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## Why “*Tolle Lege*”?

The title of this journal is a reference to an extraordinary moment of conversion in the life of St. Augustine, the great philosopher and theologian of the early medieval period. The story begins with St. Augustine sitting beneath a fig tree, weeping in distress over his inability to leave behind his life of sin and follow God faithfully. Amidst his tears he hears the distant voice of a child chanting the words “*Tolle, lege!*” or “Take up and read!” Aroused from his pitiable state and taking this as a sign from God, he goes to his house, picks up the first book he finds, and reads the first chapter. The book contained the letters of St. Paul, and the verse that Augustine read spoke to his heart with such force that he was convinced beyond any doubt of the truth of God; he was converted on the spot.

This journal of philosophy and theology is meant to embody a spirit of truth-seeking—on the part of both the contributors and you, the reader. Like St. Augustine, we are all faced with the choice between complacency and continual conversion toward truth. We hope that this journal will serve as an aid in the discovery of truth, and thus we exhort you in all earnestness to “Take up and read!”

## Editor's Note

*Tolle lege*—two words changed the world when St. Augustine converted to a new life of faith and truth. Ten years ago, these words inspired the creation of this journal. For a decade now, we have highlighted Mount students' contributions to the fields of philosophy and theology and have brought them to you, the reader, in the hope that you would be inspired in your own journey toward Truth. As we enter a new decade of publication, these two words continue to inspire us in our mission, and we are confident that you will recognize this fidelity as you read the essays in this volume. This year we have nine fantastic essays on a variety of topics, from understanding the vice of anger through *Star Wars* to exploring the significance for the Christian life of Jesus' prayer. The prizewinning essay, *Religionless Christianity, the Christian, and the Church*, explores Bonhoeffer's idea of "religionless Christianity" as a way for the Church to reorient itself to God for the modern era. This essay was chosen after a blind review by our team of editors for its clarity of argument and its contemporary relevance.

Publishing this journal would have been impossible without the support of many individuals in the Mount community. We would like to thank the Interim Provost, Dr. Jennie Hunter-Cevera; the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Dr. Pete Dorsey; the Theology Department Chair, Fr. Jim Donohue; and the Philosophy Department Chair, Dr. Richard Buck, for their financial support. Special thanks are owed to our faculty advisers, Dr. Thane Naberhaus, Dr. Justin Matchulat, and Dr. Luis Vera, for their continuous encouragement and guidance, as well as to the unsung hero of the Philosophy Department, Mrs. Katie Soter, whose assistance has been invaluable. Thank you to the undergraduate editors who evaluated and chose the essays, and of course, to all the students who submitted their work. We encourage all students to consider submitting their philosophy and theology essays for next year's publication.

So *tolle lege*—take up and read! We hope that through this publication, you will be inspired to join a community of seekers in our conversation as we endeavor to discover truth and articulate it to others.

Katherine Wu and Alyse Spiehler  
Editor-in-Chief and Assistant Editor

## Contributors

**Anna Bradley** graduated in May 2016 with a degree in philosophy and criminal justice. She likes philosophy because it helps her seek the Form of the Good and also because it gave her an excuse to watch *Star Wars* I–VI for research.

**Megan Crandall**, from Freehold, New Jersey, is a member of the Class of 2017 with a major in health sciences (pre-physical therapy) and a minor in psychology. She plans to continue on to graduate school, specializing in speech and language pathology.

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**Kayla Morrow** is a senior double major in English and philosophy, currently living in Connecticut. She loves reading, writing, learning, and teaching, and hopes to make a living out of these passions after graduation. Her immediate plans are to pursue a career in public humanities in the region.

**Zachary Robinson** is a seminarian in the class of 2021 for the Archdiocese of Baltimore in his second year of formation at Mount St. Mary's Seminary. He earned two bachelor's degrees, in mathematics and physics, at Penn State University, worked for Boeing for three years, and earned a master's degree in Applied and Computational Mathematics from Johns Hopkins University before entering seminary. His favorite Bible verses are Hebrews 13:1–6.

**Alyse Spiehler** will be graduating this May with a degree in philosophy and English. She is passionate about lifelong learning, and hopes to put her love of philosophical inquiry to use in the service of others. She plans to work toward this goal by pursuing a master's degree in philosophy.

**Katherine Wu** is a biology major in the class of 2017 with minors in theology, history, and Latin. She plans to study theology in graduate school and hopes one day to teach at a small college like the Mount.

## Religionless Christianity, the Christian, and the Church

*Katherine Wu*

In 1882, Friedrich Nietzsche wrote of Western culture, “God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.”<sup>1</sup> He was right. Sixty years later, Dietrich Bonhoeffer grappled with the reality of a godless modern culture in the context of his prison cell in Nazi Germany and called for a new “religionless Christianity,” free of metaphysics and individualism, which could connect to the modern man and—more importantly—return God to His true position as the center of human existence. Bonhoeffer’s letters seem to be promoting a rejection of all traditional metaphysical claims and religious structures, but he must be read in the context of his larger ideas about God and human nature. In his call for religionless Christianity, Bonhoeffer embarks on a radical critique of Christianity in the modern era, and calls on Christians not only to accept the modern condition of secularism, but to embrace it in order to reorient themselves and the church to what God truly intends for the world.

For Bonhoeffer, religion is a human project to reach God, based on a false conception of transcendence.<sup>2</sup> This understanding, seen in Pietism and liberal theology, separates God from the world, placing him beyond and above it, where He “addresses our subjectivity and our inwardness,”<sup>3</sup> at the same time limiting the spaces in the world where He may be encountered.<sup>4</sup> There, He becomes a *deus ex machina*, to be used in times of weakness and distress.<sup>5</sup> The religious man looks away from his own problems and concerns to God for help, making religion essentially a human endeavor, with the individual man as its central concern. Through His ultimate goodness and transcendence,

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 181–82.

<sup>2</sup> Ernst Feil, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, trans. Martin Rumscheidt (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 171.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>5</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison: The Enlarged Edition*, ed. Eberhard Bethge, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), 361.

God provides a way for human beings to avoid engagement with this life in favor of the next; through His omnipotence and omniscience, God provides the easy answers to questions which human beings cannot yet answer, and a crutch for problems they have not solved.<sup>6</sup> God stands by man in his hour of need, and as his needs grow fewer and fewer, God is pushed to the boundaries of human existence until He finally becomes superfluous.<sup>7</sup> The concern to “reserve a space” for God which pits God and the world against each other, the complacent piety of Job’s friends, and the separation of the secular and religious which led to the “escapist religiosity” of churches in Nazi Germany all spring from the religious outlook.<sup>8</sup>

The marginalization of God in religion is directly tied to the growth of human autonomy. Starting with the power granted to human reason and the separation of God from the world in thirteenth-century nominalism and continuing through the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment, human beings have increasingly been able to answer their questions “without recourse to the ‘working hypothesis’ called ‘God.’”<sup>9</sup> Science and technology eliminated or reduced many former human limitations and discovered a mechanistic order in the universe, the Enlightenment eliminated God from ethics and political theory, and after Feuerbach, even philosophy and religion no longer needed any reference to God.<sup>10</sup> This explains the shrinking relevance of religion to the daily life of the modern man. As human autonomy and independence from the “hypothesis of God” grows to its completion, the world becomes a place where one can live “even if there were no God,”<sup>11</sup> a world come of age that has matured from dependence on religion into the independence—and responsibility—of adulthood.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 281.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

<sup>8</sup> Geoffrey B. Kelly, “Prayer and Action for Justice: Bonhoeffer’s Spirituality,” *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. John W. de Gruchy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 249.

<sup>9</sup> *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 325.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 360.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.

<sup>12</sup> It is worth pointing out that Bonhoeffer may be a little too optimistic here. Given the problems which have resulted from eliminating the “God-hypothesis” as a foundation for human rights, political theory, ethics, and other areas of thought, the rise in religious fundamentalism and the West’s inability to cope, and other developments, it may be safe to say that Western culture generally has agreed that it is possible to live “even if there were no God.” But whether it is actually possible or not seems at least an open question, perhaps even a definite “no.” See Peter Selby, “Christianity in a World Come of Age,” *The Cambridge Companion*

Christians responded to this new reality in a variety of ways in a vain attempt to save religion, none of which were effective. Apologists tried to prove that the “God-hypothesis” was still necessary for the ultimate questions of death and suffering. Not only were they still accommodating God to the world; their efforts rendered God even less credible by assuming that one day, “[those questions] too [could] be answered ‘without God.’”<sup>13</sup> It was also a cheap tactic that exploited human weakness, attempting to “demonstrate to secure, contented, and happy mankind that it is really unhappy and desperate and simply unwilling to admit that it is in a predicament about which it knows nothing.”<sup>14</sup> Some tried to turn back the clock by protesting developments such as historical criticism and Darwinism.<sup>15</sup> Liberal theology accepted the new reality, but insisted on keeping a religion and a God that were severely circumscribed by the world. Others attempted to reinterpret the world in order to bring it back in line with religion, but none of these could succeed as long as religion still consisted of a false idea of God and its individualistic call.<sup>16</sup> Only the Confessing Church’s return to the “great concepts” of Christian theology and Barth’s call for the God of Jesus Christ against religion made any headway, but neither offered an interpretation that could reach the wider Western culture and give it concrete guidance.<sup>17</sup> Again, Bonhoeffer’s critique of Christianity in his time should be read in the context of Nazi Germany. Was this religion, which made God a human tool and pushed Him to the boundaries, which produced churches that readily collaborated with the Nazi regime and retreated from following Christ to offer “dogmatic orthodoxy and shifty platitudes,” really worth saving?<sup>18</sup>

No, answers Bonhoeffer. To seek to preserve a dying religion would be to confuse a historical stage of Christianity with Christ Himself.<sup>19</sup> The religious concept of God as the “working hypothesis” and as the tutor of man is merely a temporally conditioned form of Christianity, and with the development of human autonomy, religion is no longer relevant today.<sup>20</sup> Modern man no longer feels the need for

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to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, ed. John W. de Gruchy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 233.

<sup>13</sup> *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 326.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 341.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 327.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 328.

<sup>18</sup> “Prayer and Action for Justice,” 249.

<sup>19</sup> *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 327.

<sup>20</sup> *Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 175.

religion, even fiercely opposes it, because religion and human autonomy are irreconcilable. The abstractions of metaphysics seem to be so much empty air compared to the concrete reality of the world, and the individual's relationship with a transcendent God, on which such questions as salvation depend, is no longer relevant if modern man is "secure, contented, and happy" without Him.<sup>21</sup> The passing of religion is a good development, precisely because religion rests on a partial conception of God which leads to falsehood, a conception which artificially separates God and the world and subjects humanity to an artificial dependence on God.

In fact, this transition is what God demands of humanity. The metaphysics and individualism of religion are not "relevant to the biblical message" and must be discarded.<sup>22</sup> For the sake of intellectual honesty, God wishes humanity to stand before Him and recognize the reality of a godless world.<sup>23</sup> He is no longer the mere object of human searching in religion, but must be recognized as "really the Lord of the world," and so the demand to recognize human autonomy is also a demand to return God to the center of human existence.<sup>24</sup> God and humanity must return to their proper places. As the old form of Christianity passes away, a new, radically religionless Christianity must emerge in order to carry the message of God's revelation to the world.

But "what do a church, a community, a sermon, a liturgy, a Christian life mean in a religionless world?"<sup>25</sup> Bonhoeffer provides a few answers in his letters from prison. The new form of Christianity is characterized not by metaphysics and appeals to the inwardness of individual men, but by prayer and righteous action.<sup>26</sup> In addition, a Christian must have "this-worldliness," living a secular life in the world characterized by "discipline and the constant knowledge of death and resurrection."<sup>27</sup> Given that Bonhoeffer mentions the church and the liturgy, it is assumed that religionless Christianity does not mean a rejection of Christian forms and structures. However, his letters only offer a small glimpse at what this might mean for the church. For a fuller glimpse of religionless Christianity, one must consider Bonhoeffer's ideas in the context of the vision of the world expressed in his earlier works.

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<sup>21</sup> *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 326.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 360.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 281.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 369.

For Bonhoeffer, theology can only be fully understood in terms of the communal nature of God and of human beings.<sup>28</sup> In place of the God of religion, a God who is radically detached from the world and isolated, Bonhoeffer offers a picture of the radical freedom of God, who chose to bind Himself to the human race. “God is not free *of* man but *for* man,” and the greatest evidence for this is God’s covenant and revelation in Jesus Christ.<sup>29</sup> Thus, God’s being—and by extension all being—is being-for-another. The arbitrary nature of God, created in nominalism and defended by Barth, no longer makes sense as a protection for God’s freedom, for God has the freedom to bind Himself.<sup>30</sup> God’s transcendence of the world does not leave Him detached from human affairs, but “what is above the world is . . . intended to exist *for* this world” and does so in the Incarnation.<sup>31</sup> It follows that one cannot speak of God in the abstractions of metaphysics; his very being is concrete and relational in Jesus Christ, who is the embodiment of the relationship between God and humanity. In His two natures he does not bring together two separate entities, but is “the Word of [God’s] freedom,”<sup>32</sup> the concrete form of God’s choice to bind Himself to humanity.<sup>33</sup>

This means that what it means to be human, created in God’s image, is of necessity relational. Unlike earlier definitions of *imago Dei*, which defined it individualistically as a particular characteristic of human beings, Bonhoeffer argues that to be human is to be free in the way that God is free—that is, for the other. Freedom is not something in itself, or “a quality which can be revealed . . . but a relationship between two persons. Being free means ‘being free for the other,’ because the other has bound me to him. Only in relation with the other am I free.”<sup>34</sup> To be human is to be in relation to God, before God.<sup>35</sup> But as humans are only the image of God and not God Himself, the freedom of the created can only be analogous to that of the Creator. Thus, while God is one who exists “in and for himself . . .

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<sup>28</sup> Clifford Green, “Human Sociality and Christian Community,” *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. John W. de Gruchy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 113.

<sup>29</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Act and Being,” In *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Witness to Jesus Christ*, ed. John de Gruchy (San Francisco: Collins Publishers, 1988), 77. Italics in original.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>31</sup> *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 286.

<sup>32</sup> “Act and Being,” 77.

<sup>33</sup> Andreas Pangritz, “Who is Jesus Christ, for us, today?” *The Cambridge Companion to Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, ed. John W. de Gruchy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 140.

<sup>34</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Creation and Fall,” In *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Witness to Jesus Christ*, ed. John de Gruchy (San Francisco: Collins Publishers, 1988), 112.

<sup>35</sup> “Human Sociality and Christian Community,” 115.

yet at the same time existing for his creatures,” human beings are “over against the other, with the other and dependent upon the other.”<sup>36</sup> That is, God exists for Himself yet chooses in His freedom to bind himself to human beings, but human beings are by their very nature made to be for others because of their necessary dependence. This is expressed in the duality of the sexes.<sup>37</sup> To be human is to be communal, in relation with God and with other human beings.

This can be seen even in the existence of the individual. By defining an individual as an individual, one implies an “other.” Thus, the seeming paradox of saying, “The individual is not solitary” is overcome when it is realized that the individual is defined against the background of others, in relation to another.<sup>38</sup> It is by the moral claim of another, of a “Thou” to whom the divine “Thou” gives its character, that an “I” is recognized. Thus, one encounters God concretely in another’s “Thou”—it is through another person, and not in some abstract spiritual way, that human beings encounter and form a community with God.<sup>39</sup> Community with God is present and exists in community with other human beings; as one lives in community for others, one lives for God.<sup>40</sup> The relation of the whole human race to God is only expressed in each individual relation between persons and between communities.<sup>41</sup>

In a world of sin, however, this intended relationship is not present, and can only be reconstructed through God’s revelation in Christ. Sin is the expansion of the self and the existence of a demanding self-love which breaks communities and isolates the individual.<sup>42</sup> If human nature is inherently communal, the existence of sin denies any possibility of living out human nature as it was meant to be. It gives an additional importance to the “Thou” of both another human being and God to act as a boundary, an “ethical barrier,” to the “I” of the self in its pride and disproportionate self-love.<sup>43</sup>

Christ comes as God’s “yes” to the world, and in his cross not only reconciles human beings to God and to each other, but allows

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<sup>36</sup> “Creation and Fall,” 113.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. Bonhoeffer adds that man’s freedom from creation to rule over it as a God-given dominion is an additional image of God’s freedom, in this case his freedom from and over his creatures. See “Creation and Fall,” 114–15.

<sup>38</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Sanctorum Communio,” in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Witness to Jesus Christ*, ed. John de Gruchy (San Francisco: Collins Publishers, 1988), 46.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>40</sup> “Human Sociality and Christian Community,” 120.

<sup>41</sup> “Sanctorum Communio,” 53.

<sup>42</sup> “Human Sociality and Christian Community,” 121.

<sup>43</sup> “Sanctorum Communio,” 47.

them to be truly human for the first time since the Fall.<sup>44</sup> As God within the midst of the world, Christ hallows the world; as God suffering at the hands of a godless world, Christ invites Christians to stand by him, upending the expectations of the religious that God stand by him. Thus, the religionless Christian, the human being in his true humanness, is called to “[participate] in the sufferings of God in the secular life,” turned not toward the world beyond but living fully as part of this world.<sup>45</sup> This, not an abstract belief in God as the great Problem Solver, is real faith, a faith which involves the whole of the human person and takes him beyond his own cares and desires to the richer polyphony of life in the world. Bonhoeffer uses music as a metaphor for the Christian life: the love of God provides a *cantus firmus*, the foundational melody which allows the other melodies of life to develop to their fullest as counterpoint.<sup>46</sup> Thus, the “this-worldliness” of the religionless Christian is not “the shallow and banal this-worldliness of the enlightened, the busy, the comfortable, or the lascivious,” but the “this-worldliness” of a person who lives a multidimensional life in the world in faith, taken out of himself and sharing in the sufferings of Christ.<sup>47</sup>

This must of course be lived in the context of Christ’s community of faith, the church. The church is “Christ existing as the congregation,”<sup>48</sup> the divinely established community of “humanity pardoned in Jesus Christ.”<sup>49</sup> As such, the church is where human beings “be-with-each-other” and “be-for-each-other,” a community where one lives out what it means to be human.<sup>50</sup> “Self-renouncing, active work for the neighbor; intercessory prayer; and finally the mutual forgiveness of sins in the name of God”—all these are practical ways Christians can fulfill their calling.<sup>51</sup> In the forms of word, sacrament, and community, Christ is present and proclaimed. The first two forms are not separate or distinct, but enfolded in the life of the community as the forms by which Christ addresses and lives in the community; as such, the proclamation of the gospel and participation

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<sup>44</sup> “Human Sociality and Christian Community,” 121. This is in contrast to the idea of divinization common in the Church Fathers.

<sup>45</sup> *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 361.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 369.

<sup>48</sup> “Sanctorum Communio,” 63.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>50</sup> “Human Sociality and Christian Community,” 122.

<sup>51</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Sanctorum Communio,” qtd. in “Human Sociality and Christian Community,” 123.

in the sacraments are inherently communal actions. Christ is present to the individual in others.<sup>52</sup>

As Christ's community, the church only exists "when it exists for others."<sup>53</sup> Bonhoeffer offers a few suggestions as to what this would look like. The church "should give away all its property to those in need," with the clergy supported either by their congregations or the addition of secular careers.<sup>54</sup> The church cannot retreat into sanctuary religiosity, but "must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life, not dominating, but helping and serving" through the proclamation of God's truth in Christ and by its example of righteous action.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the church must live in the world, not "at the boundaries where human powers give out, but in the middle of the village."<sup>56</sup> This does not mean that it should be an official, state-sponsored church—as the community of the humiliated Christ on the cross, the church must follow its Lord in humiliation, willing to renounce its privileges, power, and property to stand as the hidden center of human life just as Christ is the hidden center of the world.<sup>57</sup> If the church ceases to proclaim Christ-for-others, choosing to fight for self-preservation or institutional power, it ceases to be a church and becomes merely a sinful human community. As the community of the suffering God, the church must stand with those who are suffering and oppressed, the brothers and sisters in whom Christ is present in weakness. In Bonhoeffer's situation, these people were the Jews and other undesirables under the Nazi regime.<sup>58</sup> Although Christians cannot do the same redemptive work as Christ, they "must have some share in Christ's large-heartedness by acting with responsibility and in freedom when the hour of danger comes, and by showing a real sympathy that springs . . . but from the liberation and redeeming love of Christ for all who suffer."<sup>59</sup> It must be the suffering of fellow human beings, not one's own suffering as in religion, which spurs the Christian to action.<sup>60</sup>

The importance of Bonhoeffer's theology lies in his recognition of the condition of modern culture and of Christianity in his time, and

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<sup>52</sup> "Human Sociality and Christian Community," 124.

<sup>53</sup> *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 382.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

<sup>57</sup> "Who is Jesus Christ?" 138–39.

<sup>58</sup> "Prayer and Action for Justice," 262.

<sup>59</sup> *Letters and Papers from Prison*, 14.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

in his response, a call to a new, religionless Christianity in which man and church can truly live out what it means to be human in Christ. No longer is it possible for human beings to hide behind God as a crutch; they must stand before Him in the world precisely as human beings who live for God in their existence for others. This means an acceptance of the world as it is, and of living life to the fullest in prayer and in service. Bonhoeffer's call for religionless Christianity is not a call for complacency, but for action. Just as for Barth, God's revelation stands in judgment against human efforts, Bonhoeffer's theology stands in judgment against the church, not only those of his time who submitted to Nazism, but all who trade their mission to proclaim Christ-for-others for the honors and privileges of the secular world.

# More Machine than Man: Destructive Anger and Restorative Love in *Star Wars*

Anna Bradley

Anger has a complicated existence in Western thought. It exists as both a natural emotion and a cultivated habit, which can present itself as either a vice or virtue. This complex status often leads to seemingly contradictory attitudes toward anger; we praise those who are level-headed and patient, but we look down on individuals who are *too* level-headed and patient, calling them spineless. We condemn red-faced, vein popping anger, but we flock to movies like *Kill Bill*, *Taken*, and *Carrie*, which glorify violence and single-minded revenge.

The confusion could be brushed aside if it stemmed only from the media, but classical texts tend to confuse the situation more than they illuminate it. The Christian tradition lists anger, or wrath, as one of the Seven Deadly Sins, but philosophers like Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas say anger can be a virtue—if all the circumstances are right. It is widely accepted that anger is an emotional response to injustice, real or perceived, and that its virtue and vice come into play in the way the emotion is expressed. Beyond that, we are left with only the unsatisfying explanations that the vice is excessive anger and that the virtue seeks to right injustice. At what point is anger excessive, and how does it right injustice?

It might seem like popular culture only adds to the present confusion, but certain films are actually helpful in explaining the complexity of anger in ways that philosophical texts simply cannot reach. Anakin Skywalker from the *Star Wars* saga is an example of a person descending into the grips of vicious anger. Fortunately for Anakin and for our own education, the character of Luke Skywalker serves as his foil. Luke experiences the emotion of anger, but he expresses it virtuously. His persistent love for his father helps us realize that, fundamentally, the difference between virtuous and vicious anger is love. The virtue of anger is oriented toward justice through compassionate love for others. The vice, meanwhile, is centered on disordered love in the form of fearful, selfish self-

preservation. Besides separating the virtue from the vice, properly ordered love is also what allows the vicious to dig themselves out of the hole they have dug for themselves.

Aristotle describes virtuous, righteous anger as mildness. A mild person is one who is good-tempered, inclined to make allowances, and disinclined toward vengeance. The mean between its excess and deficiency is notoriously hard to pin down, in part because there are so many ways for individuals to go wrong; they may be chronically irritable, they may be inclined toward excessive bursts of rage, or they may nurse grudges and seek revenge. One may be deficient by being a fool, being unable to recognize injury, or being a doormat. The mean is dependent on context. Aristotle explains, “the person is who angry at the right things and toward the right people, and also in the right way, at the right time, and for the right length of time, is praised.”<sup>1</sup> This is understandably but frustratingly vague.

In *Deadly Vices*, Gabriele Taylor argues that that our inclination toward the excess of anger is rooted in self-deception, characterizing the viciously angry as individuals who are fundamentally insecure in their self-esteem.<sup>2</sup> Because they have a low opinion of themselves (but often hide this low self-image), they are oversensitive to real or perceived injustices against themselves. In so doing, they “expect to be undervalued and tend to find their expectations confirmed.”<sup>3</sup> Expressing their sense of injustice would reveal their low self-esteem, so they stay quiet. They nurse their anger and unsatisfactory self-image within themselves, which makes them hostile towards others and makes their dissatisfaction grow until it bursts.<sup>4</sup>

Henry Fairlie’s account of anger in *The Seven Deadly Sins Today* does not have the same analytical approach as Taylor, and the two accounts differ in some details, but his account of vicious anger is useful and practical. He defines the vice as “a disorderly outburst of emotion connected with the inordinate desire for revenge,” which may be inordinate “either in regard to the object on which [it] is vented, or in the degree in which [it] is fostered or expressed.”<sup>5</sup> The error occurs when the emotion of anger becomes a fixation and cannot be satiated through just means. Anger is defensible and praiseworthy when it

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1999), 1125b, 32–34.

<sup>2</sup> Gabriele Taylor, *Deadly Vices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 84.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Henry Fairlie, *The Seven Deadly Sins Today* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 88.

prudently addresses an injustice, but because it is so difficult to do that in the right way and at the right time, it is frequently “perverted into the desire for revenge and the injury of someone else.” In such cases, the focus moves away from justice and toward an inordinate love of the self.

Fairlie would probably agree with Taylor’s assessment that vicious anger boils down to a frustrated self-image. He identifies the most common provocation of anger as fear, particularly fear of the loss of power.<sup>6</sup> This certainly sounds reminiscent of *Star Wars*, but it does not have to be as dramatic as it sounds. Fairlie believes that individuals are defined by their power, and that power is understood in terms of how much knowledge they have. When knowledge that is thought to be deserved is denied or individuals are exposed as ignorant, they are being denied power they believe they have a right to, thus prompting their anger against injustice.<sup>7</sup> For some, fear of this loss of power may begin to rule their lives.

One of the most memorable lines in the *Star Wars* saga relates to fear. When Yoda is first introduced to a young Anakin Skywalker, he tells him: “Fear leads to the Dark Side. Fear leads to anger; anger leads to hate; hate leads to suffering.”<sup>8</sup> We know from Fairlie and Taylor that anger is connected to a hidden lack of self-esteem, desire for revenge, nursing of resentment, and fear in relation to power and knowledge. As viewers, we know Anakin is going to become an infamous villain, and Yoda’s line foreshadows his descent into vice, evil, and the general bundle of bad juju known as the Dark Side. At this point in the series, however, Anakin is simply a scared little boy. His justifiable fear is correctly identified by Yoda as the starting point of it all.

In *The Phantom Menace* we are introduced to an unfortunate combination of factors that create a situation that will only continue to degenerate as the prequel trilogy progresses. Anakin is discovered by Qui Gon Jinn as a slave on Tatooine. He is insecure about his own well-being and status, safe only in the unconditional love of his mother. In order to live a better life and unlock his potential, he must leave her behind—possibly forever. The Jedi counsel instantly mistrusts the child they are introduced to, sensing his ominous future. Then, in *Attack of the Clones*, we meet an older Anakin who has grown

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>8</sup> *Star Wars, Episode I: The Phantom Menace*, directed by George Lucas (Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox, 2011), Blu-ray.

tremendously as a Jedi. His skills make him cocky, but he is also profoundly insecure and desperate to impress Padme, his forbidden crush. Meanwhile, Obi-Wan Kenobi constantly puts him down, doubting his ideas and referring to him as “my young Padawan.”<sup>9</sup> Anakin is frustrated and filled with angst, but it isn’t until his mother is murdered that Anakin truly takes a turn for the worse.

Anakin’s choices express disordered love. It is good for him to love Padme and want to protect her, it is good to love his mother and want justice for her, and it is good for him to want to use his talents as much as he can. His error occurs in the way he expresses these goals, mistakenly thinking he has the power to save Padme and to right the wrong committed against Shmi Skywalker. He turns to the Emperor for the knowledge he needs in order to gain this power, but his attempt to take control of uncontrollable things gradually poisons his love for Padme and turns it into a self-oriented lust for power in the name of justice.

Anakin’s desire for justice results in resentment towards the Jedi counsel and Obi-Wan, revenge on the Tusken Raiders, and a possessive, fearful attitude toward Padme. Fundamentally, these fears and goals are self-centered; Anakin doesn’t mourn so much for the pain Shmi felt, but that she was taken from him. He doesn’t want Padme to be safe for her own sake, but because he doesn’t want to lose her as he lost his mother. He is uninterested in the flourishing of the Jedi order or the Republic if it does not involve him.

Once we reach the climax of *Revenge of the Sith*, Anakin’s quest for power and control has literally turned him into a different person. He personifies vicious anger as Darth Vader, even choking Padme—whom, all along, he was possessively trying to protect. We are reintroduced to him in *A New Hope* and find that anger has settled into him like a character trait. He is less human now, and not just because his limbs are replaced with prosthetics. He is so firmly rooted in vice that all love, even disordered love, seems to have left him. While disordered love was what sent Vader on his downward spiral, rightly ordered love is the only thing that can pull him back out. Luke Skywalker is instrumental to our understanding of anger both because he practices righteous anger and because his compassionate love for Vader is what finally redeems him at the end of *Return of the Jedi*.

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<sup>9</sup> *Star Wars, Episode II: Attack of the Clones*, directed by George Lucas (Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox, 2011), Blu-ray.

Understood thus far, vicious anger involves excess and perversion. Prompted by fear over a loss of power (the loss of which is perceived as an injustice), those affected by the vice are moved to misguided, self-protective anger. Anakin's simultaneous insecurity and confidence in his abilities made him feel undervalued, and he tried to protect those he loved by possessing and controlling them. Luke is tempted by a similar situation. His aunt, uncle, and Old Ben are murdered, and he is propelled from a simple farm life into a rebellion. He worries about the safety of his friends, has powers in the force that he neither understands nor has been trained to use, and discovers that the villain responsible for all this—Vader—is his father, and that he has been lied to for years by those he trusted.<sup>10</sup>

Luke's various expressions of anger, most notably in the climactic Death Star scene in *Return of the Jedi*, are understandable and justifiable. However, when the Emperor rejoices in Luke's anger, he fails to understand that strong emotions of anger may still be righteous. According to Aquinas, anger is virtuous as long as it is ordered by and used for the true goals of humankind; that is, as long as one is seeking truth and goodness and is not selfishly motivated, strong expressions of anger are valid.<sup>11</sup> The vice does not lie merely in feeling a strong emotion of anger, but in expressing anger excessively due to misguided motivations.

In all of his decisions, wise or ill-advised, Luke is trying to protect those he cares for. He is not acting out of self-interest or fear, and he is not using means that are excessive or oriented toward power. Luke faces the same temptations as Anakin and could have chosen to go down the same path, but he stays rooted in righteous anger because of his compassionate, selfless love. Anakin claimed to be motivated by love, but was actually motivated by selfish concerns; Luke, however, is properly motivated and therefore virtuous.

Luke's love is properly ordered, so it is self-evident that his love saves him from vice. What is interesting, however, is that it also saves his father. When writing about the saving power of love, Kierkegaard writes about its ability to *build up*. Describing love as self-giving,<sup>12</sup> Kierkegaard argues that “the lover presupposes that love is in the

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<sup>10</sup> *Star Wars, Episode IV: A New Hope*, directed by George Lucas (Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox, 2011), Blu-ray; *Star Wars, Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back*, directed by Irvin Kershner (Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox, 2011), Blu-ray.

<sup>11</sup> Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 194.

<sup>12</sup> Soren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love: Some Christian Reflections in the Form of Discourses*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), 202.

other person's heart, and by this very presupposition he builds up love in him—from the ground up, insofar as in love he presupposes it present as the ground.”<sup>13</sup> To love, he believes, is to assume that the person you are loving is good and already capable of love him- or herself. This belief in the other encourages love to grow in the other's heart, whether it was initially present or not. The presupposition of love isn't easy, requires that we withstand the other person's “misunderstanding, his thanklessness, his anger” and his general sinful tendencies.<sup>14</sup> However, if we stand firm, the other's heart will eventually change for the better. Essentially, people live up to our expectations of them.

Kierkegaard's account of love is solid but vague, particularly in relation to love as a remedy for vice. This is where *Star Wars* becomes usefully illustrative once more. Before her death, Padme tells Obi-Wan that, despite everything, there is still good in Anakin.<sup>15</sup> Luke also shares this optimistic attitude, and after discovering that Vader is his father he almost instantly shifts from wanting to eliminate Vader as a threat to wanting to save him from himself. In their encounter on Endor, Luke tells Vader, “I feel the conflict within you; let go of your hate.”<sup>16</sup> He refers to his father as *father* and stubbornly believes that Vader has the potential to turn back from the Dark Side. In short, he presupposes love.

Vader does not respond favorably right away, but his actions toward Luke reveal that he still possesses some goodness. He cannot bring himself to kill Luke, despite having multiple opportunities. Instead, he encourages Luke to join him so they can rule the galaxy together. Although this certainly is not a praiseworthy goal, it shows that Vader feels some sort of positive emotion for his son and is willing to at least share power. It is not until he sees Luke about to be killed by the Emperor that Vader is able to bring these feelings to the surface.

In the Death Star scene, Vader watches the Emperor torture Luke. Luke, clearly in agony, begs his father for help.<sup>17</sup> Vader hesitates, but is finally moved to action—in fact, this is a move of righteous anger. He sees injustice before his eyes, and sees an opportunity to avoid

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>15</sup> *Star Wars, Episode III: Revenge of the Sith*, directed by George Lucas (Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox, 2011), Blu-ray.

<sup>16</sup> *Star Wars, Episode VI: Return of the Jedi*, directed by Richard Marquand (Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox, 2011), Blu-ray.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

making the same mistake he made years ago. This time, instead of destroying love by acting out of fear and self-preservation, he protects it by putting his own well-being aside and killing the Emperor. This, clearly, is not self-interested: protecting Luke caused his own death. Fortunately, this sacrificial act of compassionate love for his suffering son, who persistently believed in his goodness, was what he needed to break out of vice and effectively turn back into Anakin Skywalker.

We literally see Anakin's humanity once more when he removes his mask, wanting to look at his son "with his own eyes." As the Death Star is falling apart around them, Luke says, "I'm not leaving you, I have to save you." Anakin responds, "You already have, Luke. You were right about me."<sup>18</sup> Luke had no evidence to truly suppose that Anakin still had love in his heart, but Anakin says himself that this presupposition is what he needed. Luke's love built up love within Anakin, whether it was present to begin with or not.

It may seem to some that a sci-fi movie has little to do with our own lives. We certainly don't have lightsabers and blasters lying around, and the United Nations is not run by a Sith lord. However, like most stories, the *Star Wars* saga has themes applicable to our own daily challenges. In this analysis, characters in *Star Wars* illuminate the theories of various philosophers on anger. Anger is a tricky thing, and the boundaries between its virtue and vice are not clearly defined. The relationship between Luke and Anakin shows that, besides errors of expression, love is what separates the vice from the virtue. Fear and lust for power hurt love and turn it destructively toward the self, while compassion and mercy extend love towards others, allowing one to seek justice in a righteous way. As long as one acts out of sincere love for another, they may be reasonably secure in knowing that they are acting righteously.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

# A Critique of Gerhard Ambrosi's Geometric Model of Aristotelian Proportional Reciprocity

Zachary Robinson

In addition to his many unprecedented contributions to philosophy, Aristotle is also renowned for his precise definitions. Sometimes he would even go to the extent of applying mathematical expression to his philosophical concepts. One of the most famous and clear cases is his definition of distributive justice in *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, one of the most mysterious cases is his description of proportional reciprocity found two chapters later.<sup>2</sup> Confusion has especially arisen concerning what Aristotle meant by “the combination that aligns with the diagonal,” equalization, and need measuring all things.<sup>3</sup> This particular passage “has been the object of numerous comments by philologists, philosophers, theologians, historians and economists. It has been considered one of the most obscure texts ever written by Aristotle.”<sup>4</sup> The economist Gerhard Michael Ambrosi, in his paper “Aristotle’s Geometrical Model of Distributive Justice,” puts forward a mathematical model describing what he considers to be the “textually most consistent interpretation” of Aristotle’s proportional reciprocity.<sup>5</sup> Ambrosi suggests that Aristotle’s description of proportional reciprocity should somehow be unified with his definition of distributive justice.<sup>6</sup> This is indeed a valuable suggestion because of its novel insight, but he interprets Aristotle in this difficult passage to mean that the working time of unequal individuals should be artificially made to be equal.

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collings (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2012), 1131a25–1131b15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 1132b21–1133b29.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 1133a5–b28.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas J. Theocarakis, “*Nicomachean Ethics* in Political Economy: The Trajectory of the Problem of Value,” *History of Economic Ideas* 14, no. 1 (2006): 16.

<sup>5</sup> Gerhard Michael Ambrosi, “Aristotle’s Geometrical Model of Distributive Justice” (presentation, 11<sup>th</sup> ESHET Conference, “Justice in Economic Thought,” Strasbourg, France, July 5–7, 2007), 41.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

Consequently, the geometric model proposed by Ambrosi has some significant flaws. Therefore, in this paper, I will review the model set forth by Ambrosi so that the reader may assess my understanding of the model, critique its mathematical and practical flaws, and explain why it is inconsistent with Aristotle’s writings.

First, let us examine the model proposed by Ambrosi. Ambrosi sets persons  $A$  and  $B$  on opposite sides of a square, initially assuming they are equal in worth and representing their worth by the length of the side. He then labels the diagonals of the square  $C$  and  $D$ , adding the constraint that  $C$  and  $D$  must have a fixed length, claiming, “The difference in ‘worth’ as far as the goods are concerned should . . . be attributed to the persons compared, while their working time is treated as equal.  $C$  and  $D$  should therefore be equal for persons  $A$  and  $B$ —no matter whether they are equals or not equals.”<sup>7</sup> This added constraint ends up being the source of the flaws in the model. Ambrosi, without loss of generality, considers a working time of one year. He analyzes the case where person  $B$  increases his worth, now denoted by  $B'$ . Since  $C$  and  $D$  are fixed, they rotate about their intersection points with line  $A$ , and the square becomes a trapezoid (see Figure 1).

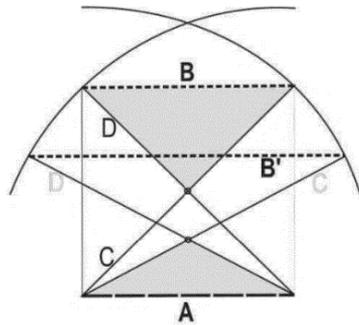


Figure 1: Ambrosi geometric model<sup>8</sup>

He then labels the sides of the triangles formed by the diagonals  $C$  and  $D$  with sides  $A$  and  $B$  as follows:  $C_A$ , the amount of yearly product  $A$  would keep for himself in a proportional exchange;  $D_A$ , the amount of yearly product  $B$  would give to  $A$  in a proportional exchange;  $C_B$ , the amount of yearly product  $A$  would give to  $B$  in a proportional

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 17.

exchange; and  $D_B$ , the amount of yearly product  $B$  would keep for himself in a proportional exchange (see Figure 2).

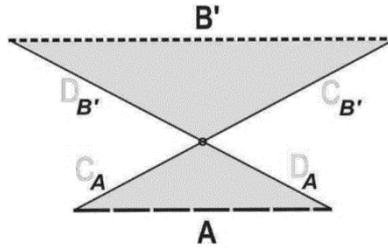


Figure 2: Ambrosi labeling for exchange<sup>9</sup>

Ambrosi correctly equates several ratios that arise due to the similar triangles of Figure 2:

$$\frac{B'}{A} = \frac{D_{B'}}{D_A} = \frac{C_{B'}}{C_A}$$

He argues that these ratios are representative of Aristotle’s concept of distributive justice because the ratios of the yearly values of the persons appears to be equal to the ratios of the relative values of the things. Ambrosi also declares the area of the triangles with bases  $A$  and  $B$  (shaded gray in Figure 2) as representative of the ability of persons  $A$  and  $B$  to satisfy their personal need.<sup>10</sup> The motivation for Ambrosi’s model is that he interprets Aristotle in his discussion of proportional reciprocity as being interested not in isolated exchange between individuals but instead in “keeping the state together in the face of potentially challenged survival”; he claims that Aristotle is more concerned with society than individuals when it comes to reciprocity.<sup>11</sup> This is a wrong interpretation of Aristotle’s concept of proportional reciprocity, as will be demonstrated by pointing out the errors in the model related above.

Here are the problems with Ambrosi’s model. First, as a geometric model, the lengths of all lines in the model must be able to be compared to each other using some kind of uniform unit of measurement. Ambrosi proposes using a unit of years, transforming all money values into year-values, and locking  $C = D = 1$  year.<sup>12</sup> This yields an extremely bizarre result: in the case where persons  $A$  and  $B$

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 20–1.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 34–5.

are equal, recall that the shape of the model would be a square, and  $A = B = \sqrt{1/2} \approx 0.707$  years by the Pythagorean Theorem. That is, even though persons  $A$  and  $B$  worked for a whole year as equals, their personal worth is less than one year. Since Ambrosi thinks Aristotle has societal concerns, if we consider the society where every member had equal yearly personal worth, they would all have a personal worth of less than a year! Or if we tried to normalize so that the worth of all persons would be 1 year, then  $C = D = \sqrt{2} \approx 1.414$  years, and the yearly value of everyone's products is somehow worth more than 1 year! None of these conclusions makes sense. The problem is even more clearly illustrated with monetary units. If there is a conversion factor that allows us to convert money to years, that same factor would enable us to convert years to money. Let us consider the case where persons  $A$  and  $B'$  do not have equal personal worth, with  $A < B'$ , and the shape of the model is a trapezoid rather than a square. Assume that last year  $A$  made \$400 and  $B'$  made \$500, and suppose that we want to calculate  $C_{B'}$  and  $D_A$  to know how much product in dollar-value the persons ought to give each other in a proportional exchange. Since Ambrosi's model requires that we equalize  $C$  and  $D$ , to satisfy that constraint, we would need to stretch the \$400 of person  $A$  and the \$500 of person  $B$  over lines of equal length. But our units are the same! We would have lines of equal length with different measures, an obvious breakdown for any geometric model.

Second, Ambrosi's model has serious limitations with regard to the upper limits it purports to discover. If we accept units of years to measure line lengths, the maximum possible value for  $B'$ ,  $B'_{max}$ , is  $B'_{max} = 2 - A$ , when  $B'$  lies directly on top of  $A$ .<sup>13</sup> Considering the case where persons  $A$  and  $B$  start out with equal personal value and  $B$  increases to  $B'$ , the constant value of  $A = B = \sqrt{1/2} \approx 0.707$  years and therefore  $B'_{max} = 2 - A = 2 - \sqrt{1/2} \approx 1.293$  years. Note that  $1.293/0.707 \approx 1.83$ . This would mean that  $B$  could not increase his personal worth enough to even double his starting personal worth, no matter how hard he works! This is a glaring problem for any economic model.

Third and finally, Ambrosi's model suffers in its attempt to describe personal satisfaction of need. Recall that the area of the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 22.

triangles with bases  $A$  and  $B$  are supposed to represent the respective person's ability to satisfy his need. According to the Ambrosi model, as  $B$  increases his personal value while the personal value of  $A$  remains constant, the ability of  $B$  to fulfill his need increases to a maximum, then decreases to zero.<sup>14</sup> This is seen by examining Figure 2: as the trapezoid flattens out, the height of both shaded triangles will decrease, and consequently the area of both triangles will decrease (approaching zero) as well. This defies common sense. The Ambrosi model intends to represent the worth of persons using their yearly earnings.<sup>15</sup> As one man's yearly earnings increase while everybody else's remain the same and their product values remain the same too, that man's ability to buy other peoples' products and therefore satisfy his need increases. On top of the other problems discussed, Ambrosi's model contradicts fundamentals of economic theory evident to all.

Let us turn to particular lines of Aristotle that contradict Ambrosi's interpretation of equalization. The primary source of error in Ambrosi's model is the constraint of fixing the lengths of lines  $C$  and  $D$ . He derives this constraint from Aristotle's statement that the work of different and unequal persons ought to be equalized.<sup>16</sup> As opposed to Ambrosi's thought that Aristotle intends to equalize the working time of individuals, what Aristotle really intends is to equalize the products of unequal individuals. Hence he says, "As a housebuilder stands in relation to a shoemaker, so a given number of sandals must stand in relation to a house."<sup>17</sup> A fair exchange, as envisioned in Aristotle's concept of distributive justice, is captured in proportions, not in trying to force what is unequal to be artificially equal. This is why Aristotle said earlier, "If there is *first* proportional equality and *then* reciprocal exchange occurs . . . proportional reciprocity . . . will take place."<sup>18</sup> We must first equalize the amount to be exchanged by using proper proportions and only then exchange our goods to achieve proportional reciprocity. Notice how greatly this differs from strict reciprocity, "an eye for an eye," or a working year for a working year, which Aristotle condemns. He states, "In communities concerned with exchange, the just in this sense—reciprocity in accord with proportion and not in accord with equality—holds them together, for the city stays together by means of

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 22–4.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>16</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1133a18.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 1133a23.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 1133a10. Italics added for emphasis.

proportional reciprocity.”<sup>19</sup> To be clear, “equalization” is a word for Aristotle that means balancing by using proportional ratios. Thus, equalizing the working time of unequal individuals brings about manifold errors, whereas knowing the number of one product that stands in relation to another brings about an exchange that is equalized in value. Rather than by following the model put forward by Ambrosi, it is in this way that a synthesis of proportional reciprocity and distributive justice is valuable in interpreting Aristotle.

In conclusion, I have presented my understanding of the Ambrosi model, criticized its flaws, and explained how the principal feature that precipitates those flaws contradicts Aristotle’s intended meaning of proportional reciprocity. The errors in the model mainly arise because Ambrosi assumes that Aristotle’s meaning of the word “equalization” is to make equal the working years of unequal individuals. This leads to errors with unit uniformity, a false ceiling for the increase of personal value, and contradictions against a common sense understanding of need satisfaction. Ambrosi does, however, suggest unifying Aristotle’s concept of proportional reciprocity with his concept of distributive justice, which is a meritorious idea. Such a synthesis could be invaluable in deciphering Aristotle’s writing on proportional reciprocity in *Nicomachean Ethics*, which remains to this day one of his most mysterious texts, and one that should be explored by future scholars.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 1132b32–4.

# Making Space for a Fifth Cause

*Alyse Spiehler*

It is detrimental for the student of metaphysics to overlook Aristotle's importance in this field of study. His contributions to our understanding of essence, causation, substance, and intellect, among other things, have given generations of thinkers the framework to reflect and build upon this foundational science in a multitude of ways. In his own metaphysical account, his understanding of causation, and specifically his theory of the four causes, is an indispensable building block of his entire framework. Indeed, as Nathanael Stein notes, the four causes are necessary for Aristotle's "accounts of change, existence, substance, scientific understanding, the soul, biological phenomena, the good, the state, the heavens, and God, among others."<sup>1</sup> A proper understanding of these causes and of Aristotle's explanation of them is critically important. Additionally, if a developed view of these causes arises which helps to clarify the multitude of accounts that spring from this fundamental notion, it ought to be carefully considered. A development of this type may very well come in the form of a carefully posited fifth cause. Indeed, by considering Aristotle's aim in his metaphysical work, by examining the causes themselves, and by suggesting the ways in which four causal accounts may be insufficient, it seems that there is, in fact, space for a fifth cause within the Aristotelian metaphysical framework.

Aristotle frames and lists the four causes beginning at *Physics* 194b17. He explains this fundamental account elsewhere in his work, for instance in chapter two of book five of the *Metaphysics*, but his explanation in his *Physics* is particularly clear and straightforward. He begins by drawing his reader's attention to his preceding discussion on matter and form, and says that it is proper to discuss the causes in this context. Subsequently, he makes a key point, one which describes the final cause, as it were, of this whole study. This, the aim of "our

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<sup>1</sup> Nathanael Stein, "Causation and Explanation in Aristotle," *Philosophy Compass* 6, no. 10 (2011), 700.

inquiry,” is “knowledge.”<sup>2</sup> If one is to appreciate why she should persevere in this study at all, she must recognize what kind of knowledge Aristotle is oriented towards, because this is his goal.

In Aristotle’s work, he discusses knowledge in a variety of ways. Indeed, throughout his texts, Aristotle uses three different words for the way that people know. The first is *epistasthai*, which Terence Irwin and Gail Fine explain as the knowledge associated with “demonstrative science.”<sup>3</sup> The second is *gignōskein* which is knowing or recognizing individuals and “ordinary perceptible objects.”<sup>4</sup> The third, which is the kind that Aristotle says is the end of his inquiry, is *eidenai*, a “less specialized” form of knowledge. This kind of knowledge implies that “p is true” and, perhaps, that “S is justified in believing that p.”<sup>5</sup> As we have seen, knowledge is the aim of this exploration into causation. Aristotle hopes to attain, and to allow others to attain, a somewhat general understanding of things by understanding the four causes. Because *eidenai*, not *epistasthai*, knowledge is the goal of his articulation of the four causes, the goal of Aristotle’s inquiry is not to obtain a sort of demonstrable knowledge. Rather, he hopes that through the four causes, the metaphysician might understand things as they truly are and that she might be justified in believing them, but not in the demonstrative manner typically associated with systematic disciplines.<sup>6</sup> His explanation of the causes ought to be understood in this light.

The four causes are clearly not formulas for demonstrative proofs but rather explanations which help us to better understand the “why” of things. Andrea Falcon articulates this reality in her article on Aristotelian causality. Falcon explains that this type of question is “obviously . . . a request for an explanation.”<sup>7</sup> As such, “it can be useful to think of a cause as a certain type of explanation.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, in his own work, Max Hocutt understands the causes in precisely this way. He argues that they ought not to be called the “causes” because, “for

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<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Physics*, in *Introductory Readings*, ed. Terence Irwin and Gail Fine (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996), 194b18–19.

<sup>3</sup> Terence Irwin and Gail Fine, eds. *Introductory Readings* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1996), 341.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Andrea Falcon, “Aristotle on Causality,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 11 January 2006, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-causality/>.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

Aristotle, specifying ‘causes’ is constructing demonstrations.”<sup>9</sup> A construction of demonstrations, as we’ve seen, would be more in line with a pursuit for *epistasthai* knowledge. As such, he argues that the more adequate translation is “because” since the causes answer the question “Why?” a question that is “normally answered by saying ‘Because.’”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, each of the four causes—material, formal, efficient, final—can be seen as an answer to an iteration of the question “Why is *A*, *C*?” a question which requires a further explanatory step, a *B*, to arrive at its conclusion.<sup>11</sup> The answers provided by the four causes constitute the missing middle term of a syllogism. Each helps to better explain the object of one’s pursuit of *eidenai* knowledge.

Aristotle himself explains the causes as if he were answering four questions. The material is the answer to the “that from which” question; the formal is an answer to a question of what a thing’s “essence” is; the efficient answers the question of what “the source of the primary principle” is; and lastly, the final cause answers the “what is it for” question.<sup>12</sup> Falcon and Hocutt’s insights highlight the way in which the four causes answer these questions. For this reason, I am inclined to subscribe to Hocutt’s rewording of “four causes” as “four because.” However, I will continue to use the word “cause” for the sake of continuity. If one hopes to understand why a knife is the type of thing it is, she ought to seek the answer provided by each of the causes. After she finds each answer, she would know what the knife was made out of, what makes the knife a knife, where the knife comes from, and what it is used for. In knowing each of these things, she would know why the knife is what it is in four different ways. As we will discuss shortly, Aristotle also believes that this would fully explain the knife. Aristotle’s causes, no matter what one chooses to call them, are clearly about better understanding the “why” of things.

A central claim which Aristotle makes of his four causes is that they provide the complete explanation of things. As Falcon explains, “Aristotle is adamant that, for a full range of cases, all four causes must be given in order to give an explanation. More explicitly, for a full range of cases, an explanation which fails to invoke all four causes is no explanation at all” (Falcon). In his own work, Aristotle was satisfied with four explanations to yield knowledge of everything that is. He

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<sup>9</sup> Max Hocutt, “Aristotle’s Four Because,” *Philosophy* 49, no. 190 (1974): 385.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 387.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 392.

<sup>12</sup> *Physics*, 194b23–34.

considers the question of whether chance or luck might be a fifth cause beginning at *Physics* 195b30 and, unsurprisingly, concludes that neither is. After this, he affirms his conclusion from chapter three—that he had provided “an adequate determination of the number of causes”—and asserts that these are included in every “reason why something is so.”<sup>13</sup> He does suggest elsewhere that one might not need all four causes to understand something, as is the case with a lunar eclipse.<sup>14</sup> However, he never affirms that one needs *more* than four causes. This belief may prove to be an oversight on his part, which is what we will now consider.

Before we question what a fifth cause might be, it is proper to examine how to approach this question. There are at least two ways in which one might approach the question of other causes. Ultimately, the most fitting approach will be the one which is best aligned with Aristotle’s own way of answering the question of causation. The first of the two ways in which to consider the question of a fifth cause is to examine whether the four causes are sufficient for one to have knowledge of a thing. The other is to suggest that there are more than four causal relationships in nature. The latter approach would pursue the type of question which Stein poses in “Causation and Explanation in Aristotle”: “are the four causes exhaustive because . . . nature as a whole, upon inspection, exhibits these causal relations and no others?”<sup>15</sup> Indeed, he engages with this question of fundamental causal relationships between things in a later work. However, while this investigation may be fruitful, it seems less fitting than the former approach—that of considering whether the four causes always furnish one with sufficient explanations of a thing so as to affirm that the individual really knows it. This is more fitting, then, because of the framework which Aristotle himself provides.

Aristotle does not describe the four causes as an exhaustive metaphysical list of causal relationships. Stein clarifies this in his work by saying that it may be “misleading” to perceive Aristotle’s project as drawing a distinction between four types of determinate metaphysical relationships if in fact Aristotle intended to provide the thinker with a framework by which to explain things.<sup>16</sup> Because Aristotle speaks of

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 195b29, 198a15.

<sup>14</sup> Falcon, “Aristotle on Causality.”

<sup>15</sup> “Causation and Explanation,” 702.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 705.

the causes as a framework by which we explain things, it seems that his project is not aimed at determining causal relationships. For instance, Aristotle states that “we must always seek the most precise cause,” by which he means that we should sharpen our understanding of what attributes the causer has which make it cause in that way.<sup>17</sup> He posits that the man who is building, for instance, should be understood in light of his “building craft.”<sup>18</sup> The call for precision in this way seems to be indicative of the type of explanation which Stein implies, a framework by which we explain things, rather than an enumeration of a causal relationship in nature. If it were the latter, it seems that Aristotle would focus on the way in which the builder determines his product, not on how we describe the builder. This understanding of the causes as a way to explain things rather than a description of metaphysical causal relationships is consistent with our understanding of the causes as being aimed at the inculcation of *eidēnai* knowledge. In light of this understanding it seems that the first approach, the examination of whether the four causes are sufficient for one to have knowledge of a thing, is the better one. As such, we will continue in this vein.

An investigation along these lines ought to proceed in a deliberate manner. As we have seen, Aristotle believes that the four causes provide a sufficient explanation for one to have knowledge of a thing. It follows that if in some instances the four causes are insufficient explanations—if one can know all four but still not have a complete explanation of the object of her questioning—then there must be some other explanation, some fifth cause, in order to bring Aristotle’s project to fruition. Now, Aristotle is clear to say that “causes are spoken of in many ways.”<sup>19</sup> Even according to his own explanation, then, we might speak of a thing’s causes in more than four ways. The four reduce a plurality of causes down to the material, formal, efficient, and final because these four adequately explain what any further “cause” intends to answer. As Stein explains, “Aristotle’s suggestion is that a complete explanation” of some thing “must cite all four of these [causes], and that they are jointly sufficient when cited. Any further feature we might hit upon as explanatory . . . will in fact fall under one of these four headings.”<sup>20</sup> All causes, according to Aristotle, are reducible to the four. As such, a genuine fifth cause cannot simply be

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<sup>17</sup> *Physics*, 195b23.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 195b24.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 195a28.

<sup>20</sup> “Causation and Explanation,” 701.

a further explanatory step in one of the four directions that Aristotle details. A fifth cause, if there is one, must both complete one's understanding of an object which would be otherwise incomplete and not simply be some variation of a material, formal, efficient, or final explanation.

One way that Aristotle demonstrates the four causes' ability to fully explain some thing is by describing how each cause can be seen in a particular object. Falcon details the explanation of a statue in her article.<sup>21</sup> Let us apply Falcon's general explanation of a statue to a specific statue, that of Abraham Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial. The material cause of this statue is the white marble; the formal cause is "the shape" of this statue, in this case, Abraham Lincoln seated; the efficient cause is "the artisan," the Piccirilli Brothers; and the final cause is the "that for the sake of which" of the statue, to memorialize Abraham Lincoln.<sup>22</sup> Now, there is one thing here which seems clear and which I will take for granted. That is, if someone were given this explanation of this statue of Abraham Lincoln, even if she never saw it herself, she would be able to rightfully claim knowledge of it. One reason this seems so evident is that a great number of subjects in one's education take as a given the belief that one can know a thing without seeing it. We seem satisfied to say that we know, at least in the *eidēnai* sense, about things like the original Globe Theater in London even if it is impossible for any living person to have seen it. It seems wholly consistent with Aristotle's account of knowledge of a thing to say that one need not experience it firsthand in order to be able to explain it fully and therefore to know about it. So, for Aristotle, one must be able to explain all things in terms of the four causes if she is to know them, even if this knowledge is never affirmed through her own perceptions.

However, it appears that there are things which one cannot explain without more information than the explanations that the four causes offer. To argue for this point, I will offer an example. Suppose that a student of nature goes to the library in order to learn about animals. Suppose also that she has not been taught about animals and has virtually no firsthand experience with them. When she arrives at the library, which is ordered only very generally by category, she pulls

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<sup>21</sup> "Aristotle on Causality."

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

out two books in order to learn about animals. One is on horses and the other is on unicorns. Both are written in the same, brief style. She has not heard about either animal before. In both, she reads an explanation of the animal's matter. Each animal is similar on this count. She reads about their shape; the chief difference here is that the unicorn has a horn on its head. She also learns about their reproductive habits, and about their relationship to humans and the world around them. She closes both books and, being a good Aristotelian, begins to explain each animal in terms of its four causes in order to see if she has adequate knowledge about both. She is satisfied that she can explain both in terms of all four causes and claims to have knowledge of each. However, she is completely unaware that one of these animals does in fact exist while the other is only a myth. She has done her job, it seems, as far as the four causes are concerned. She has asked the "why" of each's matter, form, and end, and of the source of its primary principle. It seems odd, though, and rightly so, to say that she is really clear in her "knowledge" of unicorns. There is another explanation that is needed if this student is to understand unicorns.

Let us consider whether this may serve as an adequate refutation to Aristotle's assertion that the four causes are a sufficient explanation of a thing. For one thing, a unicorn is immaterial and clearly does not exist in the same way as the existing things which Aristotle discusses leading up to his treatment of the four causes do. However, there are a multitude of immaterial things which countless persons have described in terms of having material attributes. The author of our misguided student's book is one such person. The account of a unicorn, on paper, ascribes to it similar material attributes to that of a horse, complete with flesh, bones, sinew, etc. We have already said that such "on paper" accounts are suitable means of attaining *eidenai* knowledge, as it is in the case of the original Globe Theater. One can explain things which have never existed, such as unicorns, or which used to exist but do not any more, such as the original Globe, in terms of the four causes, and can offer accounts of these things in such a way that others can learn about them.

The issue, though, is whether such an account of a thing which has never existed is really enough for one to say that she knows about it. Aristotle does not believe that one can speak meaningfully about things that do not exist. This seems clear in light of his discussion of things that do exist and of their essences. The way in which one speaks of primary and secondary substances, as Aristotle does in *Categories* 2a,

describes the way that some thing is, its mode of being. The explanation of “what it is to be” a thing says of “some existent thing” what that thing is.<sup>23</sup> Robin Smith’s article illuminates this key point in Aristotelian philosophy and highlights that Aristotle’s discussion of this “what it is to be,” a discussion of some thing’s essence, is about *existing* things. Aristotle intentionally confines his discussion of substances to existing things. If one is to have a meaningful discussion about what it is that she knows, then she must understand whether this thing exists at all. In the Aristotelian framework, then, it seems important for our student to know that she has learned about a creature which does not exist.

While one may argue that she would never have knowledge of a nonexistent thing, it still seems that she would need to know that the horse, of the two animals, does exist, in order to understand it fully. She, in her knowledge, ought to be able to distinguish between these two different types of things in terms of their existence. The four causes do not include the question of whether a thing has material existence, but only how this matter is manifested in the material cause. Thus, the question of whether this thing is real or not does not seem to be explained by any of the four causes. It does seem, though, that the explanation of a thing which ultimately lacks being must take its nonexistence into account if one is to know it. In this type of case, at least, the four causes do not explain the object of one’s inquiry sufficiently so that the student can claim knowledge of this object.

It is not within the scope of this paper to detail exactly what a fifth cause might be or how it would precisely answer an important “why” of a thing. However, a few points may be gathered from this discussion which might be helpful in such an endeavor. The first is that it appears that one must understand whether a thing exists if she is to claim knowledge of it. When one learns about the Lincoln Memorial, horses, or the original Globe Theater, she is learning about things which have existed materially and formally. If she is to consider the explanations of things like unicorns, she must understand them as mere fabrications of the mind. Surely, these immaterial things will never be known through demonstration as material things are, but this is not the kind of knowledge which the four causes seek to furnish.

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<sup>23</sup> Robin Smith, “Aristotle’s Logic,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 18 March 2000, <https://seop.illc.uva.nl/entries/aristotle-logic/>.

Perhaps, then, a fifth cause would answer the question of existence in some way so that the student could truly know the object of her inquiry.

The second point is that while it seems that a fifth cause may be needed, it does not follow that a sixth, seventh, or fiftieth cause is also necessary. In the unicorn example, it seems that existence is the only missing element for the student to understand why the unicorn is what it is. I suggest that a fifth cause would sufficiently answer the “why” of a thing and that the many further causes would be reducible to the five. Aristotle’s account is a good one, and what it needs, if anything, is to be adjusted, not recreated. However, this suggestion would only be suitably affirmed in a thorough discussion of a fifth cause itself, which is not within the scope of this paper. The third point is that, in the discussion of Aristotle’s causes, it is important that one focus on the aim of his study. While a great many points might be brought up from this re-envisioning of the four causes’ sufficiency for knowledge, these enumerate three of them.

In this discussion of Aristotle’s metaphysics, it becomes clear just how important the four causes are. If one is to successfully know the world around her, she must be able to explain the things which make up that world. This is what the four causes are intended to equip her to do. However, it seems that these may not be sufficient, which is made especially clear in the case of nonexistent things. In the consideration of how these things are known, a space opens up for a fifth cause which may provide the final explanation necessary in order to achieve the knowledge at which Aristotle aims. In so doing, the framework which Aristotle established so long ago will be better equipped to make sense of things, to further explain the way in which beings are.

# Hitting the Mark of Compassion

Megan Crandall

Aquinas describes the virtue of mercy as a “heartfelt sympathy for another’s distress, impelling us to succor him if we can.”<sup>1</sup> He uses “mercy” as an interchangeable term with “compassion” because they signify an interior emotion expressed outwardly through action to mitigate the suffering of another. Compassion can be categorized as a virtue of humanity because the action pursued is for the good of the person in need.<sup>2</sup> The environment in which humans are immersed determines their capacity for the cultivation of this virtue. As with any skill, certain tools are required to perfect the habituation of the virtues. The pursuit of compassion is impeded by the lack of opportunity, or the inability to recognize the opportunity, to put it into practice in daily life. Obstacles present in today’s society, such as the overconsumption of violence in media and video games as a form of entertainment, diminish the tools necessary for the cultivation of compassion.

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle lays out a virtue-ethical framework for establishing what it means to exemplify a particular virtue. In book II, chapter 6, he states that “virtue is concerned with feelings and actions, in which excess and deficiency constitute misses of the mark, while the mean is praised and on target.”<sup>3</sup> These characteristic actions and feelings of virtue can be put on a scale where two extremes exist around the mean, or the virtue. The purpose of identifying the extremes is to aid human beings in evaluating their actions based on where they lie on the scale. The main goal is to come as close as possible to the mean in order to live a life of virtue. The virtue of compassion lies between two extremes, callousness being the deficiency and pity being the excess.

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<sup>1</sup> Judith Barad, “The Understanding and Experience of Compassion: Aquinas and the Dalai Lama,” *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 27 (2007): 12.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Sisemore and Amanda M. Blackburn, “Religious Faith and the Virtues: An Introduction to the Special Issue,” *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 43, no. 2 (2015): 84.

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd ed., trans. Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 30.

A person can hit the mean of compassion by joining in the suffering of another and responding to this emotion through action. There are two ways in which a person can make the emotional connection required to achieve this virtue. One either sees another's suffering as one's own from past experience or realizes the possibility of one's own suffering in a similar way.<sup>4</sup> The witnessing of another's suffering must resonate within an individual in one of these two ways because one must first understand one's own suffering before one can comprehend the suffering of another.

Compassion should not be confused with sympathy. Sympathy is an emotional feeling of sorrow toward a person who is suffering, whereas compassion is an emotional response of sadness for another so potent that it becomes coupled with the inclination to alleviate the perceived distress. Compassion also depends on context.<sup>5</sup> It is easy to be sympathetic to those suffering an evil at a great distance from the sympathizer. For example, a person can sympathize with starving children in third-world countries; however, the likelihood of the person acting upon this sympathy in a practical way so as to ease the suffering of the children is small. Compassion takes action by first feeling an intense emotional response toward the distressed and then having the ability in that moment to act in the interest of the person in need. There is a sense of urgency in the response of the compassionate toward the distressed given their capacity to act according to their proximity to the situation. Proximity determines the amount of suffering the person is able to alleviate, while urgency determines the person's voluntary wont out of love of humanity to relieve the evils set before him or her in the sufferer. When someone is close to a situation in which sympathy is aroused, that person has a greater capacity to act in such a way as to affect the condition of the sufferer. When people experience compassion, they are passionately moved to relieve the suffering of another as immediately as possible. This passion stems from a selfless desire for the continued flourishing of humanity. The way in which a person acts to lessen suffering must also be practical and suited to the situation. This means that an act of compassion is not without reason. These requirements make it difficult for someone to "hit the mark" every time while practicing the virtue of compassion.

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<sup>4</sup> "Understanding and Experience," 14.

<sup>5</sup> John Saunders, "Compassion," *Clinical Medicine* 15, no. 2 (2015): 122.

Pity is commonly confused with compassion; however, when one takes pity on another, one is exhibiting compassion in excess. Many people may also refer to an overly compassionate person as a “bleeding heart.”<sup>6</sup> This extreme is ineffective because people who are suffering often despise being pitied; it is degrading and adds to the suffering rather than alleviating it. When people take pity on others, they identify themselves as superior to those who are suffering; they deny their own vulnerability to misfortune and evils. Pity denotes a lack of hope, while compassion fills the suffering with hope by joining two people together in the burden of dealing with adversity. Those who choose to pity others are unable to understand and cope with suffering, which clouds their ability to judge the situation effectively and act appropriately in aiding them.<sup>7</sup> Being unable to acknowledge one’s own suffering and vulnerability means that one will not see oneself as a human being who is equal to the person in need. This will undermine a person’s ability to be genuine in responding to the sufferer while at the same time denying his or her own humanity.

The opposing extreme of compassion lies in the deficiency of callousness. One who believes in tough love may miss the mark of compassion due to an exclusive focus on personal well-being. Callousness blinds people to the needs of others around them. It is an every-man-for-himself attitude that detracts from the natural goodness of humans to voluntarily come to the aid of others out of love for humanity. Gender stereotypes encourage callousness in men because of the expectation for them to maintain emotional stability as well as physical and mental strength in any given situation. This fosters deviation from the virtue of compassion by dictating social rules of engagement for men. Based on this stereotype, men would be less likely to show compassion when others are in need. These extremes vary according to numerous possibilities of conditions. Virtue depends on context in order to determine where the mean lies.

In Luke 15:11–32, Jesus tells the parable of the prodigal son who convinced his father to split up his estate so that he could have his

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<sup>6</sup> Lawrence M. Hinman, “The Ethics of Character: Virtues and Vices” (PowerPoint file, University of San Diego, CA, November 8, 2005), <<http://ethics.sandiego.edu/presentations/theory/virtue/virtue.pdf>>, 27.

<sup>7</sup> Donald DeMarco Donald, “The Virtue of Compassion,” *Lay Witness Magazine*, <<http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/the-virtue-of-compassion.html>>.

share at his disposal.<sup>8</sup> The son proceeded to fritter away all he was given on sinful activity until he had so little that he longed to eat with the pigs for which he labored. The son decided to return to his father's household as a servant in order to ensure himself a meal. Upon his arrival the father ran to his lost son, a socially distasteful reaction at this time in history, and called for a great feast to celebrate the returning son. This parable portrays a perfect act of compassion for someone who had lost his way through his own actions and choices. It proves that no matter the situation in which a person is in need of help, whether the cause of the misfortune was the fault of the individual or not, compassion supersedes judgement of others by focusing on love for others and the desire to deliver them from pain. As with the reaction of the son's older brother in the parable of the prodigal son, personal considerations must be put aside in order to open oneself completely to the virtue of compassion. Pity and callousness are based on self-interest. Either pity will develop out of a sense of superiority over the suffering person or callousness will result from disdain for the circumstances surrounding another's suffering. Genuine compassion does not allow selfishness and personal concern to dictate who is or is not in need; rather, compassion is felt deeply and given selflessly out of love for one's fellow human beings.

Compassion for humanity is constantly threatened by the advancement of technology. The progress of technology is both positive and negative. Aldous Huxley, in *Ends and Means*, describes technological progress as a more "efficient means for going backwards."<sup>9</sup> While it pushes innovation to its limits in the pursuit of efficiency, use of technology in certain ways has the drawback of limiting our interpersonal interactions. The ability to genuinely connect human being to human being is lost when technology is allowed to monopolize our lives. This threatens the cultivation of compassion because in order to experience a feeling of sadness coupled with an inclination to act, one must first establish a connection with the sufferer. The establishment of this connection solidifies the understanding of what the sufferer is experiencing and adds to the impulse to ease the suffering. Constant exposure to violence in the media and video game play are two examples of potential negative technological influences. When too much time is

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<sup>8</sup> *The Catholic Study Bible: The New American Bible*, 2nd ed., ed. Donald Senior, John J. Collins, and Mary Ann Getty-Sullivan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Aldous Huxley, *Ends and Means: An Inquiry into the Nature of Ideals and into the Methods Employed for Their Realization*, ed. Howard Schneiderman (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2012), 9.

spent viewing violence via news coverage or immersed in violent video games, one encounters fewer opportunities for genuine human interaction and therefore fewer opportunities to establish a connection. Media coverage and advances in video game play pose a particular threat to the formation of this connection and the cultivation of compassion.

Media coverage of the news dehumanizes every aspect of tragedy and suffering by constantly devoting attention to anything that warrants a top story. These stories are run across a screen at all hours of the day, seven days a week. The constant spotlight desensitizes the audience to the reality of the situations that surround those involved and further distances human beings from each other while ironically offering immediate access to communication. A study published in 2008 revealed that daily exposure to media coverage of the news can result in a “blunted response” to violence.<sup>10</sup> These programs alienate individuals from those who are suffering by diminishing the ability to form a genuine emotional attachment to a fellow human being in need. Exhaustive media exposure makes tragedy and violence become normal to the general population. Developing compassion becomes much more difficult as the violence and suffering of others becomes an expected encounter in the news.

News coverage reveals real-life tragedies and violence while video games offer a virtual reality for one to partake in, often involving violence as well. Video games have come a long way since the first one was created in 1958.<sup>11</sup> Gaming has become an outlet for people of all ages, especially Generation Z. These games were first developed as an individual activity for single players, as in games like Ms. Pacman and Asteroids. Over time, gaming expanded to include a multiplayer mode in a group setting. Today, the internet enables gamers to interact in their virtual worlds with others through audio and video settings. It is arguable that these games promote social activity between people; however, the new advances in technology diminish the sociality by isolating the real-life version of an individual from the real-life version of the other players. A sense of unity is only achieved through the

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<sup>10</sup> Erica Scharrer, “Media Exposure and Sensitivity to Violence in News Reports: Evidence of Desensitization?” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 85, no. 2 (2008): 302.

<sup>11</sup> Ernie Tretkoff, “October 1958: Physicist Invents First Video Game,” *American Physical Society*, ed. Alan Chodos,

<<https://www.aps.org/publications/apsnews/200810/physicshistory.cfm>>.

characters in the game rather than physical human beings. This makes it more difficult to form a genuine connection between players, specifically in violent video games, which tend to focus more on the progress of the individual compared to the virtual players. In this situation, multiplayer and single player violent video games are similar in that they both incorporate opponents whom players combat; the only difference between the two is whether or not the opponent is computer-operated or operated, via internet connection, by another human being. In both cases, the aim of the game for each individual is to beat the opponent, encouraging anti-altruistic attitudes. Concern solely about the individual is synonymous with self-interest, which was previously concluded to be a detractor from the cultivation of compassion.

As video game graphics and maneuvering capabilities have advanced, many games incorporate morally questionable actions as highly realistic experiences. Most revolve around violence, mimicking real life situations of war and chaos. An aggressive or violent action is taken out on the gamer's opponents out of necessity in order to achieve some reward in the game. Distortion of consequences then becomes an issue for the virtue of compassion.<sup>12</sup> In violent video games, compassion is seen as weakness in the eyes of opponents. The reality of the violent action in the game is minimized by the desire to win the game or gain superiority over other players' achievements. The real-life consequence of the violent action shifts from a cruel infliction of suffering to a temporary disruption of game play. The goals of the game distort how some actions are viewed. For example, Call of Duty encourages players to score by killing computerized opponents in order to increase their "killstreak."<sup>13</sup> Grand Theft Auto promotes "daily missions" that can be fulfilled through obtaining objects by any means, including violence and shooting, in exchange for money upon completion.<sup>14</sup> Violent acts are deemed morally justified based on the objectives of the game.<sup>15</sup> These objectives are reinforced by the consequences of the violent action using operant conditioning. Rather than focusing on the harm done to an opponent, the player who

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<sup>12</sup> Tilo Hartmann, Maja K. Krakowiak, and Mina Tsay-Vogel, "How Violent Video Games Communicate Violence," *Communication Monographs*, 81, no. 3 (2014): 312.

<sup>13</sup> "Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare Multiplayer Guide—How to Earn Scorestreaks Fast," *VG24/7*, November, 2014, <https://www.vg247.com/2014/11/10/call-of-duty-advanced-warfare-multiplayer-guide-scorestreaks-fast/>.

<sup>14</sup> Arek Kaminski, Jacek Halas, and Bartek Duk, "Grand Theft Auto V Game Guide & Walkthrough," *Gamepressure.com*, <http://guides.gamepressure.com/gtav/>.

<sup>15</sup> "Violent Video Games," 312.

committed the violent act focuses on the reward that is received—advancement in the game. The consequence of a violent act becomes a positive result to the player who performs the action. Thus the act becomes justified in pursuit of the objective of the game and adds to the desensitization to the violence.

Lack of promotion of moral evaluative practice in video games due to the reward system for violent actions poses a problem for real-life perceptions of compassion. “When desensitization occurs, the process of moral evaluation is disrupted because the individual does not perceive or respond to the cues that are necessary to initiate the evaluative processes. As a result, actions may be taken without consideration of their moral implications.”<sup>16</sup> The distortion of consequences represented in violent video games repeatedly prompts players to seek out violent actions in order to receive rewards. This inhibits the moral evaluative process of a human being, increasing the likelihood of a harmful action being taken in real-life. The cultivation of virtues requires practice, as do the tools making the virtues a habit, in this case, moral evaluations. It is necessary to have the ability to make moral evaluations in order to respond appropriately to situations calling for compassion. A human being who is repeatedly exposed to the sort of reward system involved in violent video games lacks practice making these moral evaluations. Constant exposure to violent video games detracts from the opportunity to make a habit of moral evaluation before taking action. The games reinforce violent action as the best response, the morally correct response according to the virtual ideals of the game.

Moral justification of immoral concepts undermines compassion and encourages callousness. Aggressive behavior toward an opponent is encouraged by the notion that compassion for the “enemy” is a bad attribute to have in game play. This is why callousness is applauded and compassion is diminished. Aggressiveness openly demonstrates the willingness of a player to show no mercy. It has been shown that males tend to exhibit more aggressiveness in correlation with video game violence than women.<sup>17</sup> This analysis of gaming activity and

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<sup>16</sup> Jeanne B Funk, Heidi B. Baldacci, Tracie Pasold, and Jennifer Baumgardner, “Violence Exposure in Real-life, Video Games, Television, Movies, and the Internet: Is There Desensitization?” *Journal of Adolescence* 27, no. 1 (2004): 25.

<sup>17</sup> Bruce D. Bartholow and Craig A. Anderson, “Effects of Violent Video Games on Aggressive Behavior: Potential Sex Differences,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 8, no. 3 (2003): 283.

behavior supports the stereotype that encourages men to be more callous in their interactions. Women exhibit less outward and direct aggressiveness but still experience it. While “males are more likely to employ direct forms of aggression . . . females are more likely to use indirect forms of aggression—actions that are harmful to others in more subtle ways.”<sup>18</sup> Therefore, aggressiveness is not exclusive to one gender and creates a difficult environment for the cultivation of compassion. The negative connotation of compassion in this scenario reduces the value of the virtue and treats it as a bad attribute.

In 2012, Gollwitzer and Melzer concluded that “inexperienced players felt greater moral distress when they inflicted violence against humans rather than objects.”<sup>19</sup> These players were not used to the constant violence that occurs in violent video games, compared to players who have spent more time exposed to the technology. The amount of exposure to gaming influences the capacity one has for compassion for other human beings. A study mentioned in the *Journal of Adolescence* in 2004 showed that “children with a high preference for violent games and high time commitment to playing demonstrated the lowest empathy” when tested on specific set scales.<sup>20</sup> Empathy is defined as the “general capacity to resonate with others’ emotional states irrespective of their valence.”<sup>21</sup> It is the initial emotional connection felt by a human being toward the suffering of another. Compassion incorporates the initial emotion of empathy coupled with the desire to alleviate the pain. The study on children showed that constant exposure to violence in games diminishes empathetic feeling toward others. If the empathy is not felt, a genuine human connection is not made and there is no internal call to action. Without the emotional attachment to the suffering opponent, the player sees no reward that will result from relieving any perceived pain; the player will feel no sense of urgency in committing a selfless act to assist a fellow human being. Compassion requires habitual incorporation into one’s life so that it becomes a part of daily interactions with others. Continual violent game play makes a habit of cultivating callousness, a detachment from the suffering of others, rather than the virtue of compassion.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 288.

<sup>19</sup> “Violent Video Games,” 311.

<sup>20</sup> “Violence Exposure,” 27.

<sup>21</sup> Tania Singer and Olga M. Kilmecki, “Empathy and Compassion,” *Current Biology* 24, no. 18 (2014): R875.

The virtual reality created by video games approaches real-world scenarios that are similarly seen in topics broadcasted by news sources. For example, Call of Duty mimics real-world war scenarios seen in society today. While the news desensitizes viewers through constant exposure to real-life suffering, gaming gives players the ability to partake in inflicting the suffering. Virtual violence and aggression in video games and violence broadcasted on the news have become forms of entertainment. This entertainment aspect is disturbing because the desensitization of violence has such an effect that viewers and players are no longer concerned by the content being portrayed and furthermore experience enjoyment from these forms of media.<sup>22</sup> Enjoyment of violence as entertainment becomes a priority over being compassionate in interactions with others. Compassionate responses to acts of violence as portrayed in the media and video games are curtailed by society's twisted portrayal of violence as an enjoyable experience, minimizing the real-life consequences of the content. Technological advances in news broadcasting and video game content increase the tendency of humans to be drawn away from hitting the mark of compassion.

Human beings are naturally social beings. They seek a genuine attachment to other humans. Video games and news undermine the severity of violence, working against the formation of an attachment to others. They encourage self-interest and undercut the reality of human distress. If the distortion of violence continues with the further advance of technology, generations will be desensitized earlier in their childhood and throughout their development, causing them to be less likely to come to the aid of fellow human beings upon adulthood. Compassion will become a lost virtue in each successive generation. Human beings cannot live in a world where sociality lacks genuine concern for one another. Self-interested intentions will trump altruism. Humans ought to resist excess exposure to violence in media and video games in order to cultivate the virtue of compassion.

In March of 2016, a Huffington Post article discussed an interesting concept introduced by Dr. Matthew Grizzard about the benefit of desensitization to violence in news media. The article suggested that since "research in cognitive psychology suggests that

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<sup>22</sup> "Violence in the Media," *Psychology: Science in Action*, November, 2013, <http://www.apa.org/action/resources/research-in-action/protect.aspx>.

emotions cloud our rational judgment processes . . . being more in control of our emotions through the desensitization processes might allow us to make better decisions and respond more rationally.”<sup>23</sup> However, this is not necessarily true. Erica Scharrer’s study on the blunted response of individuals as a result of excess exposure to violence in the news suggests otherwise.<sup>24</sup> Cognitive and emotional desensitization stemming from constant exposure to violence through media inhibits the cultivation of compassion. Emotional desensitization creates a blunt response to a scenario that would typically cause a rather strong response. Cognitive desensitization alters the view of violence as something that is “uncommon and unlikely” to an occurrence that is “mundane and inevitable.”<sup>25</sup> The idea that violence is inevitable decreases the likelihood the suffering will elicit a response because it becomes perceived as a natural part of life that happens to everyone. While it is true that suffering is a natural part of being human, it is also true that the social aspect of human beings seeks compassion in their time of suffering. Excess exposure to violence in news media inhibits the strong emotional response needed to evoke compassion within a human being. Without emotion there is no compassion, and without compassion there is no action. The need for rationality in the response of helping others would have no place if not for the provocation of emotions. If human beings seek to cultivate compassion, desensitization will set them back in their pursuit.

Some may claim that violent video games alone are not a sufficient explanation for an individual’s lack of compassion for another person. Video games are a virtual reality which can easily be distinguished from real-world violence and suffering by any reasonable individual. By taking part in this form of entertainment, sociality is improved. Players are able to come together in a multiplayer arena and communicate between one another in an attempt to complete the objectives of the game as a team. This promotes a connection between one and one’s team by bonding them through cooperation and leadership. The selfless aspect of these seemingly violent video games is present in the willingness to further the team’s achievements. Lack of compassion

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<sup>23</sup> Christopher J. Ferguson, “Media Violence and Desensitization Part 2: A Case Study in How News Media Can Get It Wrong,” *Huffington Post*, April 14, 2016, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/christopher-j-ferguson/media-violence-and-desensitization\\_b\\_9684170.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/christopher-j-ferguson/media-violence-and-desensitization_b_9684170.html).

<sup>24</sup> “Media Exposure,” 302.

<sup>25</sup> “Violence Exposure,” 25.

resulting from desensitization toward violence and suffering has no place in video games. Players become even more sensitive to violence when an act is committed on a fellow team member by an opponent. Therefore, compassion is cultivated through video games due to attachment to members in team play.

This objection is invalid. Though there are many components that influence the actions and intentions of individuals in daily life, violence in game play is a curtailer of compassion that can be controlled by the individual. One can choose not to habitually take part in violent video games. The repetitive submersion into violent gaming adds to the desensitization of individuals to suffering over time. This habituation carries over in to the discrimination between virtual-reality and reality. Though an individual is completely capable of distinguishing between the consequences of actions in violent games and the consequences of actions affecting real human beings, the distortion of consequences presented by the game distorts the take-away of the value of compassion. If games promote compassion for opponents as being a weakness, players will be less likely to make compassion in daily life a priority once habitually exposed to this idea. The stereotype of men, discussed previously, promotes callousness, devaluing the virtue of compassion as necessary to human sociality in a similar way. The sociality sought after by human beings thus begins to conform to this view of compassion.

The team component of multiplayer games does not satisfy the element of selflessness in compassion or increased sensitization to suffering. A team member may be disheartened by any violent act inflicted on a fellow team member; however, this feeling is fleeting for two reasons, the first being that any suffering portrayed in a video game is short-lived. Players who die come back to life after a short period of time determined by the game manufacturers. This fact leads to the second reason. Since players witness this distortion of consequences, such as the dying and bringing back to life of a character who has been “killed,” the other players on the team experience the disheartened feeling only briefly, if at all. This feeling is immediately replaced by the desire for revenge on the opponent who has caused the “suffering.” This only increases the determination to commit violent acts on the opponent, the capacity for violence, and therefore the desensitization to violence and suffering. The feeling of disheartenment may also stem from anger toward the team player for

setting the entire team back in their advancement through the game. In this case, the players feel no form of compassion for the misfortune of their “injured” player and instead are filled with contempt toward the gaming abilities of that one team member. The selflessness that the objection suggests becomes non-existent as players begin to desire that the weaker player have less involvement in game play or even no involvement at all. Eventually, these group dynamics force a leader to emerge, namely, the best player out of the rest. Players then begin to compete against one another for this leadership position, leaving no room for altruistic intentions. Competitiveness fuels the lack of compassion by adding to the devaluing of this virtue as a good attribute. These ideals that are repeatedly encouraged by violent video games paint compassion as a negative attribute and restrict the cultivation of the virtue in order to win or complete objectives.

Incentives are used to stimulate some sort of desired response. Violent video games use incentives, such as the reward system, to achieve the desired response of continued game play. News media offer incentives to viewers for continued broadcasting of the particular station by claiming to provide the most in-depth coverage of controversial stories, usually involving violence of some form. These incentives perpetuate the cycle of repeated exposure, and the negative attributes associated with these forms of entertainment continue to influence their audience. The motivation to be compassionate is overshadowed by the excessive exposure to incentives of the video games and the news. The value of compassion perceived by humans is diminished through the violent entertainment, reducing the likelihood of the habituation of the virtue.

Virtues are not natural dispositions given to humans at birth. They must be practiced in daily life in order for us to move toward hitting what Aristotle refers to as the “mean.”<sup>26</sup> If entertainment outlets, such as violent video games and media, are regularly encountered, the value of compassion will be reduced. Human beings will be given tools by these encounters that disassemble the virtue rather than foster its cultivation. This undermines the moral duty of human beings to help others in need regardless of their individual desires. Without compassion, humans are left bereft of a deeper emotional connection with others, which hinders human flourishing.

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<sup>26</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics*, 30.

# From Anonymous to Individual: Arendt's and Havel's Account of the Individual in Totalitarian Society

*Alyse Spiehler*

When one considers the all-encompassing oppression of a totalitarian regime, the question of the individual's relationship to this entity rises to the forefront. Indeed, in light of the horrifying information that has come to light since the collapse of various totalitarian governments, the thinker must consider how the individual in this society has either perpetuated or been defeated by this system. In *Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt begins to answer this enigma in her description of the longing for anonymity in a totalitarian society born from a perverse sense of selflessness. Her discussion of the formation and preservation of totalitarian regimes offers invaluable insight into the psychology and motivation of an individual person in the societal masses. Even so, her work does not provide an equally valuable account—that of an individual's ability to retaliate and how this affects the system in which she lives. However, Vaclav Havel's "The Power of the Powerless" furnishes exactly this discussion. A synthesis of Arendt's and Havel's accounts, then, details the phenomenon of anonymity in totalitarian masses and the power that each individual has to oppose the system by rediscovering her own identity. Havel's account offers support for Arendt's by affirming the notion of the anonymous masses, and elaborates upon it by showing how an individual can regain her individuality in retaliation. By examining both of these thinkers' discussions of individuality in a totalitarian system, and by considering the relationship between the human person and the totalitarian state, Arendt's and Havel's student arrives at a more profound understanding of identity in the context of totalitarian systems—a relationship that can both strengthen and destroy the manipulative power of totalitarianism in an individual's life.

In chapter one of *Totalitarianism*, Arendt illuminates the widespread phenomenon of selflessness in totalitarian society, as well

as its causes and effects. Her description of the individual's relationship to herself as a selfless one is not, as the term might originally suggest, positive. Rather, selflessness as the masses experience it is the "sense that oneself does not matter," it is the "feeling of being expendable."<sup>1</sup> Now, this psychological sense of worthlessness is not merely a negative effect of "the breakdown of class society" but is also a "disturbing" key element "in the success of totalitarianism."<sup>2</sup> When class-centric society crumbled, the "masses grew out of the fragments of [this] highly atomized society" and came face to face with their loneliness, which had only "been held in check" through their class membership.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately for these isolated individuals, their personal desolation became the building block of the totalitarian regime which eventually overtook them.

The masses' sense of superfluousness opens the door to totalitarian domination because it is only "where the great masses are superfluous" that totalitarian movements are "possible."<sup>4</sup> These individuals needed no convincing; their own sense of self already affirms the totalitarian leader's belief that the citizenry is expendable. Those persons who once enjoyed a sense of individual uniqueness were battered by war, which "obliterated individual differences so even suffering . . . could now be interpreted as "an instrument of historical progress."<sup>5</sup> The sense of self, established in individual experiences like suffering and edified by one's identity in relationship to her class, was replaced by a sense of uselessness. Arendt's series of claims suggests that the pervasive sense of selflessness was caused by the events in this historical moment. What's more, this new mass psychology was a fertile ground for the totalitarian movement that took root. The individual's desire for anonymity grew from a sense of futile selflessness in a society whose members shared this sentiment with her.

Once the masses were united by a sense of selflessness, a widespread longing for anonymity followed in suit. Arendt explains that in post-war Europe, Hitler appealed to the war-stricken individuals' awareness of their situation—one where death is arbitrary and each person is helpless—to further his cause.<sup>6</sup> She notes that "the

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<sup>1</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

peculiar selflessness of the mass man appeared here as yearning for anonymity.”<sup>7</sup> Individuals *desired* to abandon themselves to the system, to become active in a regime where their only real function was like that of a cog in a machine.<sup>8</sup> The individual already saw herself as useless and expendable. The less the selfless person is identified in terms of her unique characteristics and traits, the more anonymous she becomes. This increasing anonymity is desirable for the individual who believes that she is useless, since she would rather blend in than broadcast her condition. It is also necessary for the totalitarian leaders who depend upon masses of expendable persons to carry out their plans for domination. The promise of anonymity explains the selfless person’s attraction to the role of totalitarian minion. As we have already seen, selflessness is key in totalitarian societies. Arendt’s account reveals, then, that an individual’s anonymous abandonment to the totalitarian scheme is critical to the success of the whole project.

Havel’s greengrocer illustrates the condition of the anonymous individual in society and the effect that one’s complicity has on the regime as a whole. Havel offers the example of a working man, a greengrocer, who, at the start of the essay, hangs a totalitarian slogan in the window of his business. He does this because “these things must be done if one is to get along in life,” and he does not seem to put much thought into his conformist action.<sup>9</sup> However, Havel asserts that the “slogan’s real meaning . . . is rooted firmly in the greengrocer’s existence.”<sup>10</sup> Its meaning exposes his identity as an oppressed member of society and therefore unveils how he exists as an individual. In conforming to this way of life, the greengrocer submits to and propagates a system whose aims are diametrically opposed to “the aims of life.”<sup>11</sup> In this submission, Havel identifies the same anonymity that Arendt notes in her work. In totalitarian society, the human is not allowed to realize herself as such, but rather she surrenders her “human identity in favor of the identity of the system.”<sup>12</sup> What’s more, Havel asserts that this desire for subordination is present to some extent in all people: “in everyone there is some willingness to merge

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Vaclav Havel, “The Power of the Powerless,” *Vaclav Havel*, October, 1978, [http://www.vaclavhavel.cz/showtrans.php?cat=eseje&val=2\\_aj\\_eseje.html&typ=HTML](http://www.vaclavhavel.cz/showtrans.php?cat=eseje&val=2_aj_eseje.html&typ=HTML).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> *Totalitarianism*, 6.

with the anonymous crowd and to flow comfortably along with it down the river of pseudo life.”<sup>13</sup> The greengrocer, like everyone else in society, has not done anything outlandish by rejecting personal identity in favor of anonymity among the masses, it seems. He has, however, engaged in an action which compromises his identity and independence. Unlike Arendt, Havel does not merely present this altered sense of identity in a totalitarian regime; he also explains how one might break free of it.

Neither Havel’s work nor the greengrocer’s actions ends with the affirmation of the mass individual’s anonymity in totalitarian society. Havel’s depiction of the greengrocer’s retaliation unveils the individual’s ability to break free from this anonymity and reaffirm her identity as independent of the throes of totalitarian life. The greengrocer decides that he will not hang the totalitarian sign in his window. In this seemingly small action and the actions that follow from it, the greengrocer has effectively revolted against the totalitarian system. His “revolt is an attempt to live within the truth.”<sup>14</sup> This small action demonstrates that “living a lie is living a lie,” a revelation that addresses the whole world.<sup>15</sup> If the greengrocer is able to live in the truth, so is everyone else.<sup>16</sup>

Havel argues that the greengrocer’s actions threaten the very foundation of the totalitarian system.<sup>17</sup> He suggests that any action that dispels the lie of totalitarianism reaffirms the human freedom that the system seeks to eradicate. Indeed, “freedom is indivisible,” so any action that affirms one person’s freedom necessarily affirms another’s.<sup>18</sup> What Havel does not say explicitly, but what follows from his and Arendt’s account, is that the greengrocer is no longer anonymous—he has reestablished his unique human identity by his action. Where conformity achieves the abolition of uniqueness and distinction, retaliation exposes the individual as an individual. When the greengrocer stands before the world as its addresser, his identity is reaffirmed by his retaliatory action. Where Arendt’s account reveals that the individual’s anonymous submission to the totalitarian regime is a precursor to its success, Havel’s account—which is consistent with hers—shows that the converse is also true. That is, an individual’s

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<sup>13</sup> “Power.”

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

affirmation of her own identity through her retaliation threatens the very existence of the totalitarian system. The retaliator does this by exposing the system for what it is—a lie.

In her explanation of the totalitarian system, Arendt illustrates the psychological state of the individual in this context. Her work helps to make sense of a phenomenon as radical as totalitarianism. The tumultuous period following the mass destruction of the world wars had a profound effect on its survivors. These were overtaken by a sense of selflessness which predisposed them to anonymous abandonment to the totalitarian system. As such, this very system was poised for success. Arendt's claims reveal the interconnectivity of the mass individual and the system in which she lives—a connection forged by the desire for anonymity and a system which necessarily offers just this. Havel's account also recognizes the mass individual as an anonymous person whose identity has been subordinated to the system.<sup>19</sup> In a further step, Havel's description of the greengrocer reveals the power that the seemingly powerless are able to yield—the ability to confront the totalitarian system at its very core. By rejecting the status quo of serving as an anonymous cog, the greengrocer affirms his identity in the face of the totalitarian lie. In a system that requires anonymity to thrive, the smallest action that affirms one's identity is an affront to the entire regime. When the individual in the totalitarian system reclaims her identity, she also rejects the oppression under which she lived. This opens a door for freedom. Those individuals who desired to shut themselves off from independent action and personal liberty are made to face the freedom that they once enjoyed. Perhaps, then, the action of people like Havel's greengrocer, who took a step from anonymity to individuality, can serve as an invitation to others who were once like him.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

# The Metaphysics of Gender: Finding a Middle Ground

*Kayla Morrow*

The contemporary society that we inhabit misunderstands metaphysics, specifically the crucial properties that make us who and what we are essentially. This confusion is embodied in the way that undeniably natural properties such as gender have been reduced to mere human “choices” or “constructs” to be changed at will, analogous to painting one’s nails or growing facial hair. But our gender and the fundamental distinctions associated with it seem to be essential to the account of what we are. This raises the larger issue of where to draw the line regarding which characteristics should be included in an account of the human essence. While Aristotle’s reductionist account must conclude that gender is a nonessential property, Aquinas wisely concludes that gender is necessary in making us what we are. However, despite his success in enhancing Aristotle’s account, Aquinas neglects a crucial third category of essence that lies between generic and specific essence, one that would account for a property like gender: it is not only important to specific individuals but is also something universal and objective which unites males and females based on essential traits. This middle ground would allow us to identify gender as essential to what we are, but would not account for *all* of what we are.

In our modern age, choice has replaced an understanding of human nature in many aspects of life. People believe that they can defy nature by overcoming or changing what they truly and fundamentally are, including their gender. Men who don’t enjoy being men suddenly want to “become” women because they believe that gender is merely accidental and can be reconstructed as such. This attitude is explicitly illustrated through the contemporary case of the former Olympian Bruce Jenner, who recently revealed his intent to transition into a woman in order to achieve a happier, more fulfilling life. Previously, Bruce struggled with his gender identity, “[dressing] as a woman” and

“[having] other people buy him women’s clothes.”<sup>1</sup> So, he decided to undergo multiple surgeries and procedures in order to make his body appear more like that of a natural woman, including shaving down his larynx to lessen the effect of his Adam’s apple; getting manicures and pedicures to appear more feminine; growing out his hair so that it is long like a woman’s would be; taking female hormones; undergoing electrolysis to get rid of hair on his face and chest; getting breast implants and a nose job; and undergoing facial feminization surgery that involved changes to his hairline, forehead, chin, and jaw.<sup>2</sup> Although a surgery to rearrange his genitalia to mimic that of a woman’s would serve a purely aesthetic purpose—since he cannot alter his reproductive system—Jenner claims that sex reassignment surgery may be the next step in his transition. He is changing everything possible because he truly believes, or at least tries to convince the world, that he can become a woman in some sense. Jenner’s reason for this change is that he sees his being born as a male a mistake, something accidental that he could change and construct to fit his desires and personal intentions. The only reason given for Jenner’s transition into a “woman” is that he wants to be one, as if no further explanation is necessary.

Fueling Jenner’s mindset is the modern notion that the world is one big workshop and that our bodies are things to be constantly changed, rearranged, and added to using human technology. We have come to think of the body we have been given as something to change rather than to objectively understand and accept. Some may ask why this contemporary attitude is such a negative thing, as it seems to allow for choice, happiness, and acceptance for all people. What we must remember, however, is that this attitude is dangerous because it also means that something so essential to what we are becomes a mere expression of taste. Attempting to change our gender is no longer an unnatural feat; it entails no more significance than saying, “I want to grow my facial hair out” or “I like this nail color today, so I’ll try it out and see how I like it.” Further, relativism is an inevitable consequence of this attitude. If we can be “whatever” we want and virtually everything is a mere expression of taste, then we can no longer judge the decisions of others. When recognizing and judging human

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<sup>1</sup> Aili Nahas and Patrick Gomez, “Bruce Jenner Happy at Last,” *People*, February, 2015, 56.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

differences, there is now a fear of offending and of being offended, discriminated against, or oppressed as a result of these tensions. Rather than addressing problems or confusion, we simply avoid saying anything at all.

It is important to explore the underlying reason *why* contemporary America adopts such a position, which supports the idea that gender is not something essential to who and what we are. This position is largely a response to historical degradation and abuse that has been associated with, and justified on the grounds of, definitions of people based on their race, sex, etc. In a way, definitions seem to limit humans by reducing them to a static and pre-determined account of their person. This is why certain movements—such as the civil rights movement and women’s suffrage movement—fought popular opinion about their characterization, which was based on a misunderstanding of their essence. Feminists resist definitions of being a “woman,” because historically, negative connotations have been associated with such a definition:<sup>3</sup> career immobility and restriction to the domestic life of being a housewife; being discriminated against, oppressed, and degraded by the patriarchy due to a lack of voice and power; and being denied membership into certain spheres of society based on the perception of women as unintelligent, incapable, and generally inferior to men. So feminists and those who identify with the cause tend to resist any account of their essence that will differentiate them from males, due to the fear that this distinction will somehow lead to negative treatment. Feminists also do not want their essence to consist only of being female, because that would limit the account of what they are to being mere reproductive vehicles. For these reasons, the feminist resistance to gender essentialism, which is the idea that men and women have inherently different natural capabilities that qualify them as belonging to their separate genders, is explicit: “Anti-essentialism is a prevailing assumption in contemporary feminism, to the extent that the term ‘essentialist’ has become a term of abuse in feminist writing as well as in university classes in feminist theory.”<sup>4</sup> However, we can scrutinize this opposition to gender essentialism by taking the concept of gender, de-contextualizing it (and thereby taking out considerations of discrimination or societal expectations) and asking whether there are

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<sup>3</sup> Victoria Barker, “Definition and the Question of ‘Woman,’” *Hypatia* 12, no. 2 (1997): 186.

<sup>4</sup> Natalie Stoljar, “Essence, Identity, and the Concept of Woman,” *Philosophical Topics* 23, no. 2 (1995): 261.

fundamental differences between men and women that must be recognized.

Physically, the matter of females and males differs in crucial ways. We can examine individual men and women and perceive noticeable differences: women have wider hips, bigger breasts, and genitalia consisting of a female reproductive system. While we can perceive these characteristics, they also seem to point us to some underlying, more universal distinctions that consider their *purpose*: women's hips, which are already noticeably wider than male's hips from puberty, undeniably serve the purpose of accommodating the birth of a child. This is seen in the way that "the cartilage that holds the three-piece pelvis together softens during pregnancy to allow it to become more pliable, extending nurture to the very action of giving birth."<sup>5</sup> If we consider female breasts, we again realize that they serve a purpose greater than physical distinction from males. Female breasts lactate in response to childbirth, and this process seems to be designed "for the ongoing nurture of newborn infants until they are old enough to eat and digest solid foods for themselves."<sup>6</sup> This purpose is demonstrated in the way that each breast contains a mammary gland, which creates and dispenses milk and "is positioned in such a way that the nursing infant rests near the mother's beating heart, approximating as closely as possible the intimacy and safety that the infant enjoyed in the womb."<sup>7</sup> Not only do the breasts provide sustenance for newborn babies, they are designed for women to experience this process with their baby in a nurturing, intimate, and maternal way.

Although the position of the mammary glands, the width and flexibility of the hips, and the ability to lactate are all distinct female properties, they organize themselves towards a common biological purpose: bearing children and then nurturing these children, a unique ability confined to women alone. In examining the intricate design of the female body, we can note that the physical matter associated with being a female is not something accidental, something that serves to physically differentiate women from males, or something that merely makes women appealing to male sexual desire. Rather, it is based on an underlying distinction that serves the specific biological purpose,

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<sup>5</sup> John D. Garr, *Feminine by Design: The God-Fashioned Woman* (Atlanta: Golden Key Press, 2012), 171.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

one fundamental and essential to being a woman, namely, bearing children. Even if a woman is infertile and her reproductive system does not allow her to have a biological child of her own, her body still possesses the potential to do so in virtue of its matter, function, and purpose. This unique female abilities of childbirth and nurture seem to be an essential part of what a woman is, or at the very least something more important than nail color and hair length, and they definitely cannot be characterized as accidents since our unique body parts are all organized toward the end of reproduction.

Through examining the explicit differences in the matter of males and females on a physical and biological level, we raise the further question: Do these different characteristics, which make up our gender, matter in the account of what one is essentially? And, on a more global scale, one can ask where the line must be drawn regarding characteristics and properties that are essential in the account of what we are, and properties that are nonessential or accidental in accounting for what we are fundamentally. We can examine two prominent accounts of essence that provide answers to this question of gender and essence, namely the Aristotelian and the Thomistic accounts.

Aristotle defines essence as that which makes a substance what it is necessarily.<sup>8</sup> It is the account of what a primary substance is in its own right, meaning not contingently, accidentally, or predicated upon something external to that substance. Ultimately, essence corresponds to the species of a genus, which provides an account or definition of what primary substances (of the same species) must universally, fundamentally, and necessarily be in order to exist as the primary substances they are.<sup>9</sup> So the essence of an individual person is accounted for by the genus (animal) and the species that differentiates us from all other things in that genus (rational animal, or human).<sup>10</sup> Although we may think that there are unique or special things about individual people that “make them who and what they are,” such as their personality, knowledge, or gender, all humans are reduced to the same essence, according to Aristotle.

So, when trying to decipher essence one must only consider the essential properties of a substance, which are those that the substance must absolutely and necessarily have in order to exist as that substance,

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<sup>8</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, in *Aristotle: Introductory Readings*, ed. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1996), 1029b15–20.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 1029b10–15.

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle, *Categories*, in *Aristotle: Introductory Readings*, ed. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1996), 2a20–25.

and ignore accidental properties, which are ones that the substance happens to have but could lack while still existing as that particular primary substance. Accidental properties are contingent, meaning that they can't exist apart from what they are in; they exist in "something," as a part of "something," and cannot exist apart from this "something."<sup>11</sup> Consider the example of a table to illustrate this point: its essential properties would include things like a sturdy base or legs, a flat surface, and material that will support a reasonable amount of weight, because it cannot exist as a table without these things. If a "table" was made out of cardboard and had neither a base nor flat surface, it would not function as a table. Consider next a particular table that is 2 feet tall, brown, and has a scratch in its surface: the existence of all of these properties is predicated upon the existence of the table, and the table would still function as a table without these properties (i.e., if it were shorter or taller, of a different color, or did not have scratches). Aristotle explains that one can define or give an account of accidental properties, but they do not have an essence or contribute to the essence of the substance they exist in. For Aristotle, accidents do not add anything to essence; they merely serve as differentia, helping us to distinguish between particular substances, *this* substance as opposed to *that* substance, within a species.<sup>12</sup>

Because metaphysics is concerned with deciphering the universals underlying the particulars, it is fitting that Aristotle prioritizes the essential properties and ignores the accidental ones, which distract us from the fundamental account of what a substance is necessarily. It can be understood that the most essential property of being classified under the species *human* is our capability for rational thought, which distinguishes us from non-rational animals. However, we must wonder whether or not Aristotle's account of essence and accidental properties, especially in relation to humans, is too exclusive and uncompromising: it seems to draw the line, regarding which properties are essential and nonessential in accounting for our essence, in an unfitting place. There are many properties that Aristotle describes as accidental but that are essential to making us who and what we are, particularly gender. His account of essence (considering only what is written in his *Metaphysics* and not any earlier or later commentary)

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<sup>11</sup> *Metaphysics*, 1029b15.

<sup>12</sup> *Categories*, 3a15–30.

reduces gender to the role of an accidental property, giving it no more importance to our account of essence than other accidents, like hair color or facial hair length.

The Thomistic account solves many of the problems that Aristotle's account of essence, although more developed than Plato's, created. Saint Thomas Aquinas describes two types of essences: generic and specific. Generic essence is defined by the composite of form and undemarcated matter, while specific essence is defined by the composite of material and demarcated matter.<sup>13</sup> Undemarcated matter is unmarked and more abstract, referring to a type of matter in general, while demarcated matter is unique, concrete material that marks *this* particular substance as different from *that* particular substance; this is similar to the distinction between a general concept and its specific referent. Aquinas floats back and forth between the genus, species, and individual when talking about essence, and he uses the example of the genus "animal," the species "human," and the primary substance "Socrates" to demonstrate the demarcation between these categories.<sup>14</sup> *Human* is a specific, individual species of its genus animal, and Socrates is a specific individual of the species human. This means that Socrates has a human essence, which is his generic essence, and an individual essence of "Socrates-ness," which is his specific essence. Socrates' form does not change, meaning that he is still a human, but the composite of his material, flesh and bones, as well as his demarcated matter becomes his individual essence. So, our specific essence considers *all* of our unique properties as important in accounting for who and what we are essentially.

By assigning a specific essence to individual humans, Aquinas preserves our uniqueness and ensures that we never have to discount essential properties as mere accidents. He does not, as Aristotle does, mark our unique matter as merely accidental but rather makes them essential to who and what we are as individuals. However, the Thomistic account of essence contains flaws, specifically concerning the topic of gender. Although Aquinas' account does allow gender to participate in essence, it only does this on an individual level; it falls short in accounting for the essence of *all* men or women, and only makes room for a subjective account of gender that matters for individuals and their specific essences. However, there seems to be an essence of not only individual men and women but also men and

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*, in *Aquinas: Selected Philosophical Writings*, trans. Timothy McDermott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 95.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

women as abstract categories, or species. Women, in virtue of being women, all possess biological and physical functions that *allow* (not necessitate) them to serve the purpose of bearing children. While it is true that there are many different personalities and unique traits for humans to possess, there are not different types of “women” or “men” in a generic sense. Our gender is not something that we choose, because all humans are born as either male or female (disregarding special cases like that of a hermaphrodite). Our reproductive functioning it is not something that we can change, as we can our nail color or facial hair. It is not something that differs between individual men and women because all members of the male or female species have the same reproductive functioning as the other members of their species. However, Thomas Aquinas’ account of essence fails to define gender in this generic way, as an essential property that characterizes all men and all women as such.

My solution to this dilemma of where to place gender is to add to Aquinas’ philosophy in a way that characterizes gender as a generic category rather than a specific essence, because it is universal and common among men and women, and a more determined category than *human*, because not all humans are of the same gender. This is what Thomas Aquinas’ account is missing: a middle ground of essence between the individual and the entire human race in which gender can be placed. So, I argue that gender should be its own species, in the middle of our generic essence (human) and specific essence (individual) and should define which properties men and women must necessarily have to exist as men and women. I do not attempt to argue that our gender is our most generic essence, or the essence that accounts for what we are at the most fundamental level. Because our gender is predicated upon our existence, meaning that we cannot be a man or woman without first being a person, we must ultimately recognize that we exist as humans first and foremost. As members of the human species, we differentiate ourselves from other animals in our genus based on our rationality, but we still identify as rational *animals*. In a similar way, we should differentiate between humans based on gender, but we should still identify as human on a more general level. Our commonly shared status as members of the species *human* is what unites every single human, and we must recognize that all humans have inherent dignity and deserve respect as rational animals. I do not attempt to place gender in a hierarchy or claim that

the essence of men and women is defined only by their gender. Although I claim that women's matter serves the purpose of having children, I do not reduce women to being animalistic procreation machines by claiming that a woman's only purpose is to have children. Rather, I claim that we, as humans, share the common essence of being rational beings but also share a more defined essence as men or women.

At this point one may claim that recognizing differences in gender and defining men and women by their gender is harmful. However, we must recognize that there is a fine line between human-constructed definitions that serve to restrict others to a certain class, and definitions based on a necessary understanding and acceptance of fundamental differences and qualities. The difference between the two is that the first is an attempt to define someone based on an accidental property, while the second is an attempt to define someone based on an essential property. Since gender is an essential property, we must recognize the fundamental differences in function between men and women. Differences in themselves are not bad but become such when used to justify abuse or oppression as a result of human action. Once we realize that gender is fundamental to who and what we are, we can also understand that it is possible to define and differentiate between the sexes in a way that is not oppressive but done out of observation, even admiration. I believe that this distinction can be made for gender: we can consider gender as essence in a way that is not offensive or dangerous but rather respects and appreciates the essential differences between men and women.

# Revelation and Exemplarity: The Relationship between the Prayer of Christ and of the Christian in the *Summa Theologiae*

Nicholas Dolan

The activity and subject of prayer was one that St. Thomas Aquinas was well acquainted with throughout his life. As a Dominican, he chanted the Divine Office every day, celebrated the Holy Mass, and engaged in personal prayer day and night. In his theological writings, the subject of prayer was present virtually from the beginning to the end of his work as a theologian. Thus, one finds Thomas writing about prayer in his commentary upon Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, in his career as a Biblical commentator, in his sermons as a preacher, in his *Summa Theologiae*, and, most interestingly, in his *Compendium of Theology*, wherein Thomas left his work unfinished in the midst of explaining the relationship between hope, prayer, and the *Our Father*. The treatment of prayer in his *Summa* is Thomas' most concise presentation of his mature thought upon the subject. His treatment is divided into two questions. The first treatment is found in the *Secunda Secundae*, while the second is in the *Tertia Pars*. In his first approach, Thomas considers the subject of prayer in general, and in the second he looks at it in relation to Christ. Given the fact that these two questions are in two different parts of the *Summa*, it may seem that they are unrelated. However, this is not the case, and, in fact, the prayer of Christ is intensely significant for the prayer of Christian believers. Christ's prayer is significant for Christian prayer because of its twofold instruction: it reveals his identity as Son, and it provides the perfect example of prayer in Christ's life and the perfect form of prayer in the *Our Father*. This essay will unpack this twofold instruction of the prayer of Christ in the following way. First, the heart of Thomas' teaching on Christ's prayer in *Summa theol.* III, 21, a.1 will be examined. The conclusion of this article will then be set within the context of the structural argument of the *Summa* as a whole. Following this, the perfect example of Christ will be examined in its moral and ontological

implications. Finally, Thomas' exposition of the *Our Father* as the perfect form of prayer will be treated.

### Revelation of His Identity

Aquinas' treatment of prayer occurs in *ST III*, 21. This is situated in the larger section on the consequences of the hypostatic union of Christ, which begins with q. 16 and extends to q. 26. The prologue to q. 16 divides this section into three parts: what belongs to Christ in himself (16–19), what belongs to Christ in relation to his Father (20–24), and what belongs to Christ in relation to us (25–26). The questions contained within these three parts seem disparate in their content. Colman O'Neill, O.P., argues that the unity among these varying questions is around the “question of *logical deductions* which may be made from what has already been established” concerning the person of Christ in *ST III*, 1–15.<sup>1</sup> Concerning the question of Christ's prayer, then, Thomas' treatment of it may be seen as an attempt to integrate major Christological themes from Scripture with his explanation of the Church's dogmatic teaching.

The section to which Christ's prayer belongs considers Christ's relationship with his Father. In the prologue to this section, Thomas divides the section into two parts: those things predicated of Christ “because of his relation to the Father” (q. 20–22) and those predicated of him “because of the Father's relation to him” (q. 23–24). The prayer of Christ falls under the first category of predications and follows Thomas' introductory question (q. 20) concerning the subjection of Christ to the Father. Following his explanation of the hypostatic union (namely, that the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Son, assumed to himself a full and complete human nature in the Incarnation), Thomas answers affirmatively that Christ is subject to the Father in his human nature, but not in his divine nature, because “[w]hoever has a nature is competent to have what is proper to that nature” and human nature has a threefold subjection to God, which Christ specifically professes in the Gospels.<sup>2</sup>

Question 21 of the *Tertia Pars* focuses upon the way in which prayer may be predicated of Christ on account of his relationship with the Father. The Scriptures bear witness to the fact that Christ prayed in Luke 6:12: “In these days he went out to the mountain to pray; and

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<sup>1</sup> Colman O'Neill, O.P., *St Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, vol. 50: The One Mediator (3a. 16–26)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), xxvi.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Tertia Pars, 1–59*, vol. 19, ed. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcon (Lander: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), 20.1, resp.

all night he continued in prayer to God.” Drawing upon his definition of prayer as “the unfolding of our will to God, that He may fulfill it,”<sup>3</sup> Thomas explains how it is possible and expedient for Christ to pray to the Father. Christ’s prayer is possible because of the distinct but united divine and human wills which he possesses on account of his hypostatic union. If Christ only had a divine will, it would be neither possible nor right for him to pray because “the Divine will of itself is effective of whatever He wishes by it.”<sup>4</sup> Since, however, Christ has a human will in addition to his divine will, it belongs to him to pray as a human with a human will on account of the fact that “the human will of itself is not efficacious enough to do what it wishes, except by Divine power.”<sup>5</sup> The response to the first objection of article one specifies Thomas’ conclusion in showing why it was expedient for Christ to pray. Christ could carry out all things as God, but he could not do this as man since, as a man, he is not omnipotent. The reason, therefore, that Christ prayed, being both God and man, was to instruct humanity. This instruction is twofold: first, “that He might show Himself to be from the Father” and so reveal himself as Son; second, “to give us an example of prayer” that was truly human and truly divine.<sup>6</sup> Besides quoting from Patristic sources in support of the pedagogy of Christ’s prayer, Thomas does not provide much of an explanation concerning how Christ’s prayer instructs in these ways. If one considers the structural argument of the *Summa* and the place of Christ in it, though, it becomes clear how and why Christ’s prayer reveals his identity and is the perfect example of prayer. Moreover, when Thomas’ teaching on Christ’s prayer here is connected with his teaching on the *Our Father*,<sup>7</sup> it is evident that Christ provides, in addition to his perfect example, instruction in the perfect way of praying to God with the gift of the *Our Father*. Together these three points show the relationship between the prayer of Christ and that of the Christian.

It almost goes without saying that Thomas’ use of the *Summa* genre is intentional. With the discovery and revival of Aristotelian philosophy during Thomas’ day, Thomas adopted the *summa* genre in

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 21.1, resp.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 21.1, ad. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Secunda Secundae, 1–91*, vol. 17, ed. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcon (Lander: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), 83.9.

order to demonstrate the scientific status of the discipline of theology by “putting logical order into all the richness of teaching about God and creatures proffered by the living Church.”<sup>8</sup> This genre specifically places an emphasis upon the ordering of material. Thus, O’Neill writes, in explaining Thomas’ use of the *summa* genre:

It is a structured, articulated whole that is presented to the student; and it is only within the context of this whole that any detail may be justly evaluated in terms of its function in the development of the work’s fundamental insight into the order of the universe as it is revealed in the Word of God. This is true in a special way of St Thomas’s Christology which, in its whole conception, is in immediate function of the main thrust of the *Summa*’s structure.<sup>9</sup>

In order, therefore, to understand Thomas’ particular teaching about the prayer of Christ being revelatory of his identity, one must understand the identity of Christ that is being presented by the *Summa* itself in its structural argument. Thomas lays out this argument in its briefest form in the prologue to *ST I*, 2. In this prologue, Thomas writes that the material object of theology is the knowledge of God, both in himself and in everything insofar as it is related to him, especially as he is the beginning and end of all things. This then is the “master-concept of the *Summa*,” namely “God as he is the goal of man’s life in life everlasting, God as he is the point to which all our universe is tending.”<sup>10</sup> Thomas emphasizes in this prologue, though, that God is the beginning and end of the rational creature (humans) in particular, since the rational creature is one who has been endowed with the capacity to know and love God and so advance toward God in freedom. This rational capacity comes from the fact that the human person is made in God’s image.<sup>11</sup> Yet since the first parents of the human race rejected God through their original sin, disorder was introduced into the human as the image of God. To restore humanity to its original integrity, then, God sent his Son in the Incarnation to redeem humanity in its fallen state and so lead human beings back to God. This movement is expressed in the division of the *Summa*, as indicated by the prologue to *ST I*, 2, with its three parts corresponding to God and the procession of creation from God (*Prima Pars*), the

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<sup>8</sup> *St Thomas Aquinas*, xx.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, xxi.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae: Prima Secundae, 71–114*, vol. 16, ed. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcon (Lander: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), prologue.

rational creature's unique movement back to God through the moral life (*Secunda Pars*), and Christ, Who as the God-man is the way back to God for humanity in its fallen state (*Tertia Pars*). Thomas' prologue to the *Tertia Pars* bears further witness to Christ's role in the *Summa* and in reality by stating that it is his work to deliver humanity from the disorder of sin through his incarnation, passion and death, and thereby to lead the whole of humanity in its return to God by the grace of his resurrection. Christ, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, is fitted for this work of redemption and salvation because he is, within the life of the Trinity, the Exemplar Image of the Father through whom the Father created all things, especially the human race, the created image of God. Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., identifies the significance of the relationship between the Uncreated Image of God and the created image of God when he writes that "[t]o speak of the human being as the image of God necessarily calls to mind the exemplar after which the human race is made and which it should resemble," which resemblance is possible only through conformity to Christ in the gift of grace that is the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> In light of this, Christ's place within the structural argument of the *Summa* is that the *Summa* is oriented toward him as the return of creation to God. Torrell again reaffirms this when he says that "Christ's assigned place is exactly where it should be: in the very center of our history and at the meeting point between God and the human being," which place one must regard "as the way that leads us to our heavenly homeland, since, as the One 'who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection,'<sup>13</sup> Christ pulls us along after him with the compelling force that drives his own humanity on to the Father."<sup>14</sup> Consequently, when Thomas speaks about the prayer of Christ revealing his identity as the Son of the Father, he intends us to understand Christ as the One through whom humanity has been created and the One after whom humanity is to be re-fashioned in the image and likeness of God. To this end, in III, 21, 1, ad. 1 Thomas quotes John 11:42, where Christ says in reference to the words of his prayer, "I have said this on account of the people standing by, that

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<sup>12</sup> Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., *Christ and Spirituality in St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 79.

<sup>13</sup> Heb 12:2.

<sup>14</sup> *Christ and Spirituality*, 85.

they may believe that you sent me”—sent him precisely to lead humanity back to the Father.<sup>15</sup>

### The Perfect Example of Prayer

Thomas’ second point about the pedagogical nature of Christ’s prayer is, again, that Christ provides by his own prayer to the Father an example of prayer for humanity. The revelation of Christ’s identity highlights the significance of this example. Since Christ is the Exemplar Image of God, human beings, the created image of God, are to “image” the original Image of God through the conformity of their entire lives to him. Such conformity takes place through the imitation of Christ’s deeds, which have been given for our instruction. The possibility of this imitation presupposes, however, an ontological imitation of Christ, which is made possible by and given in the gift of grace to humanity. In addition to this, Christ specifies the way in which humanity is to “act” and “be” like himself when he provides humanity with the prayer of the *Our Father*.

#### *Moral & Ontological Exemplarity*<sup>16</sup>

As the perfect and true Image of the Father, Christ is the way for humanity to live up to its nature as created in the image of God. Put another way, he is the way for the image of God to “image” the Image of God. This is suggested by Thomas in *ST* III, 21, 1, ad.1 as it was examined above in relation to the action of prayer. This moral imitation also extends to the whole of Christ’s incarnate life since he is the primordial Exemplar of humanity. This kind of imitation is asserted most strongly by the New Testament when St. Peter writes: “Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”<sup>17</sup> Thomas, acutely aware of this command to exemplify Christ in the moral life, speaks of this moral imitation throughout his works, but especially in his examination of the mysteries of the life of Christ in the *Tertia Pars*.<sup>18</sup> Two of the strongest texts in support of this are found in *ST* III, Q. 40. Thus, in article 1, ad. 3, Thomas writes that “Christ’s action is our instruction,” and in article 2, ad 1, he writes, “[i]n His manner of living our Lord gave an example of perfection as to all those things which of themselves relate to salvation.” The Christian, therefore, is to imitate Christ in all of his

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Jn 13:1, 14:1–7, and the whole of chapter 17.

<sup>16</sup> This section is largely drawn from *Christ and Spirituality*, pp. 86–100.

<sup>17</sup> 1 Peter 2:21.

<sup>18</sup> See *Christ and Spirituality*, pp. 87–91 for a documentation of this theme in Aquinas’ writings.

actions so as to be able to image God as God is truly and perfectly imaged in Christ. However, this moral exemplarity is only possible by the prior ontological exemplarity of Christ.

The ontological exemplarity of Christ comes from God's gift of grace to humanity, namely the gift of the Holy Spirit. God's gift of grace is "nothing short of a partaking of the Divine Nature."<sup>19</sup> This grace is communicated to men and women through the humanity of Christ.<sup>20</sup> Because God uses the humanity of Christ as the instrumental cause for the communication of grace, grace bears the mark and imprint of Christ, such that the very reception of grace is a kind of conformation to Christ.<sup>21</sup> All this is to restate what was seen above regarding Christ's role within the structural argument of the *Summa*, namely, that Christ, the Image of God, was sent by God to restore humanity to the integrity of its original image. However, the conclusion drawn here concerning ontological exemplarity emphasizes that this is not simply a restoration of humanity to its original image, but also an elevation of humanity in its imaging of God. This is because with the communication of grace through Christ, humanity is both given a participation in the very life of God and concretely shown the way to live out this graced life in the salvific and instructive actions of Christ.<sup>22</sup> In other words, Christ shows humanity what the life of God is meant to look like as it is lived out in the human form.

#### *"Our Father" as the Perfect Form of Prayer*

The ontological and moral exemplarity of Christ for the Christian in regard to prayer is specified by Jesus in his enunciation of the *Our Father*. As evident from what was said above, every action of Christ is significant since he is both the exemplar and example for humanity in its return to God. In the giving of the *Our Father* to his disciples, then, this prayer has much significance because it both expresses the way in which the Christian is to relate to God in his prayer and also expresses a complete picture of how the Christian ought to be petitioning God in his prayer.

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<sup>19</sup> *Prima Secundae*, 112.1, resp.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.1, ad. 1.

<sup>21</sup> *Christ and Spirituality*, 92–93.

<sup>22</sup> *St Thomas Aquinas*, xxiii.

Thomas' treatment of the *Our Father* in the *Summa* is contained in the *Secunda Secundae*. The *Secunda Secundae* considers the particular virtues, both theological and moral, by which the human person relates and returns to God as a free and rational creature. Thomas' teaching on prayer is classified under the virtue of religion, which is a sub-virtue of justice. Religion is the virtue by which the human person relates to God, duly rendering him reverence and honor as the human person's source and end.<sup>23</sup> One way in which the human person justly reveres and honors God is through the interior activity of prayer, by which the human person raises up his mind to God, entrusting himself to him and confidently petitioning him as "Author of all that is good for us."<sup>24</sup>

Thomas argues that the most perfect prayer is the *Our Father*. The perfection of the *Our Father* is based upon the understanding of prayer as the interpreter of human desire before God.<sup>25</sup> Since prayer is the voice, as it were, of human desire to God, "then alone is it right to ask for something in our prayers when it is right that we should desire it."<sup>26</sup> In the *Our Father* one asks for those things which one should rightly desire in the order in which they should be desired. By doing this, the *Our Father* "not only teaches us to ask, but also directs all our affections."<sup>27</sup> Before considering Thomas' exposition upon the seven petitions of the *Our Father*, it is important to notice the first two words of this prayer. By instructing his disciples to call God "our Father," Jesus is inviting his disciples to realize that God is *their* Father. This paternal relationship is possible because of the grace that is communicated through Christ the Son of God. Thus, by grace, Christians participate in the Divine Nature, and, because grace comes through Christ who is the Son of God by nature, Christians become sons of God also, but by participation. Therefore, they may call God Father and have confidence in him as a child would with its own father. This confidence, Thomas says, "is excited in us chiefly by consideration of His [God's] charity in our regard, whereby he wills our good."<sup>28</sup> With the understanding that God is one's Father, the

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<sup>23</sup> *Secunda Secundae*, 81, resp.

<sup>24</sup> Brian Davies, "Prayer," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 473.

<sup>25</sup> *Secunda Secundae*, 83.9, resp.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.9, ad. 5.

Christian can pray the remainder of this prayer with confidence, since God is the One who is able to give and who is willing to give.<sup>29</sup>

According to Thomas, the first thing that should be the object of human desire is “the end, and afterwards whatever is directed to the end.”<sup>30</sup> The seven petitions of the *Our Father* are divided along these lines. The first two concern God as end and the next five concern those things that direct the human person to God as their end. Concerning the first two petitions, in which God is addressed as the human person’s end, Thomas argues that the man’s affections can tend to God in two ways: first, “by our willing the glory of God;” second, “by willing to enjoy His glory.”<sup>31</sup> In the first way, man loves God for God’s own sake. To this way of directing man’s affections corresponds the first petition, in which the name of God “our Father” is asked to be hallowed (“Hallowed be thy name”). In the second way, man loves himself in God. The way in which the man can love himself in God is clarified in the second petition (“Thy kingdom come”), “by which we ask to come to the glory of His kingdom.”<sup>32</sup> Now, a desired good may direct the human to an end either by its nature or accidentally. When the desired good directs one’s self to an end by its nature, the very nature of the desired good is such that it directs the desirer to the good. In terms of being directed to God as one’s end, this takes place in two ways. It may take place either “directly and principally, according to the merit whereby we merit beatitude by obeying God” or “instrumentally, and as it were helping us to merit.”<sup>33</sup> The direct and principal way is expressed in the petition “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” and the instrumental way is expressed by “Give us this day our daily bread.” The petition for one’s daily bread has a twofold meaning, according to Thomas. It may mean the desiring of the sacramental Bread of the Holy Eucharist or it may mean the sufficient sustenance of food for that day. These two meanings taken together encompass the totality of man’s supernatural and natural needs. A desired good directs the man to his end accidentally when it removes an obstacle. In terms of the end of beatitude, three obstacles stand in the way, to which the final three

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas would seem to indicate the further characteristics of this kind of filial prayer in *Secunda Secundae* 83.15, resp., namely charity, faith, humility, and devotion.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.9, resp.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

petitions of the *Our Father* correspond. The first obstacle is sin, “which directly excludes a man from the kingdom.”<sup>34</sup> The second obstacle is temptation, “which hinders us from keeping God’s will.”<sup>35</sup> The third obstacle is “the present penal state which is a kind of obstacle to a sufficiency of life.”<sup>36</sup> “Forgive us our trespasses” counteracts the first obstacle, “lead us not into temptation” the second obstacle, and “deliver us from evil” the third obstacle. In addition to this, it is worth noting the further perfection of this prayer in light of *ST II-II*, 83, 9, ad. 3. Quoting Augustine, Thomas identifies that the seven petitions of the *Our Father* correspond to both the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and the seven beatitudes. Moreover, though Thomas does not mention it here, the three theological virtues and the four cardinal virtues, with the exception of temperance, may be aligned with the seven gifts of the Spirit.<sup>37</sup> Thus, in praying the *Our Father*, the Christian is truly praying the most perfect prayer, as it encapsulates the essence of his relationship with God as a son in the Son and as it petitions God for all that is necessary to attain to man’s beatitude.

## Conclusion

The relationship between the prayer of Christ and the prayer of the Christian is one of the most significant relationships within St. Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae*. In the prayer of Christ, Jesus reveals himself as the Son of the Father, who has been sent to restore humanity to its original integrity as the created image of God. Jesus is able to accomplish this work of restoration because he is the Exemplar Image of God. As such, he is also the example of how humanity is to live out its nature as the image of God. It is only through Christ that it is possible to live out this example, though, because it is through his assumed humanity that the gift of grace is communicated. Finally, Christ himself has provided the perfect prayer for the Christian in the *Our Father*, which sums up the relationship of the Christian to God and all that the Christian may ask of God in filial confidence.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> See the arrangement of contents in the *Secunda Secundae*.

# Prudence and the University: Considering Controversial Speakers

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In many universities, faculty and students are allowed to invite outside speakers to give lectures as a university event. However, controversy surrounding the speaker often forces the university to decide whether to allow or forbid the speaker according to its policies. Is it ever ethical for a university to allow someone who has expressed racist ideas to speak on campus? Can a Catholic university ever permit a lecture by a pro-choice speaker? Tackling questions such as these often seems to pit the value of free intellectual inquiry against that of justice, because of a misunderstanding of what free inquiry actually entails. However, a proper understanding of the function of the university, free intellectual inquiry, and justice reveals that these concepts are in harmony rather than being diametrically opposed. Such an understanding is necessary in order to make a prudential decision either to allow a controversial speaker to give a university lecture or to bar such a speaker from campus.

Before exploring these issues, it is important to articulate the assumptions and limitations of this paper. This paper will address public lectures—that is, lectures given by guest speakers on university grounds which are also open to the public. For reasons of length and simplicity, this paper will not discuss commencement speeches, nor will it tackle the question of how universities should implement these guidelines in their speaker policies. Although public universities in the United States must also consider questions of legality, which may be accompanied by moral considerations, these lie outside the scope of this paper.

## The Purpose of a University

One of the best articulations of the purpose of a university is found in Cardinal Newman's *Idea of a University*:

[A] University training . . . [aims] at cultivating the public mind . . . at giving enlargement and sobriety to the ideas of the age, at facilitating the exercise of political power, and refining the

intercourse of public life . . . [it] gives a man a clear conscious view of his own opinions and judgments, a truth in developing them, an eloquence in expressing them, and a force in urging them.<sup>1</sup>

A university exists primarily to educate students through the study of the world by cultivating their intellects. Ideally, universities cultivate the formation of a “clear, calm, accurate vision and comprehension of all things,”<sup>2</sup> intellectual virtues such as open-mindedness and critical engagement, and skills for communication and the pursuit of truth. All the activities of the university, including teaching, scholarship, and student care, must be oriented toward this central mission, without which a university is simply a research institution. By forming students in an accurate vision of the world and pursuing research to ensure that the communicated vision is true, a university also serves in a way as a center of moral formation for students and, through them, society. Thus, universities are “the principle community through which human rationality can examine all existing communities, families, and structures,” in order to guide them toward what is true and just.<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that a university education is a necessary good for virtue; nor is it true that knowing truth necessarily leads to acting virtuously. However, the ability to know and discover truth is an integral part of the virtues of prudence (acting rightly) and justice (acting rightly in our relationships with others), which we recognize whenever we say that a person was well-intentioned but misguided. Formation of the intellect disposes an individual to “see rightly,” without which he cannot act rightly. Through the study of specific disciplines, a student exercises sub-virtues of prudence: truthful memory, docility or open-mindedness, and the ability to quickly evaluate unfamiliar concepts and situations.<sup>4</sup> These virtues, practiced in the context of the student’s discipline and university education, can be applied to other areas of the student’s life. The importance of the university in moral formation thus places heavy responsibilities upon the institution to perform its mission well as a matter of justice to individual students and to society.

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<sup>1</sup> John Henry Cardinal Newman, *The Idea of a University* (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1973), 177–8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>3</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Idea of the University: A Reexamination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 67.

<sup>4</sup> William C. Mattison, *Introducing Moral Theology: True Happiness and the Virtues* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2008), 103–4.

## Necessary Goods

The values of free inquiry and intellectual honesty are necessary for the university to accomplish its mission. Free inquiry exposes the student to all sides of a question, prompting the enlargement of his mind and providing the opportunity for critical engagement of ideas, by which a student learns how to discover, express, and uphold truth. In addition, it prevents interference or pressure, which may lead to falsehood or the mere acceptance of convention; instead, students can consider and judge all ideas on their own merits. Intellectual honesty on the part of the institution demands that the student have access to the most robust arguments in favor of each side, in respect for those who have held those arguments as fellow human beings who had the same capacity<sup>5</sup> to discover truth. Even if their best opinions are evidently in error, a student's encountering of those ideas will clarify and deepen the student's understanding of the truth and enhance the formation of intellectual virtues. For example, a student will be able not only to identify arguments for slavery as attacking the dignity of fellow human beings but also to explain why it is so and where it goes wrong, to defend a counterargument, and to be vigilant for similar errors in his own thought.

There is one consideration, however, which is often overlooked in discussions of free inquiry. Free inquiry is often conceived as a freedom from any pressures which may force a student into certain beliefs. However, free inquiry is not just a freedom from something, but for something. It is a subordinate good which allows for the proper pursuit of truth. In addition, this view fails to consider the proper place of free inquiry in education. Although college students have reached adulthood and thus have the capacity for critical engagement, this capacity can be clouded by any of the intellectual vices: close-mindedness, irrationality, or pigheadedness,<sup>6</sup> for example, which it is the job of the university to correct. Students must first be formed well in the norms and standards of the discipline and in the necessary intellectual skills before they can critically engage a wide range of ideas well, just as a child must learn how to construct a

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<sup>5</sup> Capacity, that is, by virtue of their existence as rational human beings—this is not to say that all people have the same intellectual capacity or access to necessary external goods like technology, but that this is a way of respecting the dignity of all human beings as sincere seekers of truth and recognizing that the pursuit of truth is a community endeavor.

<sup>6</sup> *Introducing Moral Theology*, 101.

sentence properly before he can understand and critically assess violations of word order in poetry. For example, no professor would simply present a class with two pamphlets, one on the history of the Holocaust and another which denied it, and invite students with no serious historical training to make up their own minds without giving any previous guidance. That would be irresponsible and detrimental to the students' intellectual formation, since there are accepted methods and criteria by which historians evaluate truth claims. Theories which deny the Holocaust violate this criteria and so are not equal in value and truth to theories which accept the occurrence of the Holocaust.<sup>7</sup> In addition, this would seem to communicate to students that truth is purely a matter of individual opinion rather than something which is pursued in dialogue with a community. A good professor "pressures" the students into learning about the facts of the Holocaust through grades and the format of class discussions, assignments, and tests, but that is not a violation of free inquiry, since the professor's activities are oriented towards educating students to better discover and engage truth. Thus, there can never be absolute free inquiry on a university campus in the sense often used by free-speech advocates—free inquiry must always be subordinate to its real purpose, the pursuit of truth.

Universities may therefore legitimately restrict certain speakers or lectures without infringing on free inquiry if they judge that the speaker will negatively affect their mission to educate—in fact, it is their duty as a matter of justice to their students and to society to do so. It would be prudent, therefore, to review speakers and their topics in terms of their ability to contribute to the formation of a "clear, calm, accurate vision and comprehension of all things."<sup>8</sup> Unlike lectures offered through other means like the Internet, lectures offered using university property and resources<sup>9</sup> are granted a certain degree of legitimacy in the eyes of the public because of the university's status as an institution concerned with truth, even if the university does not

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<sup>7</sup> The situation of course would be a different one if the controversy were not over the facts but the interpretation of certain events—for example, the role of Roman moral decline in the fall of the Roman Empire. The two contrasting interpretations would both use the same standards and facts, but would draw different conclusions. This differs from an argument which completely rejects the standards of historians without good reasons based on what it means to be engaged in the discipline of history. Standards may of course be challenged and changed over time, but arguments for doing so are still based on a common vision of what the discipline is and entails.

<sup>8</sup> *Idea of a University*, 139.

<sup>9</sup> This can happen directly by paying speaker fees and covering a speaker's expenses or indirectly through the funding of campus organizations which invite speakers.

endorse the views expressed in the lecture. That is why some argue for an open-door policy of no restrictions on speakers—if it is clear that any speaker, no matter how ill-informed or offensive, may speak on campus, the university avoids any possibility of being perceived as endorsing a speaker or his ideas.<sup>10</sup> According to this view, selective bans would confer additional legitimacy on those that the university allows to speak even if they are not officially endorsed, causing confusion to students and to the public which may lead to the acceptance of error. This could be a prudential decision if the university could be reasonably confident that students possessed an adequate intellectual ability to engage these ideas and that the university could mitigate any obstructions offered by the lecture to its mission. Specifically, this criterion would favor an open-door policy for graduate schools or elite universities with adequate resources. However, such a policy might not be enough to address the issue of justice to the community, which will be discussed shortly.

Universities which do not fit the above criteria must consider each speaker on a case-by-case basis, evaluating the speaker based on whether implicitly granting him a certain degree of legitimacy would obstruct the school's mission. In order not to cause needless confusion, especially among underclassmen who are less advanced in their studies, and to promote the academic standards which are necessary to education, a university has the responsibility to make sure that the lecture meets at least the minimum accepted standards of its discipline and so is worthy of serious consideration. This criterion separates crude or willful ignorance from unpopular positions which nevertheless adhere to academic standards.<sup>11</sup> A lecture advocating creationism as a scientific theory would be barred because creationism does not obey the standards of scientific research. On the other hand, a speaker (let us call him Dr. Galton) who uses psychological research with contested methodologies to draw the unpopular conclusion that there is a genetic and racial basis for IQ would be allowed if Dr. Galton had the proper academic credentials, because the research conforms to the foundational ideas and standards of the discipline even if it may fail in obeying the details. This applies even to non-academic

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<sup>10</sup> Robert M. O'Neil, *Free Speech in the College Community* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 85–87.

<sup>11</sup> Mari J. Matsuda, "Public Response to Racist Speech: Considering the Victim's Story," *Michigan Law Review* 87, no. 8 (1989): 2365.

lecturers—a university may legitimately expect that a speaker on immigration reform has had a certain amount of personal experience with the subject or has studied it in some depth.

In addition, universities must determine if the lecture is suitable for its intended audience before permitting it. In the case of students, this requires a careful assessment of how well the student body is able to critically engage controversial ideas and how well they are informed about the particular subject. In the case of the psychology lecture, for example, a student body that has only a rudimentary grasp of the practice of science and of the scientific method would be at a severe disadvantage. Students would not have the resources to critically evaluate the lecture for themselves or even assess its controversial value, leaving them not with clear vision and comprehension but with confusion that easily leads to error.<sup>12</sup> If it is determined that this can be prevented by measures such as preliminary instruction or resolved through discussion afterwards (or both), the university may permit the lecture if it can provide these resources. Otherwise, the university has a duty to bar the lecture since it interferes with the mission of the institution. If, on the other hand, the students have a good grasp of scientific and psychological thought, this same lecture would be an excellent method to encourage the students to engage with these ideas in a way that clarifies their own understanding and strengthens their intellectual ability, thus furthering the goal of the university. Such engagement would be facilitated by structures that encourage student discussion, like providing student forums afterwards or requesting comments in classes the next day.

However, an evaluation of the psychology lecture is complicated in a way that a lecture offering a contested interpretation of Plotinus is not. The content of the psychology lecture would not only certainly be seen as offensive by some in the community, but it also advances a conclusion that has historically been (and continues to be) used to justify racism and injustice. Allowing Dr. Galton to speak might contribute to the perpetuation of harmful ideologies and structures

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<sup>12</sup> Of course, this could provide an impetus for a student's self-education, which Newman argues is an important process—see *Idea of a University*, 146–48. However, education through the university community is still to be preferred, since formation in a community in dialogue with certain standards and traditions corrects the myopia and tendency toward intellectual vice which is often the product of self-education—see *Idea of a University*, 148–49 and David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson, “Energizing Learning: The Instructional Power of Conflict,” *Educational Research* 38, no. 1 (2009): 37. Without any attempt at preparation beforehand, the hypothetical example would generate needless confusion and would be a serious error on the part of the university.

which are unjust; thus, the university would have a share in social sin. Even if the content of the lecture was up to academic standards, it might be unnecessarily aggressive or intended to offend, or the speaker might have used offensive speech elsewhere or taken active part in injustice. Regardless of whether the university officially endorses the speaker or his ideas, allowing him to speak seems to normalize his behavior and could constitute an implicit endorsement, for which a university could justly be blamed. In addition, some note that college students are at a particularly vulnerable stage as they consider questions of identity, and that they depend on the university for support. Any official toleration of racist or offensive speech, even by inaction, is “a harm to the goals of inclusion, education, development of knowledge, and ethics that universities exist and stand for” and can cause lasting damage to a student’s well-being at this critical stage of life.<sup>13</sup> This seems to indicate that these kinds of controversial lectures should never be permitted to happen as a university event.

Examining these claims by using Dr. Galton as a test case can provide guidelines for prudential action. Social research indicates that concern for the impact of any racist behavior on students is well-founded: “[p]erceiving greater discrimination has been consistently linked to lower well-being, greater psychological distress, and poorer physical health.”<sup>14</sup> Targets of racism experience it not as a series of isolated incidents involving individuals but as a persistent cultural phenomenon, a way of seeing reality that is embedded in the practices and norms of society.<sup>15</sup> Thus, reactions to speech perceived as racist may seem out of proportion precisely because people react not primarily to the act itself, but to what it reveals about the larger attitudes or patterns of behavior of the person who did it and the community or institutions which may explicitly or implicitly condone it. The existence of racism as a cultural phenomenon means that acts which may be considered harmless or insignificant in the abstract take on larger meanings when directed toward racial and ethnic minorities,

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<sup>13</sup> “Public Response to Racist Speech,” 2371. Matsuda’s discussion mostly makes use of hate speech, although her inclination to ban “cold” anti-Semitic literature (which takes a dispassionate “reasoned” approach rather than employing aggression) would seem to indicate that she would also bar Dr. Galton from speaking on a university campus.

<sup>14</sup> Moin Syed and Lauren L. Mitchell, “Race, Ethnicity, and Emerging Adulthood: Retrospect and Prospects,” *Emerging Adulthood* 1, no. 2 (2013): 86.

<sup>15</sup> Bryan N. Massingdale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2010), 15.

since it is part of a pattern of societal behavior. Thus, Dr. Galton's lecture, which by itself might be considered simply questionable psychological research, has a deeper significance when viewed against the historical background of racism. This would be exacerbated if Dr. Galton supported or participated in explicitly racist actions. Taking these factors together, allowing Dr. Galton to lecture might not only implicitly condone his biased view of the world but also contribute to structures of injustice, both of which contradict the mission of the university.

Once again, prudential decisions must be made in light of their specific context. If a speaker has made offensive comments elsewhere but wishes to lecture about a subject of scholarship like art history which has no connection to his particular views, the university must weigh his potential contribution to student education against the possible perception that it is implicitly condoning racist behavior. Again, this requires an assessment of the student body—if it is determined that awareness of his behavior would overshadow any intellectual contributions for the students and thus obstruct the mission of the university, it would be best to prevent the lecture. His lecture may be allowable if the university determines that his scholarship is not only a valuable resource for students, but that the occasion of the lecture also provides an effective opportunity for students to learn and practice civil discourse. Situations like Dr. Galton's require more consideration, since his controversial position is tied directly to his professional area. Overall, it does not seem likely that a university could ever rightly allow Dr. Galton to speak if he has participated in any racist actions or speech. However, if he has not done so, there might be very specific situations where his lecture might not contradict the purpose of the university. For example, if his audience would be composed of psychology students who could appreciate the scientific value of his research and easily identify the weaknesses of his methodology, the experience could be instructive for both parties involved.

Religious universities have an additional responsibility to consider. The establishment of an explicitly religious university makes an implicit claim that the university has grasped certain fundamental truths. Rather than leaving such questions for individuals to decide, as a secular university would do, the religious university proclaims that not only does it have the ability to discover truth, it knows what truth is because it has the correct worldview. This worldview must by necessity permeate every aspect of university life; if a religious

university looks identical in every respect to a secular one, it reveals itself as untrue to its particular worldview. Thus, religious universities have an obligation to form their students so that they can recognize and believe the truth the university claims to possess.<sup>16</sup> This necessitates the careful exercise of prudence to avoid confusion or the perception of endorsing a belief which contradicts the truth. Religious universities may still invite speakers who do not believe in certain truths the university accepts; however, the university must then ensure that adequate preparation will clearly separate the university's position from that of the speaker.

At this point, the reader may offer two objections to these guidelines. First, this paper seems to argue for an essentially paternalistic viewpoint, since it is the university which decides what is worthwhile for students. However, college students are free moral agents who should be able to make decisions as adults when those decisions affect their own education and intellectual formation. In some sense, this critique is on point—because many college students have not yet more fully developed the intellectual abilities, virtues, and experience which would allow them to judge even their own education well, faculty and staff play a larger role in determining the choices of the university as it affects students. However, it must also be emphasized that students are part of the university community. Since prudence involves a true vision of the world, faculty and staff cannot virtuously decide matters which concern students without any cooperation or dialogue with them. Their vision would be limited and thus untrue, leading to an imprudent decision; the same would apply if students were the only ones who made the decision. All members of the university community must work together in order to make a truly prudent decision as a university.

A second critique would be concerned with the vulnerability of the university to abuse of these guidelines, which seem to offer a ready way to justify decisions as prudent when they are in fact a product of fear or brashness. A university could use these guidelines as a way to

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<sup>16</sup> For Catholic universities, for example, “[o]ne consequence of its essential relationship to the Church is that the institutional fidelity of the University to the Christian message includes a recognition of and adherence to the teaching authority of the Church in matters of faith and morals. Catholic members of the university community are also called to a personal fidelity to the Church with all that this implies.” John Paul II, “Ex Corde Ecclesiae,” *The Holy See*, 1990, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost\\_constitutions/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_apc\\_15081990\\_ex-corde-ecclesiae.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_15081990_ex-corde-ecclesiae.html), 27.

protect itself from truth, since decisions often rely on the specific character of the university. What if the university largely consisted of misguided scholars, overcautious administrators, or oversensitive students? The guidelines seem to justify their decision to reject a celebrated social activist or a respected evolutionary scientist just as much as another university's decision to reject a hardline racist or creationist. Again, the solution to this quandary lies in what prudence really entails: an accurate vision of the world and the ability to make decisions based upon that vision. A university must always strive to improve the accuracy of its vision through the pursuit of truth, not only to fulfill its mission, but to enable it to make decisions which are truly virtuous and not simply well-intentioned, and to serve as an example to students and society alike.