological future, even though it has already happened to Jesus. This proleptic structure constitutes the inadequateness, the provisionalness of all Christological statements ... For this reason, all statements of Christology have only metaphorical meaning. They are valid only to the extent that they are motivated by thinking through the history of Jesus ... Only the ***eschaton*** will ultimately disclose what really happened in Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Until then we must speak favorably in thoroughly legitimate, but still only metaphorical and symbolic, form about Jesus' resurrection and the significance inherent in it." (*Jesus--God and Man*, 396-97)

72. Klaus Berger observes (in *Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums: Theologie des Neuen Testaments* [Tübingen: A. Francke Verlag], 67) that Jesus' death and resurrection are not universally linked in early Christian literature: "Es ist nicht möglich, generell von einem einzigen Komplex 'Tod und Auferstehung Jesu' auszugehen, es handelt sich demnach weithin eben nicht um zwei Seiten desselben ('Dialektik') ...

Tod und Auferstehung Jesu werden nicht erwähnt in einem ganzem Block judenchristlicher Theologien des frühen Christentums: 2 Petr. Jak, Jud, P Herm. ThomasEv. -- Man kann nicht einfach erklären, Tod oder Auferstehung Jesu seien in diesen Theologien schlicht vorausgesetzt." Berger proposes that the death of Jesus had significance for some

Some early Christians did, apparently, believe in a physical resurrection, but the "physical" Lord portrayed in John 20, for example, is nothing like my or your physical body. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:50: "I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable." He had already written in 15:42-44: "So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body." What does Paul mean, then, when he wrote in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: "For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord

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Christians independent of the resurrection (see, 66) and that to give (παραδίδωμι) one's life at least initially means "to risk" life. "Gott überläßt Jesus den Menschen -- nur so weit reicht seine Aktivität. -- Wo Ähnliches von Jesus gesagt wird (Gal 1,4; 2,20; 1 Clem 16,7) geht es nicht um ein Sühnenhandeln, sondern um den Verzicht auf Gegenwehr und den Einsatz des ganzen Lebens, inklusive Tod. Vgl. dazu auch 1 Makk 6,44 ('Er gab sich, sein Volk zu retten', nicht im Sinne von Sühne oder Stellvertretung; 1 Makk 2,50 'Gebt die Leben für den Bund' heißt: 'Setzt sie ein, riskiert sie', aber es geht nicht um Opfersprache)." (67)

Finally, Berger points out that Jesus' blood as the blood of the paschal lamb was seen by some early Christians as a form of protection (it has an apotropaic meaning), and is not necessarily a sacrificial atonement for sin (69): "Wo dagegen der Tod Jesu als Entmachtung des Widersachers bezeichnet wird ..., liegt offenbar nicht eine stellvertretende oder sühnende, sondern eine apotropäische Deutung des Blutes Jesu vor. Sehr wahrscheinlich handelt es sich bei diesen Texten um eine alte Auslegung von Ex 12 (V. 7.13.22f.29): Mit dem Blut des Passah-Lammes wurden die Türpfosten der jüdischen Häuser besprengt, und daraufhin wurden die Juden vom Todesengel verschont. Es handelte sich demnach um einen apotropäischen Ritus. Im frühen Christentum wird Jesus als das Lamm angesehen, mit dessen Blut die Christen besprengt werden und wodurch sie dann den Mächten, dem Teufel, dem Bereich des Todes entrissen werden. Spuren dieser Auffassung gibt es offenbar in 1 Petr 1,2 ...; Apk 12, 11 ...; vgl. Tertullian, De anima 50,5 ...; Hebr 2,14 und Kol 2,12-14. In allen diesen Texten geht es nicht um den Sühnetod, sondern der Tod Jesu wird real-metaphorisch (wohl über die schützende Anrufung des Namens Jesu) gedeutet als Besprengung mit den blut im Sinne des apotropäischen Reinigungsritus. An die Stelle des Todesengels aus Ex 12 sind im Neuen Testament dann Tod, Teufel und Geistermächte getreten ..."

in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord." Is this rising up physical, spiritual, an early kerygma that Paul is merely reciting, or something else?

Norman Perrin summarized his study of *The Resurrection According to Matthew, Mark, and Luke*:

> Mark is attempting to convince his readers that they can experience the ultimacy of God in the concreteness, the historicality of their everyday existence; that wherever they are, God is also there, and he is there in the form of the figure of Jesus known from the gospel stories. Matthew is attempting to convince his readers that the eternal ship of the church is the vehicle of salvation for all people everywhere, and that aboard that ship the risen Lord effectively sustains those who believe in him. Luke is attempting to convince his readers that Jesus effectively lived out the life of the first Christian in the world, and that the resurrection means that his spirit now empowers those who follow him truly to imitate his life. These are the meanings of the resurrection so far as the evangelists are concerned, and as such they are more important than the question "what actually happened" in terms of appearance stories and empty tomb traditions.[73]

Furthermore, the early Church employed notions like "body dualism" and "spirit/flesh dualism" to proclaim the resurrection as docetic, and Gnostic redeemer stories appear to have been so compelling that by the mid-second century they dominated what it meant to be Christian.[74]

Can historical inquiry aid the perplexed Christian today in sorting out her/his faith? The "easiest" resolution would be to objectively determine that no or one account or understanding of the resurrection is correct, all others are wrong.[75] This would force a choice between history and

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73. Norman Perrin, *The Resurrection: According to Matthew, Mark and Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 83-84.

74. W.H.C. Frend writes: "The middle years of the second century belong to the Gnostics. Between 130 and 180 a succession of teachers, working mainly in Alexandria, dominated Christian intellectual life and spread their influence to Italy and Rome, to Asia Minor and even among the Christians in the Rhone Valley." W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 195.

75. There is evidence in Mark 9:40 ("For he who is not against us is for us.") that at least at some stage of gospel development there was a recognition and affirmation of multiple teachers and teachings in Christianity by a gospel writer. Of course, Matthew 12:30 and Luke 11:23 take the opposite position ("He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.") indicating that these gospel writers (and their source) are opposed to mutliple teachers and teachings.

This Markan passage would have to qualify Klaus Berger's judgment that multiple

faith by subordinating faith to historical verification. However, the ultimate criterion for any such decision will have as much if not more to do with our metaphysical assumptions than it will with whatever we take to be the "facts." If our metaphysical understanding of the human condition is materialistic, then one merely ignores the mediating role of consciousness and asserts that there is if not a direct correspondence between mind and fact then an asymptotic correlation that approaches zero the greater the degree of the clarity and distinctness of the perception. However, if one's metaphysical understanding insists that spirit has a priority over matter because matter cannot generate its opposite, then one would find any attempt to establish "the" truth of Christianity upon physical phenomena paradigmatic of a category mistake.

Objective historical claims are at best ***approximations***, and what is factually manifest conceals more than it makes accessible. First, because we cannot put the physical world directly into our minds, any and all objective and historical accounts conceal that the resurrection must be mediated as a representation to ourselves in the mind (spiritually) no matter what we conclude physically happened. Second, the actual conceals the possible although the possible is not independent of the actual.

What do we have of the actuality of the resurrection? We have a spectrum of reports and convictions articulated in the early Church. We can no more appropriately reduce that spectrum down to a psychological struggle born out of the disappointment if not despair over the crucifixion, than we can reduce that spectrum down to anything physical or spiritual. There was no "one" resurrection. There was the experience and report of resurrection, and the response to that/those experiences and report(s) was an explosion of possibilities.

Just as one can identify an explosion of possibilities emerging out of the teaching of Jesus, so also one can identify an explosion of possibilities emerging out of the report(s) of the

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teachers and teachings is one of several characteristics that distinguishes the "letters" from the "gospels" (one teacher, the gospel author/Jesus). See Berger, ***Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums***, 102-07, especially 104, although Berger is quick to question the notion of linear development with respect to interpretation or authority between the letters and the gospels (107).

resurrection. What is at the core of the Christian faith? It is nothing merely actual. The Christian faith confronts us with a range of possibilities born out of the actual situations of people past, present, and future. This is the truth of history and faith.

Just as possibilities are not free floating, though, Christianity's truth can only be discovered in its actual history. This history confronts the Christian with parameters that cannot be ignored and to which any discussion of possibilities must be grounded. Hence, a concern for possibilities is no call to ignore the actuality of history but to understand history more radically than mere actuality. Since history is figurative, we can apply Ricoeur's analysis of the analogy between metaphor and a literary work as a whole to historical investigation:

> In both cases [metaphoric statement and a literary work as a whole] the construction relies on the 'clues' contained in the text [we would say the historical evidence] itself: a clue is a kind of index for a specific construction, both ***a set of permissions and a set of prohibitions***; ***it excludes some unfitting constructions and allows some others*** which make more sense of the same words.
>
> Secondly, in both cases a construction may be said more probable than another, but not true. The most probable is that which (1) accounts for the greatest number of facts provided by the text, including potential connotations, and (2) offers a better qualitative convergence between the traits which it takes into account. A poor explication may be said to be narrow or farfetched.
>
> I agree with Beardsley that a good explication satisfies two principles: that of congruence and that of plenitude. I have spoken so far of convergence. The principle of plenitude ... reads: "all the connotations that can fit are to be attached; the poem means all it can mean.[76]"

Christianity's truth is one of manifest actuality and concealed possibilities (a truth "grounded" in both history and faith). Christianity's ambiguous, figurative, open-ended truth requires that we remember the accomplishments and sufferings (including those perpetrated in its name as well as those endured because of its witness) of those who have gone before. It is this

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76. Paul Ricoeur, "Metaphor and the Main Problem of Hermeneutics," *New Literary History* VI, no. 1 (Autumn 1974): 104 The insistence that the reading of a text or of history is accountable to its "object" is shared by Gadamer. Although understanding according to Gadamer is open-ended, what one seeks is agreement about and accountability to the object. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, ***Truth and Method***, translated by Garret Barden and John Cumming (New York: Seabury Press, Continuum, 1975), 236, 238, 2690, 278. It is precisely Gadamer's insistence upon our subordination to the text that leads Habermas to wonder about Gadamer's entrapment in and to tradition. See Paul Ricoeur, "Ethics and Culture: Habermas and Gadamer in Dialogue," *Philosophy Today* 17, no. 2/4 (Summer 1973): 153-65.

same ambiguous, figurative, and open-ended truth that “sets us free” and that calls us to accountability to others and our world in the present and future. Only by acknowledging the nature of history and faith are we capable of hearing the truth. Not one set of historical propositions or epistemic faith propositions communicate the truth. The truth is the cocophany of the tradition whose pluralism calls all propositional claims to accountability and demands their openness to possible correction by the alternative understandings in the greater community. The explosion of responses to the man Jesus is an affirmation of the truth of history and faith as more than mere actuality.

What does faith have to do with history? Everything and nothing! Faith is inseparable from the facts of history. The only criterion we have to distinguish between a healthy and a sick faith is the extent to which faith is willing to hold itself accountable to history as it articulates an understanding that is congruent and a plenitude with respect to the evidence no matter how fragmentary and incomplete that evidence is. Nonetheless, faith makes a plenitude possible precisely because neither faith nor history are exhausted by the facts, for there is a no-thingness to both history and faith. Higher than actuality is possibility.

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